



From the Editor

As the occupying forces announce plans and dates for their withdrawal from the country, the old warlords bide their time. Already they raise their voices against women's rights again, this time from their seats in parliament. Karzai and his western supporters talk about the Taliban threat but do nothing against the threats coming from the parliamentarians. Having put his signature under the infamous Shia family law that allows a husband to withhold food from his wife if she refuses to have sex, and legislation to control women's shelters that prescribes monthly medical checks "to monitor sexual activity", Karzai expressed support two months ago for a request from parliament to "suspend" a political party. Only widespread denunciation by human rights organizations and national and international bodies forced him to reconsider his position.

SAWA-Australia works on the basis that only a democracy free of religious pre-conditions can guarantee equal rights for women. Its position is non-political and open to cooperation with all who support women's rights. But when a political organization that has written women's rights on its banner is threatened we have to raise our voices.

The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said: "When the Nazis came for the communists, I remained silent; I was not a communist. When they locked up the social democrats, I remained silent, I was not a social democrat. When they came for the trade unionists, I did not protest, as I wasn't a trade unionist. When they came for me, there was no one left to protest." He was executed on 9 April 1945. We should not ignore the attacks on a political party just because we are a non-political charitable organization.

Matthias Tomczak

Fundamentalists try to ban the Solidarity Party

Before 2010 more than 100 political parties existed in Afghanistan. In 2009 a new party law required parties to have at least 10,000 members to qualify for registration. This reduced the number of parties to around 35. Most are instruments of ethnic leaders and warlords who use them to get access to power and aid money. When the time came to register candidates for the parliamentary elections of 2010, only five parties managed to register them under their party names, all others had to field their candidates as independents. The Solidarity (Hambastagi) Party was one of the five. It gained two seats in the elections.

The program of the Solidarity Party states as the first of its objectives "to have an independent, free, democratic and indivisible Afghanistan in which all the Afghan people will live without any discrimination whatsoever as to ethnicity, gender, tribal, religious, linguistic or regional affiliation in a spirit of solidarity and sense of security" and includes "to uphold women's rights on the basis of the equality of rights for men and women."

In 2008 the Solidarity Party organized nationwide protests against the death sentence for journalist Perwaz Kambakhsh, who had distributed an article that discussed women's rights under Islam. Kambakhsh was pardoned in 2009 and has left the country.

Three months ago supporters of the Solidarity Party demonstrated in Kabul, calling for the prosecution of warlords involved in past atrocities. Many of those accused are currently in the government,

parliament or other official positions. The next day the upper house of parliament asked the Ministry of Justice to suspend the party and prosecute its leaders. The Solidarity Party and the Minister of Justice were ordered to appear before the legislative, judicial and justice panels of the lower house for questioning.

Following a meeting with the parliamentary Complaints Committee the lower house wrote to the Ministry for Parliamentary Affairs to inform the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior and the National Security Directorate that the Solidarity Party's activities should be suspended.

At that stage NGOs and some international media took up the story, and supporters around the world sent emails to Karzai and relevant ministries protesting against the attempt to silence a democratic voice. Karzai was forced to retreat; his spokesperson Aimal Faizi explained that no action has been taken against the party so far.

For information on the Solidarity Party (Hambastagi) visit
<http://www.hambastagi.org/new/english-section.html>



International Women's Day function of the Solidarity Party 2012

A university scholarship for Shazia

As we reported in the last SAWAN, SAWA (SA) member Jane Hamilton decided to sponsor a girl from one of the orphanages of AFCECO, the Afghan Child Education and Care Organization. She sponsors Shazia, now a young woman in her first year of university studies. Last month we received a brief biography from Shazia, which we include here to introduce her to our supporters.



"My name is Shazia. I am 21 years old and live in New Hope, an orphanage in Afghanistan run by AFCECO.

I am studying law at a private university in Kabul and work part time at the AFCECO office in Kabul. I am in charge of communication between children at the New Hope orphanage and their sponsors.

Here is a little bit about my personal life. My father

disappeared when I was a baby and never returned. He was kidnapped by Hezb-e Islami, an Islamic fundamentalist party that

was involved in atrocities during the Civil War in Afghanistan of 1992 – 1996; its leader is wanted by the Karzai government. My mother lived all her life in the hope that my father may return one day. She adopted a son whom I dearly love as my younger brother. My mom works as a cook in one of AFCECO's orphanages in Jalalabad and my brother Sohail lives with her. My mother supported me through my life to receive my education and she is very glad that I am attending university now.

