



### **From the Editor**

*People in the USA and Europe are getting weary of the war in Afghanistan. Governments react by emphasizing that the troops will leave in 2014; French troops are leaving already. But other "closing down" activities have also begun: Schools and hospitals built by British troops are being shut again because Afghanistan's government does not have the means to keep them open. (Where did the billions of aid dollars go, you may ask. Look around Dubai, and you have a fair chance to find them in bank accounts of Afghan businessmen and politicians.) Decades of military activity has not improved the lives of Afghanistan's women very much, and what has been gained is in danger of being lost again. SAWA's work is more important than ever. The women and girls in the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul and Hewad High School in Rawalpindi depend on your continuing support; don't let them down.*

*Matthias Tomczak*

### **Dozens of schools and clinics to be closed**

Schools and health centres built by the British in Afghanistan as part of the military's counter-insurgency strategy are being forced to close down because President Karzai's government cannot afford to pay for them.

Senior British officials in Helmand are working with Afghan ministers to identify the schools and clinics that are deemed "critical" and should remain open, while most of the rest could be phased out between now and the end of 2014.

The need to reduce the number of schools and clinics will be a bitter blow to the Afghans who have come to rely on them, and for the British civilians and soldiers who helped to build and restore them.

The UK is pushing for services in important population centres, such as the capital Lashkar Gah and nearby city of Gereshk, to be kept open. Those in areas further away from the central Helmand river valley – where security is more precarious – are more vulnerable to closure.

Laing, who is the most senior Nato civilian in the province, told the Guardian: "Helmand is one of the biggest provinces, yet people are still willing to travel to receive better quality services. I think the idea that you need in every district centre, even the really remote ones, a school, a clinic, a justice centre ... it's not all about quantity, it's much more about quality."

*The Guardian 27 September 2012*

### **A patient's story from Hamoon Clinic**

My story is a sad one. When I was a small girl I lost my mother, so I was supposed to be in charge of all the responsibilities in the house and to look after my younger brother and sisters. My father and my brother didn't let me go to school, so I remained illiterate, was married and had children. Soon my sorrows grew more and more. We were living in Iran as immigrants, there my husband had a job, not a very much good one, but it was okay. In Iran I was worried about my husband, because young boys who come to work in Iran take to drugs, and the Iranian people didn't treat Afghans well.

Because of these problems, which always disturbed us, we decided to come to Afghanistan. As we arrived in our country I was even

more sad because there was no job for my husband, and my children could not go to school because of the unsafe situation. Soon my husband started to use drugs; I was fighting with him most of the time, but it was useless. Finally I lost my husband because of unemployment; now he is like a mad person who needs the support of others, and I remain alone with my three kids.



For medical issues I come to Hamoon Health Center, the only reliable clinic in our society. They give us medicine without fee; other private clinics take 200 Afghanis as fee, and the medicine they give to patients is not of good quality and also too expensive. Every time I come to Hamoon, I myself or my children, the medicine I receive is very effective for us. I want to express my thanks to the leadership of OPAWC and Hamoon's staff for their good job, for helping women like me. Thanks.

### **Western support for occupying forces declines**

Public support for the war in Afghanistan is collapsing in western and Nato member countries, with 53% of Europeans and 44% of Americans favouring the immediate withdrawal of all troops, an international survey shows. Large majorities – 75% of European respondents and 68% of Americans – support either withdrawal or an immediate troop reduction.

In each of the top European Nato members supplying troops in Afghanistan, the majority of respondents preferred complete withdrawal: Germany (51%), the UK (52%), Italy (55%), France (61%), and Poland (62%).

The number of Americans who preferred increasing troop levels in Afghanistan shrank from 30% in 2009 to 5% this year, and the proportion wanting immediate withdrawal rose nine points in a year, from 35% in 2011 to 44% in June 2012.

The survey reveals that public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic is split on the overall wisdom of military intervention. Fewer than 50% of people in most European countries believed the Iraq and Afghanistan interventions were worthwhile. Even last year's Libya Nato intervention, which was judged successful at the time, received very mixed support.

The German Marshall Fund of the United States transatlantic trends survey interviewed people in the US, Russia and Turkey and 12 European countries in June this year.

*The Guardian 12 September 2012*

## Hewad High School report for 2011/12

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Hewad High School's 2011-2012 sessions started on 20 September. Most schools for Afghans have been closed in the area. Hewad was officially merged with Marifat High School but students from a number of other schools also joined Hewad as it is the only school in the area. The number of schools is still dropping, and for most students from very poor families Hewad is the only hope for a good education. Hewad not only provides them with schooling, it tries to help them financially in many ways. Most students who work part-time are given free stationary to ease the burden for their families. Children as young as seventh and eighth grade work jobs like selling French fries or working as street vendors.

