



Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan

FROM THE EDITOR

The last three months saw some developments that are both exciting and challenging. SAWA-Australia (NSW) faces the task to support a much enlarged Hewad High School. SAWA-Australia (SA) started a new support project, a consequence of a large donation from PlanetWheeler to support OPAWC's Hamoon Clinic in Farah Province. More information on both projects can be found below.

While SAWA's success to obtain funding from charities such as PlanetWheeler, GlobalQuest and the DAK Foundation is good news we cannot become complacent. The need to support the basic budgets of Hewad High School and the Vocational Training Centre continues and can only be met through donations from supporters. Without your generous support SAWA could not do its work.

Matthias Tomczak

Report from Hewad High School

At Hewad High School the new school year started in September. RAWA sent us the following report that describes the difficult situation for Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Hewad High School underwent many changes this year. While the cost for many things increased, we tried our best and compromised much to keep costs low and make the budget a reasonable one; but overall the budget for Hewad High School has increased this year.

Besides the overall harsh conditions in Pakistan, an increase in violence, destitution and political uncertainty, Hewad High School has gone through some changes imposed on us by Afghanistan's Education Ministry.

As previously told, the Education Ministry introduced a new rule that boys and girls have to be separated in schools. As a consequence a bigger two story building had to be rented to separate boys and girls, and since the number of students in each class decreased two schools have been merged together. Hewad High School has been merged with Marifat High School, which means our school attracted all of the students who used to study in Marifat High School. The number of classes increased by six. Classes 1 to 3 and 10 to 12 take place in the morning and 4 to 9 in the afternoon. The number of teachers had to be increased to serve the extra classes.

The changes have had some financial consequences. Since the school is two timed now, the watchman, principal and sweeper have to work extra now for the two times. The watchman has to stay full time now. The house is bigger but in a cheaper place so the rent is lower. Transportation has jumped due to the double timing. The computer teacher charges are reduced as he has no transportation costs now.

We have tried our best to make other things as economical as possible and strictly control the usage of gas and electricity. We

hope you can manage to cover the expanses of the school, as you have done in the past. We thank every and each one of you for your hard work and efforts to enable RAWA to offer deprived Afghan girls and boys an education in Pakistan.

RAWA

Support for Hewad High School is administered by SAWA (NSW). Please consider a donation in support of the school. Bank account details for SAWA-Australia (NSW) can be found on page 4.



Some photos from the graduation ceremony of May 2011

A visit to the Vocational Training Centre

In October, on my way back from a family visit to Germany, I spent three days in Kabul to visit the Vocational Training Centre. I had been told earlier in the year that the Australian embassy manages funds to support NGOs working in Afghanistan, so Latifa, the Centre's director, invited Mr. Xian-Zhi Soon, Third Secretary (Political) of the embassy, to a visit. We explained the history of the Centre and its need for financial support with some of its programs, and Zhi informed us about the aid programs that are administered by the embassy. These possibilities will be followed up.

A year ago the Literacy Section of the Centre had moved to Spin Kalay, an area where the warlord Sayaf lives along with his commanders and where the local imam actively influenced the men not to let the women of their household attend the Literacy Course; they told the men: "The people who arrange such activities want your women to leave you and join the political parties; they show bad

SAWA OBJECTIVES

- Raise funds to assist in development and relief projects for Afghan women and children,
- Increase community awareness of the needs of Afghan women and children;
- Encourage women, men and young people to join SAWA-Australia state associations;
- Set up SAWA/RAWA support groups; and
- Encourage cooperation among SAWA-Australia state associations through participation in national SAWA network forums.

ways to your women." The Centre then lost many of its students as a result of such propaganda.

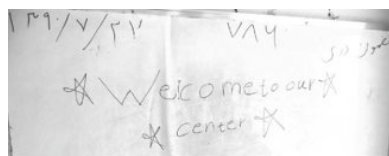
Ten months later the Centre has gained such good reputation that even the imam now supports it and sends his wife to the classes. The Centre also received several letters of thanks from husbands, in which they described the difference the course has made to their families. One husband said that before his wife joined the literacy classes she was always depressed and suffered from psychological problems and he had to spend much money on medicine for her. After she joined the course she does not need medicine any more, so they can now feed their children. So the Centre does not only bring education to illiterate women but educates the men as well.

The Centre continues to receive the highest praise from the Ministry of Education, who says that unlike other NGOs that promise many things but do not deliver, the Vocational Training Centre operates a most successful program.



Students of the literacy class; the imam's wife covered herself fully before I entered the classroom.