I would like to thank Jane from the bottom of my heart for her generosity for providing me with financial support."

It is worth remembering that half the population of Afghanistan is less than 18 years old. AFCECO's orphanages have now reached the stage where the first girls come out of high school and start their studies at universities. They will be the future of Afghanistan, and all need financial support. Sponsoring a student requires \$120 per month. If you would like to become a sponsor of one of the university students please drop a line to SAWA (SA) at the address on page 3 or send an email to sponsor@sawa-australia.org.



AFCECO director Andeisha Farid with the year 12 students of 2011

Toowoomba supports SAWA

A very special Yoga class happened in Toowoomba recently. SAWA supporters sent out an invitation to a holiday class to support the women of Afghanistan. The funds raised were divided between SAWA (NSW), who uses it for Hewad High School, and SAWA (SA), who allocated the \$120 received to the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul. Heartfelt thanks from SAWA (NSW) and SAWA (SA) go to all who attended the yoga class and supported the cause.

News from Hewad High School

Currently there are more than 200 students studying in a two-shift schedule. The first storey is the girl's section and the second is for the boys. The seniors (seventh to twelfth grade) are in the morning shift and juniors in the afternoon one. The main difficulty for the school now are the many power blackouts, which makes studying very difficult in the dark classrooms on the first floor. This is an even bigger problem in the summer heat. The school also still lacks a good laboratory and library which would benefit students a lot.



Haseema is a 10-year-old girl and studies in class two. She is the oldest of six children and being a girl, she helps her mother with

cooking and cleaning. Her father sells fruits on a cart on the markets and her mother is a housewife. Due to her father's meagre income, she didn't have uniform, shoes or bag when she came to Hewad School and the teachers got her these items. She got the first position in her class and received stationery and books as gifts which she excitedly showed us. She loves playing with dolls. Her favourite subject is Dari and she wants to become a teacher in the future.

Planet Wheeler supports Hamoon Clinic again

Last year Planet Wheeler supported OPAWC's Hamoon Clinic with \$30,000. We are pleased to report that this support continues for another 12 months; Planet Wheeler gave another \$31,000. We thank Planet Wheeler for this lifesaving support and will do our best to strengthen the capabilities of the clinic.

A patient's story: I am a woman of 6 children; I lost my husband in November 2011 in NATO air strikes. I lost my house, property, everything I had in my life. Now I am living in a bad condition. I cannot work because I have been injured on one hand during the bombing, and I am illiterate. Most of the time I am thinking what should I do with these children. Our neighbors give us some food sometimes but not always. I used to work, washing and cleaning in houses near me, though it is hard for me to do so. But I force myself and want my children not to die because of hunger. My oldest son is 14 years old, he used to sell plastic or something like that. Because of my bad situation my children cannot go to school; three children go begging. I am passing through a bad period in my life. Sometimes I fear that my children may take to drugs.



Although I am living far away I bring my children to Hamoon Clinic for treatment. Hamoon Clinic supports poor and forlorn women like me. Most of the time when I come to Hamoon the doctors behave well with us, they treat us in a good way and give us medicine. I am thankful to OPAWC for establishing this health center for the poor. I want to say please if you can establish other fields of treatment in the clinic; for example, I have pain in my back, my bones have problems, and other people like me have bones broken or injuries from bombing, but Hamoon Clinic does not have facilities for this. I hope that OPAWC will continue its good work. We trust OPAWC and its Clinic, thank you so much.

Shabnam Saleh

State Library of Queensland buys art books

In 2009 Melbourne artist Gali Weiss got together a group of artists, who produced some 50 concertina-type books of lino prints, photographs, etchings and drawings. The books were taken to OPAWC's Vocational Training Centre in Kabul, where women of its literacy classes wrote their personal stories and messages in them. Back in Australia the books were exhibited at a conference and discussed in an art magazine. As a result the State Library of Queensland decided to purchase the books as an outstanding example of dialogue between women of two continents.

