2020/2021 Annual Report

SAWA- Australia (SA)
Convenor’s Report

SAWA - Australia (SA) 2020-2021

Throughout this financial year SAWA-Australia (SA)’s members and supporters have generously provided the funds to keep the Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in Kabul operating, despite the challenges of Covid-19 restrictions. In Adelaide, the SAWA (SA) Committee continued to meet regularly, both face-to-face and via Zoom when needed.

In May 2020, the Facemask Project was initiated by the Vocational Training Centre to provide this basic Covid-19 protection to vulnerable workers in Afghanistan. Eventually it was decided to divide the project into two parts: distribution of facemasks to roadside workers for free in different provinces, and the production of facemasks for sale to international institutions and NGOs in Afghanistan. Before the project closed, SAWA (SA) and SAWA (NSW) had sent contributions totalling $15,000, over $6,700 of which was raised through a GoFundMe campaign.

The Committee’s July meeting featured a video call with VTC Director, Mursal Rahimi in Kabul, enabling the Committee to ask direct questions and learn more of the practical side of running the Centre. One outcome of this conversation was a request for English and Computer classes to be made available at the Centre. Younger students felt that having these skills would improve their employment prospects. An additional $38,730 was provided for these classes to run to December 2020.

It was particularly valuable that Carol Shamsabadi, our Treasurer (who speaks Persian/Dari), kept in close email and phone contact with Mursal throughout the year. At one stage Carol spoke via WhatsApp to the students in an English class. “All the students introduced themselves and some, who were a little more confident, spoke about their families, why they are studying English and what they would like to do in the future. They are all keen to learn and support their families. Sama, the teacher, studied in Pakistan and is an architect. Her English is very good. When I was saying goodbye, one of the students asked about the continuation of the classes. They all want to keep studying English as they see it as offering hope for work in the future.”

In September 2020, a Strategic Plan was developed against which the SAWA Committee will measure future progress and achievements. Key goals for the next five years are to:

- Raise funds to support the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul.
- Advocate for, and promote the human rights of, the women of Afghanistan
- Communicate with everyone involved with SAWA-Australia (SA) Inc.
- Ensure the sound governance and administration of our organisation

Our thanks to Margaret Gadd and Ruth Russell for their good work.

Carol talking to the students in the English class (look closely at the computer screen!)
We took delivery of a number of Gali Weiss’ beautiful *Making Marks* books and have had success selling them at SAWA events, libraries and through bookshops. Gali herself has donated the proceeds of sales via her website to SAWA. The colourful Ecosilk SAWA shopping bags have also been popular small sales items.

Unhappily a sudden Covid-19 lockdown in November caused the cancellation of our AGM planned for that month. The well-attended AGM finally took place on 19 January 2021 at Rumi Palace restaurant in Prospect. More than just a pleasant social occasion, the AGM approved a number of amendments which updated and corrected inaccuracies in the SAWA Constitution.

Members and supporters returned to Rumi Palace on 20 May 2020 for an enjoyable and successful fundraising dinner. The sold-out event raised $4,773. Sincere thanks to entertainers Trio Montagne and Tea Tree Gully Orchestra Ensemble, our generous sponsors who provided raffle and silent auction items, and those who supported by attending and participating on the night. Thanks also to our hosts Mansoureh and Mohammad and their capable Rumi Palace team.

A collaborative event with Amnesty International and Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom featuring author Mark Isaacs and his book *The Kabul Peace House* at the Welcoming Centre, Bowden in June was cancelled at very short notice when Sydney went into Covid-19 lockdown the day before Mark was due to fly to Adelaide. We look forward to reinstating this event in 2022.

In August, after Compass Markets advised they could no longer provide their services to send money to Afghanistan, SAWA opened an account with ANZ Bank for this purpose. Two transfers of funds were made using ANZ Bank during this financial year. An account has also been opened with Tyro Payments Limited, Sydney, which provides a point-of-sale machine for our use at fundraising events.

Adelaide-based film director Fahim Hashimy organised the 5th Ghan International Film Festival in October and kindly gave SAWA (SA) space to display our information/membership brochures and Gali Weiss’ *Making Marks* books. Proceeds from the film festival are used by Fahim to fund the charity “Farda” which works with and supports street children in Afghanistan.