The English class that is supported by the DAK foundation was in its third week. I realized when I met the students how difficult it is to learn a language based on entirely different grammar and writing. The students were proud to know their English alphabet and could not wait to recite it for me: "In the name of Allah: A B C D E..." They



showed me how to use the letters to put together words under instruction, such as "Welcome to our Center".

The computer class, which is supported by GlobalQuest, is taught by OPAWC's web-master. It was also in its third week. The Literacy Centre does not have room to house the computer lab, so the class is located in the Handicraft Centre. The two centres are located in different suburbs, and general lack of security prevents the students of the computer class to go to the Literacy Centre for English classes. This makes learning computer skills difficult, because much on-screen information is in English. When I visited the class the students were learning how to use the Windows operating system. They expressed a strong wish to have their own English class in the Handicraft Centre.



Matthias Tomczak

Hamoon Clinic, a new SAWA support project

Six months ago Barbara James, the Secretary of SAWA (SA), made contact with Planet Wheeler, a charitable foundation established by the founders of the *Lonely Planet* guide books. SAWA (SA) introduced Planet Wheeler to OPAWC, the Organization for Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities that operates the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul. Our hope was to increase our support for the Centre through some additional funding from another source.

After many emails and phone calls Planet Wheeler decided to come to the aid of OPAWC's Hamoon Clinic in Farah Province, the poorest province in Afghanistan, which was in desperate financial need.

Hamoon Clinic was established by Malalai Joya in 2003. When Malalai's election into parliament led to attacks against the clinic Malalai handed it over to OPAWC. The clinic provides free treatment and medicine to people who otherwise would go without. It operates a fully equipped ambulance to access outlying and remote villages where serious cases often prevent patients from traveling to the city.

SAWA (SA) received \$30,000 from Planet Wheeler for the clinic. The generous donation brings the new field of women's health to the projects managed by SAWA (SA). It poses a challenge that has to be met. Hopefully the medical community in particular will come to our assistance and bring additional support for SAWA's work.

Support for the Vocational Training Centre and the Hamoon Clinic is administered by SAWA (SA). Please consider a donation in support of the school. Bank account details for SAWA-Australia (SA) can be found on page 3.



Patients wait in front of Hamoon Clinic during a visit of OPAWC director Latifa Ahmady in April 2011



A doctor treats a patient (left); the clinic ambulance (right)

Tapaye Zanabad — the hill that women built

The hills of Kabul stand as monuments to men in battle, topped by crumbling forts and rusted tanks, ancient ramparts and gleaming tombs of kings. One is different but no less a testament to war. It is known as Tapaye Zanabad — the hill that women built.

For the past decade, war widows have converged here and built by hand their mud hovels on a slope above a cemetery in an eastern neighborhood of the Afghan capital. They came at first because the land was free and they were poor. Hundreds of widows came, aid workers said, and they now number perhaps more than 1,000 on the hill and its surroundings. *For a photo gallery of the hill go to http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the-hill-that-women-built/2011/08/05/gIQAIVrmFJ_gallery.htm*



SAWA-Australia (SA) PO Box 90, Flinders University PO Bedford Park SA 5042 sawa.sa@sawa-australia.org
Bendigo Bank Oaklands Park Branch BSB 633-000 Account number 126035633 (SAWA-Australia SA)

Convener: Matthias Tomczak **Secretary:** Barbara James **Treasurer:** Christine Tomczak

Committee: Libby Drew, Christine Gamble, Kath Jones, Ruth Redfern

Newsletter editor: Matthias Tomczak **Public Officer:** Ruth Redfern **Auditor:** Bob Shahinger

The regional groups in WA, Tasmania, Victoria, Queensland, the Riverina and Northern Rivers are affiliated with SAWA-Australia (SA) and contribute to the support for the Vocational Training Centre and Hamoon Clinic.

Malalai Joya in Hobart

The Hobart SAWA group supported the visit of Malalai Joya to talk about the position of women in Afghanistan and how we can support them. Malalai is a former Member of Afghanistan's Parliament from 2005-7 when she was dismissed for publicly denouncing the presence of war criminals in the Parliament. She is a human rights activist and has said: "In Afghanistan, democratic minded activists face many challenges, risks, and obstacles. The only difference between me and other Afghan activists is that I have fame. We are all fighting against a puppet mafia regime and against an occupation; we are fighting for justice, peace, democracy, women's rights, and human rights in our country."