The \$9,720 paid for the books have already been sent to the Vocational Training Centre. We also thank the Library for allowing SAWA (SA) to use reproductions of the artwork for a documentation of the project in a high quality book, already in preparation and available later this year. In the meantime all artwork and the Afghan stories can be visited at www.sawa-australia.org/art/.



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 Melbourne, 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.

Bowling for Afghanistan in Perth



While SAWA facilitator Elio Novello calculates the results, Zonta team member Gitta Bechtloff comments on the professionalism of Carol Anderson's team: "We might have won if we'd had better bowls."

Photo: Dawn Newman, editor of Zonta Club of Perth Northern Suburbs Newsletter.

thither. The winning team was Jo Clarke's, Jo saying she had never won a sporting trophy before in her life.

The players returned to the clubhouse for afternoon tea, a lavish spread (that nevertheless disappeared, apart from a handful of dried apricots). SAWA Facilitator Azmah took the cake (so to speak) for her three trays of sweets, in particular her Portuguese tarts earning praise from all. The first prize raffle winner was Dawn Newman of Zonta, a fitting reward for someone who had marshalled three teams of Zonta women to compete in the tournament.

Thanks to our sponsors: in particular the East Fremantle Bowling Club who allowed us to use their excellent venue and facilities free of charge, Clancy Travers of Fremantle PA Hire, Luna Palace Cinemas and Tammy's Bakery. Thanks to the SAWA facilitators: Sarah (co-secretary, and whose brainchild the bowling event was), Elio, Pauline, Azmah and Priscilla (who thought of the name).

The event raised over \$700, including \$137 of donations from people who were unable to join us on the day. Most of those who came were enthusiastic about competing for the SAWA Cup again in 2013.

Chilla Bulbeck (co-secretary)

Sally Sara "My time in Afghanistan"

Highly respected, multi-award winning ABC journalist Sally Sara, recently returned to Australia from her position as Afghan correspondent based in Kabul. Whilst there, Sally reported on both sides of the conflict thus gaining rare insights into the complexities of the country and its people. Sally graciously agreed to share some of her experiences in Afghanistan and, not surprisingly, the event on April 26 2012 was a sellout!

Her talk was lively, funny, shocking but above all honest and compassionate. A robust, informed question time followed as did delicious canapés and wine as well as coffee, tea and home-baked cakes.

Thanks must go to Sally Sara AM who so willingly gave of her time and happily engaged with members of the audience who flocked to speak with her afterwards.

SAWA (SA) would also like to thank St. Ignatius Parish for the use of their hall free-of-charge, Carol Verlato of *Plateful* for the canapés, Parade Cellars for help with the wine, and Scott Bain for the eye-catching posters. Not only were we informed and entertained but SAWA (SA) was able to send \$4,300 to help Afghan widows gain an education at the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul, thus improving their chances of providing for themselves and their children.

Finally a big thank-you to everyone who came along on the night; Sally herself remarked on the warm, community feel of the evening.

Barbara James

Nobody's Fault But Mine



An amazing group of singers were able to entertain a large audience for an hour with their clear and concise vocal work. Their tuning, dynamics and articulation were impeccable, and due to their range of repertoire, their leader Rosalie Day managed

to exploit the variety of vocal timbres more than adequately. The group, Nobody's Fault But Mine, obviously has a large following, who came to the concert to support SAWA (SA). The concert was enhanced by lighting, carpets and cushions and quite a few children who were exposed to a short talk about SAWA and their work. Having a talk about SAWA to children at a concert was a first for us and they were very attentive. The singers also had a very appreciative audience. All in all a delightful afternoon. We thank Rosalie and the singers to help SAWA (SA) with raising over \$1,600. Ruth Redfern

Farewell SAWA (SA) secretary Barbara James

This year's Annual General Meeting will bring a major change for SAWA (SA). Our secretary is planning to move to Sydney later this year, which means that she can no longer serve us in that position.

Barbara has been secretary of SAWA from 2007 until 2010 and of SAWA (SA) from 2010 to today. She has been a marvellous ambassador for the association, opening doors to donor organizations, finding sponsors for fundraising events, bringing the plight of Afghan women into schools, and acting on behalf of SAWA (SA) on many occasions. Following in her footsteps will be a big challenge.