Chris Tomczak was the honoured guest at our Committee meeting and end-of-year dinner in December 2020. Chris presented to SAWA (SA) a handmade rug featuring a map of Afghanistan which Matthias had brought back. The Committee was privileged to grant Life Membership of SAWA to Chris in recognition of her outstanding support of the work of the Association including many years of dedicated service on the Committee and as Treasurer.
It had been clear for some time that SAWA’s website needed upgrading. After considerable discussion and research the Committee engaged Peter Miller of PM Websites for this important task. Peter generously quoted his “charity” rate for SAWA. We owe many thanks to Peter for his unending patience with SAWA’s team of website novices. The new site was launched in March 2021; Farahnaz Haidari and Michele Dunn (of SAWA-NSW) are Administrators with Peter’s support. The website has proved particularly valuable during the upheaval in Afghanistan over recent months, making information about SAWA readily accessible to any number of individuals and organisations wishing to know more. SAWA also has a social media presence via Facebook and Instagram.

Julie Irwin has taken over management of the membership and supporter database, bringing it up to date and keeping it that way. Julie is now skilled in the use of Mailchimp to distribute our regular SAWAN newsletter as well as ad hoc E-News items of interest, communicating with members and supporters quickly and effectively.

Other governance and general issues to report are the lodging of SAWA’s annual report to the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission in January 2021; updating SAWA’s ABN registration; and bringing our information/membership brochure up to date.

In April 2021, the Organisation of Promoting Afghan Women’s Capabilities (OPAWC) under whose umbrella the Vocational Training Centre operates, advised that VTC Director, Mursal Rahimi, had resigned and returned to her home province to look after family, and that a new Director would be appointed. We also heard that the VTC had closed on 01 May and all staff were working from home to comply with a (then) government order which closed all education centres because of the pandemic. The VTC sent pictures of their new school premises, chosen for its good security and enough space to meet all the Centre’s needs. Despite Covid, things looked promising.

By June 2021, word from the VTC was that the security situation was “very concerning”, with the Taliban taking over many parts of the country.

Technically this is where this report should close, at the end of the financial year 30 June 2021. However, considering the devasting turn of events in Afghanistan in more recent months, it is important to make the following references to what has been happening since then.

July 2021: Situation in Afghanistan dire, Mursal Rahimi returns to Kabul where she feels safer.

August/September 2021: Rapidly changing situation in Afghanistan, Taliban returns.

8 Sept 2021, VTC reports, “This situation is very painful for all of us and no one knows the future of Afghanistan. We would love to start our center soon but it seems that Taliban will not allow women to attend school and vocational center. But we, the OPWAC, have not lost hope and we have plan to re-open our center when situation get better, but we may change the way we do things. For now, we gave some activities to the students to work at home because they are free to focus on their homework.”

23 August 2021: Mursal, husband and three-year-old daughter granted special humanitarian visa for Australia, attempted to reach an evacuation flight but chaos at airport.

5 October: By invitation, SAWA lodges written Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Australia’s
engagement in Afghanistan.

8 October: Mursal and family arrive in Adelaide. Met at airport, and settled with ongoing practical support from SAWA Committee, AMES, Anglicare.

6 October: Advised Parwana Bahadur appointed new Director. Comment from Mursal: “I have seen Ms. Parwana Bahadur sometimes at Kabul, especially in seminars. In my point of view, she is a talented and capable woman. I hope she will be successful in OPAWC as well.”

We have received a Financial Report 2020-2021 from the Vocational Training Centre but are still waiting for a narrative Annual Report and a Budget for 2021-2022. In the current circumstances we feel we must be patient and accept that things are not able to work as they once did.

As we look back over the year it is clear that what has been achieved could not have happened without the help of everyone who supports SAWA - through membership, financial donations, assistance at SAWA events, fundraising initiatives, purchase of merchandise and just spreading the word. Heartfelt thanks to you all.