In Hobart Malalai spoke on 1st September at Ogilvie High School, Ogilvie being the only all girls state school in Tasmania. Approximately 40 Year 10s listened attentively to Malalai's speech, which she interspersed with writing points on a whiteboard. There were some interesting questions and the school gave a contribution to SAWA.

At Parliament House Malalai spoke to approximately 110 people invited by the State Minister for Human Resources and Community, Cassy O'Connor, who gave an emotional thanks and promised to raise a motion in State Parliament about the need to support the people of Afghanistan and for the troops to leave Afghanistan.

In the evening, Malalai spoke at a Forum organized by *Amnesty International Australia* – Tasmanian Action Centre. The event was also publicized by University students, *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* and the *Socialist Alliance* amongst other groups. Approximately 80 people attended.

Malalai's main message is that (1) the situation is no better for women than under the Taliban and in fact could be worse, for example, poverty is so difficult that in some places families have been forced to sell their babies for as little as Aus\$10 and (2) NATO troops need to leave Afghanistan. At the moment the Afghan people have 3 enemies, the warlords in power in the Parliament, the Taliban and the NATO troops. Much of the funds going into Afghanistan goes into the warlords' pockets. If the troops leave they will lose these handouts and their power will be weakened and hopefully broken.

Altogether \$1000 was raised for SAWA. Whilst in Hobart, Malalai also did an extensive interview for *The Drum* of ABC online, which can be read at <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/2874458.html>.

Yabbo Thompson

Malaia Joya in Adelaide

The first of two major events in Adelaide was held in the hall of the Australian Education Union. It was organized by *Left Unity*, a coalition of progressive organizations and individuals in South Australia. The Adelaide SAWA group participated with an information and sales table. Although the focus of the night was on the question of foreign troops, we had an overwhelming response to our presence and received some generous donations.

On the following day SAWA Adelaide and the University of South Australia jointly organized an event in the Bob Hawke Prime

Ministerial Centre. The meeting raised over \$1000. Malaia's speech can be accessed at www.sawa-australia.org/media.html.

Because Adelaide was the first stop in Malalai's tour, she had a busy two days answering to interview requests from media in various cities around the country. Her interview with *The Wire*, a daily current affairs program broadcast on community radio stations around Australia, can also be accessed at www.sawa-australia.org/media.html.

Besides her interview activity Malalai met with members of the Afghan Youth Forum, who presented her with a valuable book. On her last day she was invited by Afghan friends and enjoyed a traditional sumptuous Afghan banquet.

Matthias Tomczak

SAWA (SA) Adelaide goes South!

SAWA (SA) was recently given the opportunity to speak to a unique group of South Australians. On 13 September Barbara James (secretary) and Kath Jones (committee member) were invited to join a group of 54 avid book lovers; *The Books and Words Group* at Lilla's Café in Yankalilla on the Eyre peninsula.

The book being discussed was *The Kite Runner*, the moving, thought-provoking and at times shocking novel by Khaled Hosseini. The group was seeking some background to the book but also some assurance that Australians were actively assisting the country in a positive way. Barbara gave a brief account of the situation of women in Afghanistan today and what SAWA (SA) is doing to improve this while Kath spoke of her experiences with Afghan refugees in Murray Bridge.

We were treated to a delicious Afghan inspired dinner, wonderful hospitality and above all, the genuine interest shown by the group. We look forward to further involvement with the Fleurieu and our thanks go to SAWA (SA) member Janice High for the invitation. Thanks also to those who donated and purchased handcrafts on the night.

Barbara James

SAWA-Australia (SA) / WILPF (SA)

Quiz Night

FRIDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2011
6:30pm – 10pm @ BOX FACTORY
59 Regent St South • Adelaide
(Between Halifax & Carrington St, just off Hurtle Square)

\$15 Entry

BYO Food & Drinks	Entertaining Group Activities
Tea/Coffee Available	WIN PRIZES
SAWA Trading Table - Afghan Handcraft	RAFFLE

SA Licence No CCP169



Convener: Dawn Atkinson **Assistant Convener:** Shirley Allen

Treasurer: Carolyn Allen

Galbally, Margaret Hetherton, June Lunsmann, Herma Sieper, Helen Toner.

Malalai Joya Speaking Tour

Along with SAWA supporters throughout Australia, and together with the Coalition of Peace Groups, SAWA – NSW had a very hectic few weeks in July and August leading up to Malalai Joya's visit to Australia. SAWA – NSW organised three exciting events for the time Malalai was to be in Sydney, but unfortunately most of her Sydney meetings were cancelled at short notice because of health problems. Malalai had hoped to be able to fulfil all her commitments, but when she arrived in Sydney, doctors decided medical attention and some rest were imperative and although we were all disappointed, her health was the most important consideration.