Barbara steered SAWA through sometimes difficult times with clear vision. Her advice was always valuable, and what she promised was as good as done. Barbara will remain a member of SAWA (SA), so we can still count on her support. We wish her all the best with her plans for the future and are happy in the knowledge that this will not be the last time to be in contact with her.



Barbara with Sally Sara at the April fundraising event



Convenor: Dawn Atkinson **Assistant Convenor:** Shirley Allen **Secretary:** Margaret Hetherton

Treasurer: Carolyn Allen

Committee: Maryellen Galbally, June Lunsmann, Susan Martin, Helen Toner. **Public Officer:** Deanna Fekete

“Once again thank you for those who made our future.”

Maliha Miazad, an ex-student of Naseema Shahid High School, formerly located in Khewa Refugee Camp, was the guest speaker at the recent SAWA fundraising dinner for 60 people at Bamiyan Afghan Restaurant in Five Dock.

After losing her father and having her family home bombed, 13 year old Maliha, arrived with her mother and other family members, at the 4,000 strong camp in 1993. Maliha told us that the best thing about the camp was the educational facilities. Many will remember that SAWA was responsible for the funding of her school through RAWA in 2005-2007. RAWA established this camp and the school in 1991 and it was our first major project. Maliha now holds a Bachelor of Computer Science and has worked for Okendon International, Save the Children, and the Embassy of Finland, Kabul as a Programme Coordinator identifying and supporting many different projects for women and children throughout Afghanistan.

Maliha believes that “the best which can help a better tomorrow and for Afghanistan to become a peaceful country, is education”. She thanked all who make it possible for her, and people like her, to complete an education in such difficult circumstances.

Her final statement “Once again thank you for those who made our future” applies to the ongoing generosity of all who support Hewad School for Afghan Refugee Children. Whether you make direct donations to SAWA-NSW, arrange at home events, or support our events you are helping to make a future for an Afghan refugee child.



Maliha Miazad, guest speaker at the Afghan dinner with husband Saheeb.

Education for Girls in Afghanistan

Since the end of the Taliban regime in 2001 major progress has been made by Afghans themselves. Now about 8 million of the 12.3 million Afghan children attend school, compared to 1 million in 2001.

Dr Attaullah Wahidyar, senior advisor to the Minister of Education in Kabul, and a PhD student at Sydney University, spoke on Afghan achievements and challenges in education, especially for girls, at a UTS seminar 19 April. (Details at www.sawansw.org.au)

Among the major achievements since 2001 are:

- A unified national curriculum so that the same knowledge and skills are taught to all children regardless of gender or ethnic background.
 - Greater local community involvement with education with widespread introduction of local school management committees to oversee each school.
 - Improved security and access for children, even in rural areas where the Taliban are strong. The Afghan Education Department has negotiated with Taliban Leaders to regard schools as a “no go zone” in return for being able to check that the proposed curriculum does not offend Islam. No curriculum has since been opposed on religious grounds.
- Clearly too there is still much to do.**
- Quality of education needs to improve especially by improving the skills of teachers who have no education beyond high school themselves (30%).
 - More girls need to finish high school. It is a cultural norm that if older girls (Grade 9 onwards) have a male teacher, it may raise suspicion of improper contact. Such suspicion damages marriage prospects, so girls leave early. A budget of US\$25million for female teacher training and major financial incentives to encourage women to teach in rural schools are expected to improve this. Currently 225 districts have no female teachers.
 - As many as 50% of schools also lack usable buildings.

Coming Events

Thursday 9th August 6.30 for 7.00pm Premier of The Sapphires Palace Cinema Norton St. Bubbles beforehand. Essential to book at 9692 8248 or bookings@sawansw.org.au

Tuesday 16th October AGM, 7 for 7.20pm Balmain Town Hall Meeting Room with drinks and nibbles.

Thursday 22nd November 12noon 7th Annual SAWA Lunch at Finola's Restaurant, Balmain Bowling Club.

Next year

February 8-10, 2013 Art Exhibition at Balmain Watch House - donate a painting and come and buy a painting, see details in next SAWAN

March 2013 Birthing Kit Assembly Day near International Women's Day Leichhardt Rowing Club venue. (details in next SAWAN)

STOP PRESS

The 1,000 Birthing Kits you helped fund and/or pack in March this year as a SAWA-NSW IWD event arrived at their final destination on Tuesday 10th July.
Well done everyone.