The school's strength was increased after two schools were merged into one. There were 160 students after the end of admissions. The number of teachers was also increased by three to accommodate two shifts and separation of males and females. The school is a two-storey building now, to separate the students (the first is the girl's section, the second is for the boys). The seniors (seventh to twelfth grade) are in the morning shift and juniors in the afternoon one.

The school held a function to mark the International Women's Day on 8 March. It was held in a small hall near Islamabad. Around 200 people attended, mostly families of students and teachers. The students sang songs, read poems, gave speeches and staged a drama depicting the dark history of Afghanistan from 1992 to today. The teachers were given gifts from RAWA for their hard work. The function ended with girls and boys performing the Afghan national dance *Attan* and guests were served refreshments.



*A teacher receives a reward for her hard work and dedication to the school students*

On 28 April five Japanese supporters from Friends of RAWA Japan visited the school. They spent several hours talking with students and taking photos. They also donated two water filters to the school which was a very helpful contribution. Pakistan's load-shedding [programmed power blackouts between suburbs] is a serious problem especially in the summer heat. The water filter is a big help for providing clean cool water for the students.

The final exams started in mid-May and lasted for about twenty days. All classes took the exams though the juniors finished a week early. The exams and school session ended on 2 June. The teachers continued to work until result day.

An inter-class chemistry quiz was held for the senior classes (10th through 12th grade) between girls and boys shortly before the exams to prepare them better. The students took part enthusiastically, and the winner classes were awarded trophies.

On 8 June the annual prize distribution ceremony was held. All students were given their report cards, while those who had obtained first, second and third places were given trophies and gifts. Hewad High School proudly graduated another batch of 12th grade students. The next day, a small farewell party was held for the 12th

graders by the tenth and eleventh graders and the staff. There was music and dancing and the teachers arranged for eatables as well.



*The prize distribution ceremony*

## The ability to read opens the world for you

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SAWA is often regarded as a charity. It is true that SAWA helps the poor and supports the disadvantaged, but the reasons for that go well beyond compassion with the plight of the suppressed. RAWA and OPAWC provide more than instructions for reading and writing, they offer a complete education in history and women's rights. Every woman who went through OPAWC's literacy class understands what is required to change the world, and that is why SAWA supports RAWA and OPAWC: to contribute to the creation of a new democratic Afghanistan free from fundamentalist control.

Our web page <http://sawa-australia.org/vocationalcenter/> has several testimonials from women who went on to become activists for a better Afghanistan. Here is an extract from one of them. It encourages us to do even more to help change the face of Afghanistan.

*I joined the OPAWC courses in 2009. In the past I was unable to read and write, but after I came to the OPAWC course I know how to read and write. The teachers helped me in any field they could. After one year of continuous study I learned reading, writing, knew about human rights, about Islam and our culture.*

*I participated in the election in 2010; I wanted to be a senator, because I learnt that all the senators are ignorant and just can read and write. I consider myself educated and a better woman than those cruel and bloody members who had money and have high posts in the government. For this reason I got up my courage and went to write my name in the list of candidate members for the campaign. But luck did not support me, they asked for my High School documents which I had not.*

*Since that time I decided to struggle and learn as much as I can. I tried my best to get a kind of document of 12th grade but I failed to get one because I am poor and have no money to pay for the bribery that works in those places. But I never lose hope; I will have a high post in future I am sure. I work a lot with my children at home, and I established a literacy course at my house for the children under 7 years. I work with them their school books. My neighbors are happy to have me near their houses and they promised to vote for me when I am a candidate next time.*

*Now I can help my children and I am very happy from this course. I learnt that a woman has a power like men, even more than men; women are human beings, not just the property of men, they have their own life, right and dignity, all these have been taken from them. But I am not Anis Gul of three years ago, I have changed, I know the ways how life progresses. I want to struggle for my right. I stand shoulder to shoulder with my sisters in OPAWC who lighten our ways for walking, who give us the chance to find out about ourselves as human beings. Thank you so much OPAWC and other supporters.*

*Anis Gul*



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**Committee:** Libby Drew, Kath Jones, Ruth Redfern, Aziza Zafari  
**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.

