

# TRANSFORMING WOMEN'S LIVES

Afghanistan project • Final update  
Summer 2015



## Adela's reflections

With fundraising for this project coming to an end, Adela, our programme officer in Afghanistan, reflects on the project's achievements. An incredible 1,200 women and 360 youths are now members of 104 *shuras* throughout three provinces in the north-west of Afghanistan.

'A vital achievement of this project is the increase in women accessing justice... Women in Afghanistan don't only face problems and discrimination within society but also with their own families... How can we say that there is equality when women are threatened within their own family?'

The programme has targeted the root problems of poverty, including the lack of literacy and knowledge of women's rights within Afghan society. This work has identified and subsequently referred 60 cases of violence against women to the Justice Department. Some of these were resolved at village level within the *shuras*, which demonstrates the cultural change that is gradually taking place; and this cultural change is slowly being reflected by changes in government policy. However, the

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Adela

law can only protect women if they are aware of their own rights. This project has equipped women by teaching them their rights in society. With the additional knowledge, they can now support other women and families.

In addition to the education around women's legal and social rights, Adela is most proud of the literacy classes.



Adela, our programme officer in Afghanistan, is proud of the work that your support is helping to achieve.

All of the women involved in the programme have taken part in these. Access to education, in Afghanistan, has increased dramatically over the last decade, due to a combination of government and internal donor funding. This has greatly improved the quality of the curriculum delivered. However, there is still a lack of qualified teachers in many remote, rural areas. In these places, the qualified teachers are predominantly male – a factor that prevents many girls from attending classes.

Compared to the total population, this project has reached only a small number of women and teenage girls, but the fact that these women have gained a level of literacy is a huge step forward for the society as a whole. Adela believes that with more programmes like this one, we will see 'step by step change within Afghan society's thinking on the rights of women and girls. I hope one day for an Afghanistan where women have access to their basic rights and needs, and will no longer be forced to accept ideas or behave as our current society demands.'

## Zai Gul's story



Zai has been supported by the project and now has higher hopes for the future.

Zai Gul Jamshedi is a member of the Tat Kohsan *shura* in Herat province. She has spent much of her life with the experience of conflict in the region and the resulting poverty. She describes the hardest thing about living in Herat as the 'false cultural restrictions' enforced on women. But, despite these cultural restrictions, compounded by high levels of unemployment leading to poverty and social instability, she is proud to be Afghani. Her community is both geographically and emotionally close. They share sincere and committed friendships, and try to work together to solve each other's problems. She says this is 'the best thing here'.

The project has provided a peaceful working environment for women to come together and put into practice what they have learnt about their rights and principles of income generation. Through this, they can support their families, both financially and through teaching their children to respect the important role that women play in their society.

**'I desire to learn more, in order to help my family and other women and families in the village.'**

Zai Gul

Zai Gul's present and previous situations vary greatly. She describes her previous self as 'an uneducated woman'. But by becoming a member of a women's *shura*, she has become literate and is in a position to support her family financially.

Zai Gul now has higher hopes for the future: 'I desire to learn more, in order to help my family and other women and families in the village.' Her ultimate dream is for her children to complete school and progress to university. She hopes that they can play a role in the rebuilding of Afghanistan after decades of conflict in the region.

### **Please continue to pray for this work:**

- For Adela and other staff working tirelessly to make a difference to women in Afghanistan
- For peace and continued transformation in Afghanistan

**If you are looking for other ways for your church to engage with Christian Aid, please contact your regional office or visit [christinaid.org/churches](http://christinaid.org/churches) for worship resources.**

**Thank you for your tireless fundraising for this project. This work couldn't have happened without you.**



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