Finally, very sincere thanks to the whole SAWA (SA) Committee for all you have done this year: Carol Shamsabadi (Treasurer), Margaret Gadd (Newsletter), Julie Irwin (Database), Farahnaz Haidari (Website), Ruth Russell (WILPF liaison), Ruth Redfern (Public Officer), Christine Gamble and Kath Jones. We have developed into a capable, supportive and well organised team.

Maureen Arnott
Convenor, SAWA-Australia (SA) Committee
## Project Report

### Vocational Training Centre

1\(^{st}\) January 2020 to 27\(^{th}\) November 2021

### INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Project Title:</strong></th>
<th>VTC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location:</strong></td>
<td>Kabul, Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No of beneficiaries</strong></td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporting Period:</strong></td>
<td>January 1, 2021 to November 27, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Budget</strong></td>
<td>51,232.00 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Budgets Period</strong></td>
<td>January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donor Agency</strong></td>
<td>SAWA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ACRONYMS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACRONYMS</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPAWC</td>
<td>Organization of Promoting Afghan Women’s Capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTC</td>
<td>Vocational Training Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BACKGROUND

OPAWC’s VTC in Kabul, funded by SAWA Australia began to operate in 2008 providing resources to the community in that poorest area. Since its inception, this project continued to offer vocational and literacy classes to hundreds of Afghan women and girls who, for plenty of reasons, were denied to formal education. The overall investment of this project is based on the understanding that such classes will empower the women and girls to gain formal education and also earning skills.

Since the beginning, SAWA – Australia remained the prime donor for VTC, contributed an average of $50,000 budget annually. SAWA – Australia donated USD 51,232.00 USD to cover the annual budget for 2021 that was allocated from January to December. This year budget had been designed to provide handicraft and literacy classes and also production workshop to around 350 women and girls.

Project Background

The Vocational training center in Kabul was mainly designed to provide capacity building programs for women and girls to make them self-sufficient. As years passed, OPAWC managed to build the capacity of thousands of women and also show them the way to make money and be self-dependent. However, in the past two years due to the outbreak of COVID 19 in early 2020 and due to the change in regime in 2021, the activities were somehow effected by these changes. Yet, OPAWC always found new ways and methods to help and aid the women and girls who were welling to have a dignify life and to be accepted as a honorable person in the family.

TARGETED POPULATION

Community: VTC is located in Afshar district of Kabul, with more than 100,000 people population. And the majority of the population is the Hazara people. those are the poorest and most deprived people in Afghanistan. Afshar is the warlord’s city and stile it’s the poorest area of Kabul. So OPAWC working continuously in this area to help people come out of the misery and make their destiny themselves.

Almost 90 % of our beneficiaries are from this area. And all of them are those who have been deprived of education during the criminal wars in Kabul or those are unable to attend school because of poverty.

The VTC provided the following services to the women:

TAILORING:

As usual a master tailor was hired to provide tailoring courses to women and girls. The main objective of the master tailor was to identify the newly clothes that were introduced in the market and teach the women and girls how to make such goods so that they could be sold in the open market. It was a difficult task since first these cloths were to be bought and then the master tailor had to identify how it was being sewed and then teach it to the women and girls. Since the master tailor was showing the women and girls how to make the latest
fashion clothes, the women were very much interested in participating in the class. The total beneficiaries of this activity was 144 women and girls

PRODUCTION WORKSHOP

The Workshop continued to provide a safe and well equipped environment for women to work and prepare clothes to be sold in the market. Most of these women did not had the equipment and materials to make the clothes at home. Our services enabled them to work for themselves and earn money in an easy way. Some of these students were able to raise enough money to buy their own equipment and materials and start working from home. As before a room was selected for this purpose and the women are able to come and make the clothes that they want to make. The materials that was required for making the clothes was bought by OPAWC and these women worked on them and made the clothes. When the clothes are sold in the market, a percentage of the money was given to the women as their salary or goods profit.
LITERACY PROGRAM

The second most important activity of the VTC is the literacy classes which are provided to both women and girls. The main idea of these courses is to give a chance to the women and girls who were unable to attend school during the years of war to learn how to read and write. These courses help them in many ways including how to read books, papers, signs a boards etc.

In the year 2021 the number of women and girls who attendee literacy courses were 50.