It was especially disappointing for the staff and students of Holroyd High School who were hosting a morning for Malalai Joya to meet with the large number of Afghan students, community representatives and senior students from a number of state and private schools.

Malalai Joya and SAWA – NSW also offer apologies and thanks for their understanding to the approximately 100 people who had registered for a talk at the Annandale Community Centre which was cancelled with only about one hour's notice. This meant that many could not be contacted in time to stop them arriving at the centre to find it in darkness and a notice on the door announcing 'cancellation due to illness'.

On the eve of her departure from Sydney, Malalai met informally with some of the SAWA – NSW Interim Committee. She again expressed her sincere regret that she had been unable to carry out the SAWA – NSW program but was grateful for the support she received while in Australia.

Malalai confirmed as true what we had heard about the closure of schools in regional Afghanistan. Around 650 have been closed because of fears for the safety of students and teachers.

She also talked about a project of special interest to her, Hamoon Clinic in her home state of Farah, which is managed by OPAWC (Organisation for the Promotion of Afghan Women's Capabilities). It is very poorly resourced with only one doctor employed at present. Fortunately support for this clinic has been secured by SAWA – SA.

Special thanks go to the Melbourne Writers' Festival and tour organisers from the Coalition of Peace Groups as well as Leichhardt Council and community and media representatives who had offered so much support.

Hewad High School

SAWA – NSW has recently sent the first quarterly payment of US\$7,200. Some subsequent payments may be a little less, depending on how much the Friends of RAWA, Japan, are able to raise this year. As co-sponsors of the school, this group sent approximately US\$7,000 last year despite the difficulties arising from the trauma of the tsunami.

A very pleasing development for SAWA – NSW is the increasing number of direct donations. This year approximately half our income has come from this source with donations ranging from \$10 up to \$1000 from individuals and companies who have simply heard of our work and wish to do something to help. As our fundraising increases SAWA – NSW would like to provide more teaching resources to enhance both staff and student development at Hewad High School.

Of special note is that since the last SAWAN Friends of RAWA in Japan have been in contact. They have now managed to raise their annual donation to Hewad High School despite the devastating tsunami and its aftermath.

SAWA Dinner 18 May

Despite competition from the Sydney Writers' Festival and winter weather, this most enjoyable dinner at Finola's Restaurant at the Balmain Bowling Club was a great success. Judge Helen Murrell was our guest speaker. Her talk included the history of struggle for basic human rights by women in Afghanistan.

Judge Murrell is one of *Women for Influence*, a group of women standing firmly with the Action Aid project for Female Paralegal Training Program in Afghanistan. (Please note the invitation to a fund raising dinner for this important project.)

The ongoing support of individuals and small businesses in the Balmain-Rozelle area has been essential to the success of this type of fundraiser. Many who were not able to attend the dinner sent donations instead.

We are sure you will agree that it is the effort of many that makes our achievements possible and our achievements become the achievements of Afghan women and children.

Margaret Hetherton and Dawn Atkinson

New website for SAWA NSW

In late August, in time for Malalai Joya's visit, a new website www.sawansw.org.au came on line, to complement the long-established SAWA website developed in South Australia, which will now become the SAWA-Australia (SA) website.

The NSW website is aimed at meeting the needs of students and busy people while carrying news relating to the Afghan struggle for basic human rights.

Many of the articles will be written by Afghan women and though still in its early stages of development, we hope you find the site informative.

Notice of Annual General Meeting SAWA-Australia (NSW) Inc.

Balmain Town Hall Meeting Room, 370 Darling St., Balmain, Thursday 10th November 2011, 6 for 6.30h, meeting to close by 7.15p.m.

As the AGM will be followed by informal discussions and a light supper, for catering purposes please RSVP m: 0425 718 996

For a copy of the Financial Statement email: info@sawansw.org.au

Sixth Annual SAWA Lunch

Thursday 17th November 2011 at 12:00 for 12:30

Finola's at Balmain Bowling Club 156 Darling St., Balmain

3 delicious courses \$55 or \$40 concession

Drinks available at the bar. Bring friends to make up a table of 4 or 6

RSVP: before Thursday 10th November 2011 to Dawn 9810 9093

or info@sawansw.org.au

Please book early to avoid disappointment as numbers are strictly limited.

SAWA bags and other items will be on sale at the SA Licence No CCP1699