

## TRANSFORMING WOMEN'S LIVES

### AFGANISTAN PROJECT UPDATE - SUMMER 2014

In our newest update we share how our partner AWEC is taking steps, with your support, to make the lives of women and children in Afghanistan better. As we continue on our journey, more women are finding their voice and *shuras* (the Dari word for council) around the country are beginning to work together so that everyone can share in the decision making process.

#### Next Steps

Many in Afghanistan await the results of the 3<sup>rd</sup> presidential election, but the more time passes, the worse the security situation becomes for some provinces and districts. As a second round of voting was organised, due to no one candidate reaching a majority vote, those working with local communities risk facing threats and possible intimidation from opposing parties.



Election workers seen here getting ballot boxes ready for the 5 April first round

Today, there are still delays and questions around the results.

Thankfully, our partner has been able to confirm, that the provinces in which they work are not directly affected and work has been able to continue relatively smoothly.

Afghan Women's Education Centre (AWEC) continues to work closely with communities and have successfully established new women and youth shuras. These are being successfully coordinated with the male-led shuras that once excluded women from their decision-making. AWEC's programme manager Mohammad Faiz Younos explains how 'prior to the project women were not able to participate in community decision-making, development issues and legal rights. By implementing this project, they could establish shuras to address these struggles.' Meeting monthly, as well as joining together for a larger provincial meeting, a positive dialogue is emerging and solutions are being found to some of the problems that they face.

Since the project began AWEC has supported 1,200 women and 360 youths through capacity building workshops and literacy classes. It continues to see women strengthened and lives changed. In addition to the transformative work of shuras in educating women in their rights, Mohammad has seen how they are 'able to remove cultural restrictions and encourage women to learn and work to support the family. As a result they can solve their problems, conflicts and challenges'. In fact, in his recent report, Mohammad also shared with us how 120 women are already thriving thanks to the hard work and determination of supported shuras. Now earning an income, they can move out of poverty and see improvement as they work as carpet weavers, soap producers or use their learnt computer skills.

Women and young people are also then able to access further resources and training through the resource centres set up by AWEC. Attending offers them the opportunity to share their views, suggestions and experiences with each other. A recent review workshop shows that those being supported are both happy and satisfied, a real testament to our partner and the enormous value of your support.

## Working for a better life

Women like Aminda Ehrari have begun to see hope for the future. Through the work of our partner, Aminda is now part of the decisions being made in her community. As her skills and knowledge have developed she can now support other women, young people and children in her local village. As Aminda has attended workshops, meetings and shared information that was once inaccessible, life is totally changing for her and her family. Informed, she now feels confident and capable of facing the challenges and problems in her local community.

‘Women are eager to work for a better life’

Although there is a long way to go, Aminda is hopeful for the future, that Afghanistan may find peace and that women around the country will have access to an education, job opportunities and justice. Change is happening, one shura at a time.

## New opportunities

Farida Haidari (pictured on the right) has her hands full with a busy family life and seven children to look after. Like Aminda, becoming part of a local shura has provided a great deal more than just access to information. When a district governor, community leader and shura members shared the project with her village, Farida saw an opportunity to make change happen.

‘As a *shura* member I would be able to...work for children and women’s rights, advocacy and [make] community decisions at village and district level’.



Now a member of a women’s shura, Farida’s life has been transformed. Without access to work, information or a role in the decisions made for her, life was bleak. Today, with the support of our partner through workshops on peace-building, health and women’s rights, Farida has been able to work alongside other villages and communities. Issues such as illiteracy and unemployment were once the reality for many women, but with training and income generating activities encouraged women are increasingly able to develop and support their families.

### **Please pray with us.**

- Pray as elections continue. That peace may be restored and that those who face intimidation may be strengthened and able to return to their vital work.
- Pray for Farida and Amina as they continue to learn and encourage other women in their local communities.
- Pray for AWEC staff as they facilitate *shuras* and improve relationships between men and women at community and district levels.
- Pray that successes can be shared and that each small step brings us closer to achieving our goals and dreams in Afghanistan.
- ‘Pray that more projects can be developed for women in education, health, literacy, social services, women’s rights and justice’, AWEC programme manager.

If there is any way we can help your group, please contact your local Christian Aid office or visit [christianaid.org.uk/partnerships](http://christianaid.org.uk/partnerships)

Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of dignity, freedom and hope, of power over their own lives. Christian Aid has a vision – an end to poverty – and we believe that vision can become a reality. We urge you to join us.

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