After attending these courses, the women are now able to read and write which is very exciting for them. The teacher uses different methods to make them understand how to read and write and we can say that her teaching methods has been very effective since they are able to read and write.
ENGLISH AND COMPUTER CLASS

The English and computer class is a new intervention used in 2020 and 2021. The idea of these courses is to give the women and girls a chance to learn how to use computers since one of the key requirement to find a job is to know English and computer.

The English course had a total of 60 students. The teacher started by teaching them the alphabetic and then the beginner book was started with them. Most of the participants in this program were young girls who wanted to work in office once they graduate.

The computer course had a total of 53 students. In this class the teacher teach them windows, office and usage of internet.

The English and computer classes were also very interesting for those women and girls who had smart phones and were using Facebook and WhatsApp applications.
COVID-19 AWARENESS

Since the outbreak of covid-19 in 2020, OPAWC has taken it as an important activity to provide awareness on prevention and protection from COVID-19 and taking of vaccine. Twice every week, the teachers provided refreshing information on COVID-19 and how to protect themselves and their children from getting infected.

Medical and Nutrition support

Many beneficiaries of the VTC do not have access to proper medication and nutrition, for the same reason, OPAWC had to help these women during the time of emergency and provided them with medication and nutrition services. A number of 80 women were supported in this way in 2021.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Due to the outbreak of covid-19 and the change in regime we did not hold any special event in 2021.

THE EFFECTS OF THE VTC ON THE STUDENT’S LIFE

The VTC had a great impact on the lives of the women and girls. Giving the women and girls a chance to have a better life has always been welcomed by the local communities especially when the programs are being implemented and ran by women led organizations such as OPAWC.

The positive impact of the program on the women and girls can be better explained through giving detail information on some of the successful women of the area.

1- Name: Aarifa
   - Age: 35
   - Province: originally from Kunduz, currently living in Kabul

Aarifa is a mother of 5 children, she got married when she was only 18 years old. Her parents were poor and had to marry her to a person in their village to reduce the cost of the family. Although Aarifa wanted to go to school and get educated, but the poverty in the family forced her to accept this harsh and cruel decision of the family.

In 2018 the family had to relocate to Kabul as there was an ongoing war in Kunduz and her husband was being threatened by Taliban.

Aarifa learned through her neighbors about OPAWC and its work and took admission in the Tailoring course. It happened that she was very talented woman. In a very short time she became a professional in making cloths. Now a days she is the only bread earner of the family since her husband has lost his job. The family is thankful from OPAWC and SAWA for the support.

2- Marhaba:
   Age: 21
   Province: Kunar, currently living in Kabul
Marhaba is a very talented girl. She is originally from Kunar but her husband moved to Kabul to find a job. 2 years ago she got married with this man who was introduced to her father by her Uncle. Her husband is an illiterate but is a good builder. Recently in an accident he got injured and it is almost 6 months that he has no job. Marhaba has great interest in learning and thus join the computer and English course. Back home she studied till class 11. She is now able to use work and write anything and make tables etc. She is very keen to continue studding and says that she will try to find a job for herself. She says her confidence has greatly improved after learning how to read and write English and how to use Computer.

3- Hamida
   Age: 33
   Province: originally from Ghor, currently living in Kabul

Hamida was a victim of violence in many ways, first her marriage was a force marriage, secondly she was prohibited from going to school, thirdly she was being beaten almost every day for no reason. After joining the center, the staff spoke with her husband and since then she is not being beaten. She wanted to learn how to read and write and so she joined our literacy course. Now she is among the top students of the center who is able to read and write in a very beautiful way.

Note: this time the women did not allow to publish their pictures because they were afraid that the Taliban might bring harm to them and their families.