## The new committee

As reported in the last SAWAN, our secretary Barbara James is moving to Sydney, so we had to elect a new secretary and fill one committee position. Christine Gamble, who has been on the committee for a while, was elected secretary (see SAWAN 34, April 2012, for a short bio of Christine) and Aziza Zafari was elected to join the committee. Aziza came to Australia from Kabul. She studies medical engineering at Flinders University and is the vice president of the Afghan Flinders Union. She also works for *Save the Children*. In 2011 she assisted SAWA (SA) with the translation of the text for the art books *Unfolding Projects*. Aziza is very active in the Afghan community, organizing cultural events and now promoting SAWA's work. Without doubt Aziza's presence on the committee will lead to expanded collaboration with Adelaide's Afghan community.

## GlobalQuest continues its support

The establishment of the computer course opened a new phase in the history of the Vocational Training Centre. When the course was announced in October 2011 OPAWC received requests for participation from more than 300 women and girls from the Centre and outside. OPAWC decided to give priority to women in the literacy and hand-crafts courses of the Centre who had performed well in their classes. Two computer classes for 40 students were arranged in two shifts.

While women from poor families see computers in shops and offices they do not know anything about computer technology. At the beginning of the course it was very surprising for them to see how a computer could save their text and reproduce it at will. But with the passage of time their interest grew more and more; they began to understand what a computer is and how it is working, and as they found out the use of it they insisted to continue with the course. As a result the course brought a refreshing new phase for the women and opened their mind to look for the sky.



*The class in session in September 2012*

After 10 months the women are able to work independently on computer and practice their lessons. They can use word processing and spreadsheet software, write down and calculate all their expenses in a form, write text in a word file and design and colour their documents.

The cost of the computers and first year of the course has been supported by GlobalQuest, a charity initiated and managed voluntarily by Coffey staff and supported by Coffey International by providing \$2 for every \$1 raised by staff. We are grateful to GlobalQuest that they decided to renew their support for a second year, allowing another 40 women to gain valuable skills to support their families.

## Thank you, supporters in north and south!



*Manhattan Project women are recognized by showing the peace sign*

Old friends and new supporters organized fundraising activities during the last three months. On 20 July 17 women launched the **Manhattan Project** in Coffs Harbour and raised \$1070 for OPAWC. The project, named to allude to the project team that built the first nuclear bomb, raises money for women and children affected by war, supporting several on-the-ground charities in hot spots around the globe.



On 7 September the **Green Oak Players** entertained again a large audience in Adelaide, expertly accompanied by committee member Ruth Redfern on drums, castanets, washboard and other instruments. A string of unfortunate incidents had prevented them to perform for us in 2011, but now they were back in old form. The concert raised \$1,491,

surpassing the result of 2010 by more than \$400.

**Toorak College** in Mt. Eliza south of Melbourne sent again a donation raised through its uniform-free day, and the Sunshine Coast Branch of the **Graduate Women Queensland** repeated their donation of last year. Other substantial donations came from supporters who prefer to remain anonymous. We send our heartfelt thanks to all.

## Keep the Vocational Training Centre alive!

While the DAK foundation guarantees the continuation of the English classes and GlobalQuest continues funding the computer classes, to keep the Vocational Training Centre operational and the basic literacy classes alive SAWA (SA) relies on donations from supporters. As the graph on the right shows, our donation income has fallen behind; by the beginning of November we should have at least \$35,000 in our account.

Currently 31 supporters have arranged regular donations for SAWA (SA). We appreciate every occasional donation however small; but the continued operation of the Vocational Training Centre can only be guaranteed if more supporters decide to send regular monthly or quarterly donations. This is easy to arrange online at [www.givenow.com.au/sawa](http://www.givenow.com.au/sawa). Please consider becoming a regular donor!





**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

### Convenor's Report to the 2012 AGM – 16<sup>th</sup> October

The 2011-2012 year was spent continuing to advance the objectives of SAWA-AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc. The success we have had in advancing these objectives is evident in the range of events members and supporters have been involved in over the last 12 months. Representatives of SAWA-NSW accepted invitations from:

- UN Women to their IWD Breakfast where the speaker was Sally Sara, ABC journalist who spoke of her posting in Afghanistan. Her message emphasised Afghan women's struggle for education and maternal health.
- Leichhardt Council to provide an information table at their IWD event. We were included in LMC Pics in the Park community event. Unfortunately our night was rained out, but thank the organisers for recognition of SAWA-NSW.
- The Birthing Kit Foundation (Australia) and Zonta International district 24 to celebrate the Millionth Birthing Kit nationally, with lunch at Parliament House, Sydney

#### **Other activities in this last year include:**

- an information and bag table at the Q & A session with Malalai Joya, held at the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts, organised by the Stop The War Coalition.
- the Convenor of SAWA-NSW as guest speaker at Politics In The Pub, Hamilton Hotel Newcastle. The topic was Forgotten Faces - Who Remembers Civilians in War, a topic relevant to our objectives so the talk was very well received. .
- SAWA-NSW members attending a special seminar on Education in Afghanistan hosted by UTS Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre. The presenter was Dr Attaullah Wahidyar, Senior Advisor to the Minister of Education and Director, Publication & Communication in the Ministry of Education, Kabul. He is also studying at the University of Sydney undertaking a doctorate with an Australian Leadership Award Scholarship provided by AusAid. His thesis topic is Extending Girls' Education in Afghanistan. Further information is on the SAWA-NSW website.