KEY STAFF

- Director: Since Miss Mursal left the office, OPAWC had to find a new Executive director and after some times was able to identify a qualified person for this position. Miss Parwana is the new executive director of OAPWC. During the absence of the Executive director, Miss Sama was responsible to take care and manage the project activities.
- Financial Officer: Mohammaduddin Jana is financial officer of VTC. He prepares the financial report for both donor and government, Distributes Salaries, paying taxes and also he is responsible for all works that related to financial part of this project.
- Program manage rand VTC principal(1): miss Freshta is still the program manager and principal of the VTC and is the overall responsible person for the management of the project.
- Literacy Teachers (1): Ms. Maryam Jana is our literacy teacher and she is trained by Department of Literacy of Ministry of Education of Afghanistan. now she is well-experienced in their field.
- Handicraft Instructor (2): Ms. Maryam Habibi Master trainer, Ms. Noria, the instructors for tailoring.
- Computer instructor (1): Miss Sheeba Wahab was the computer trainer who had studied computer in many courses.
- English instructor (1): Miss Shafia Karimi was the English trainer who is also an English teacher in one of the private courses and has studied in Muslim and other courses.
- House Keeper (1): Miss Shaima is the house keeper and responsible for keeping the house keep and also make tea for the staff.
- Guard (1): Mr. Sheikh Islam is the guard of the center and is responsible for the safety of the center.

CHALLENGES
The year 2021 was a challenging year for all of us since from one side there was the danger of COVID-19 and the increase in the prices of everything including food items and medical supplies and from the other side there was the continuous attacks of Taliban and increase in insecurity of the country. The women and children always suffers during such times and we tried to help them as much as possible. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the increase in insecurity, we had to limit our activities and thus were not able to reach the target number of 350 women in this year.

Prepared by the OPAWC staff

November 2021
Financial Report

Report for 2020/21
Income and Expenditure show the total financial activity.
Support payments to Afghanistan were transferred in US dollars through the ANZ bank.¹

Account overview
Bank balance brought forward (30/6/2020) $106,645.98
Total income (includes $61.86 interest) $59,475.84
Transfer to Afghanistan for VTC - $106,780.46
Other expenditure (including auditor fee) - $10,591.76
SAWA-AUSTRALIA (SA) bank balance at 30 June 2021 $48,749.60²

Income and expenses by source and destination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenses by destination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Account balance on 1/7/2020</strong></td>
<td>Support sent to Afghanistan - OPAWC - VTC from SAWA (SA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$106,645.98</td>
<td>September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donations and memberships via GiveNow³</strong></td>
<td>Conversion to US dollars⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy classes (VTC)</td>
<td>$38,730.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Sponsorship</td>
<td>$27,490.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Education Centre (SAWA- NSW)⁴</td>
<td>$68,050.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total income GiveNow:</td>
<td>Total payments to Afghanistan $106780.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,298.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donations and memberships via bank and other⁵</strong></td>
<td>Expenses in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face mask project</td>
<td>Payment to SAWA - NSW $4,540.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$6,715.67</td>
<td>Computing web hosting and domain registration $260.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Events</strong></td>
<td>Website upgrade $1,871.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie night – Melbourne⁶</td>
<td>Auditor $190.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$400.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumi Palace dinner⁷</td>
<td>Purchase of SAWA bags. / PO Box, postage, other, etc. $921.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7581.03</td>
<td>Payment to Rumi Palace (fundraising dinner) $2,808.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Books and merchandise</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7,443.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bank interest</strong></td>
<td>Total expenses in Australia $10,571.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$61.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall income for 2020/21</strong></td>
<td>Overall expenditure for 2020/21 $117,372.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$59,475.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes:
1 Most Australian banks do not allow money transfer to Afghanistan. SAWA-Australia (SA) has used ANZ bank as of February 2020.
2 SAWA-Australia (SA) sends funds to Afghanistan at the beginning of the calendar year but operates on Australia's financial year. The bank balance at the end of June 2021 therefore represents part of the funds that will be sent to Afghanistan in 2021/2022 financial year.
3 Donations received online through www.givenow.com.au.
4 SAWA-Australia (SA) collects donations for SAWA NSW through GiveNow and forwards this money to them at the end of the financial year.
5 Donations received through cheque, direct bank deposit into the SAWA-Australia (SA) Bendigo Bank account, and PayPal.
6 Movie night (The Judge) was held by Banyule U3A, Melbourne.
7 SAWA (SA) held a fund raising dinner at Rumi Palace Restaurant - 20th May 2021.
8 Conversions into US dollars are performed using the exchange rate given by the bank on the day.