#### **Over the past 12 months whilst continuing familiar annual events we have broadened our fundraising activities, including:**

- **Film Nights:** with the support of Palace Cinemas we have held two very successful film nights this year, 'A Separation' and 'The Sapphires'. Each night has been a 'sell-out'.
- A **Special Appeal:** The Christmas E-card in 2011 raised over \$3000 for Birthing Kit components. This year we will extend the idea of the e-card to include a generic printed card also aimed at fundraising for the Birthing Kit components for next year's assembly day on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

#### **Ongoing have been:**

**SAWA-NSW Eco Bags:** Having sold 1500 ecobags promoting [www.sawa-australia.org](http://www.sawa-australia.org), we have been encouraged to use the bags to promote [www.sawansw.org.au](http://www.sawansw.org.au). An order form is on the SAWA (NSW) website. This fundraiser was seeded by a small group of local supporters in 2009 and has so far raised approximately \$7,500.

**The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual SAWA Lunch** in November 2011 was again supported by the local community. Special thanks go to Finola Healey and staff at the Balmain Bowling Club, to Locks Hair Ben Gipton and staff and to Di and Yhanni at Tali Gallery.

**Afghan Banquet:** With the generous support of Haseeb Miazad a delicious and successful dinner was held at Bamiyan Restaurant. Guest speaker Maliha Miazad assured guests of the value of education to Afghan women. Maliha, along with friends and family received much of their education in schools run by RAWA while they were refugees in Pakistan.

**Birthing Kit Assembly Day** in March 2012 was most successful. Thanks to the Leichhardt Rowing Club for their support in giving the use of their premises, to Jan Wood for filming and featuring the event on Coffee Break, to the Inner West Courier for the publicity. 1,000 kits were sent to Afghanistan as a result.

**Home Fundraising Events:** We are grateful to those who have held gatherings of friends to promote SAWA and to raise money for our major projects.

The generosity of our supporters in these events has been most appreciated.

### **Hewad High School**

With Friends of RAWA Japan, we have provided a little over the budget for 2011-2012 to fund the school in Pakistan. I wish to thank all those who have made such generous donations through the year, many of whom are from outside of Sydney and from other states. A report from the school is on our website along with a detailed budget for the year 2012-2013 school year. Members will note that the budget has risen to US\$38,686.44.

### **Conclusion**

Special thanks go to Ro Bancroft of Bancroft Studio, to Claire Pickard of GO Media and to Yhanni Anthis for their skilled support and to all the individuals and businesses who have given donations. We recognise the involvement given by each and every member and supporter who are helping to make a difference in the lives of Afghan women and children. Very special thanks and recognition must also go to the outgoing committee who have given generously of their time, energy and skills over the past twelve months.

### **Congratulations to Nasima Rahmani**

Unifem's first Peace Scholar, on receiving the UTS Chancellor's Prize for Excellence, for her significant contribution to women's rights in Afghanistan. Nasima, having completed a Master of Laws at UTS returned to Kabul where she assisted the Action Aid program providing paralegal education for Afghan women and is now Director of the Women's Empowerment Centre at the Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education in Kabul.

#### **Dates for Your Diary: (details to follow)**

29<sup>th</sup> November, 12 noon for 12.30 p.m. 7<sup>th</sup> Annual SAWA lunch at Finola's Restaurant, Balmain Bowling Club, 156 Darling Street, will provide a Christmas lunch for \$50 (concessions \$40) - guest speaker Dr Nina Burrige.

8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> February 2013: Art Exhibition and Sale will be held at the Balmain Watch House, 179 Darling Street, Balmain.

4<sup>th</sup> March 2013: Birthing Kit Assembly Day at the Leichhardt Rowing Club, Glover Street, Leichhardt.

**PS** A special appeal has been sent out to members and supporters to provide Hewad School with an Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) unit. We are pleased to note that donations have already begun to come in for this very important additional support for the school.