

WOMEN FOR AFGHAN WOMEN

NEW YORK COMMUNITY CENTER



NYCC client © 2016 WAW

A fghan women in New York today struggle with many of the same issues as their sisters in Afghanistan, including domestic violence, poverty, and isolation—with limited access to opportunities to lift themselves out of these circumstances. The Afghan community in New York is also virtually invisible to social service agencies despite their tremendous needs.

“Women for Afghan Women is not just a place we go to for services—it is a lifeline; it is family.” – *NYCC client*

The vast majority of Afghan families living in the New York Afghan community are low-income refugees or recent immigrants. Yet, most are unable to access public health benefits and assistance, such as food stamps, due to language and cultural barriers. Staggeringly low literacy rates among adults also often leave Afghan immigrant children struggling to keep up in school, while women and girls are frequently subject to gender discrimination and domestic violence.

BRIEF HISTORY

Women for Afghan Women (WAW) was co-founded and is currently run and led by Afghan women who have first-hand knowledge of the Afghan community

in New York and the Afghan diaspora in the United States (U.S.). Using a holistic, grassroots approach, WAW has advanced its mission through an in-depth understanding and respect of Afghan culture, society, and traditions.

In 2016 alone, the New York Community Center (NYCC) directly improved the lives of hundreds of women, girls, children, and families by:

- Providing more than 500 clients with comprehensive case management services, including 36 survivors of domestic violence;
- Assisting 52 refugees, mainly women and children, with acclimating to their new homes and communities;
- Helping 22 clients successfully pass their U.S. citizenship exams;
- Facilitating the procurement of employment for 34 women;
- Assisting 6 women to enroll in college;
- Providing 150 women and 7 men with adult educational empowerment classes;
- Empowering 35 adolescent girls through the Girls Leadership Program; and
- Maintaining a 100% success rate with our children’s tutoring program, Homework Help, in which all 75 children passed their state exams and advanced to the next grade.





WAW’s programming started in April 2001, serving the needs of ten immigrant Afghan women in Queens, New York. The organization’s co-founders quickly learned that these women endured similar human rights abuses as their sisters in Afghanistan.

“Learning English is wonderful, but using English to change things is powerful.” – NYCC client

In response to a needs assessment of this underserved population, WAW launched its New York Community Center (NYCC) in 2003. As WAW got to know the community better, its programming grew to reflect the services clients required and requested.

The NYCC continues to operate with flexibility in order to best respond to the needs of those WAW serves. For instance, in 2016, WAW added two more English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for women and a new class for men.

GROUPS SERVED, CHALLENGES, AND SERVICES

The NYCC is strategically located in Queens, which is home to an estimated 90% of New York’s Afghan community, and

is within walking distance for many clients. WAW’s success stems from its family-centered approach, which has enabled the NYCC to build trust with the community and work within it to foster positive change.

Today, WAW’S NYCC is a lifeline for the local Afghan-American, as well as Afghan immigrant and refugee communities, providing families with critical case management services, educational empowerment, and legal support. The NYCC also serves South Asian and Muslim immigrant groups in light of its cultural and language competencies in English, Farsi/ Dari, Pashto, Urdu, Hindi, and Arabic.

In conjunction with providing direct services at the NYCC, WAW advocates for the rights and safety of Afghan women, girls, and children in New York and in Washington, DC to ensure that their voices, challenges, and concerns are heard by key U.S. and international policymakers.

To date, the NYCC has provided case management to more than 5,000 women and families; adult educational classes to over 1,000 women; and after-school tutoring and leadership development to 500 children. The NYCC is open Monday through Saturday and programs include:

Case management and in-house legal support that confidentially assist individuals and families dealing with issues of domestic violence, public benefits, immigration, employment, interpretation, and any other need that may arise;

Adult empowerment classes offer women instruction on ESL and literacy, the U.S. citizenship test, and driving test, as well as a new citizenship class for men;

Know Your Rights program that provides information sessions, direct and referral services for immigrants, raises awareness about immigrant rights, and assists women and men in the Afghan, South Asian, and Muslim communities better understand and respond to immigration challenges;

Women’s Circle provides a monthly support group that serves as a safe and confidential space for discussions on topics that are pertinent, but often taboo, in the community, including domestic violence and women’s rights;

Girls Leadership Program is an empowerment program designed for girls aged 10-15 that offers human rights, life skills, and leadership training with counseling on career choices;

Boys Leadership Program examines the rigid roles Afghan and Muslim boys are raised with and explores how gender roles, culture, and religion impact the treatment of girls and women in the community; and,

Homework Help that provides students of all genders from first to twelfth grades with support on homework and preparing for state testing.

For information on how to support WAW or to learn more about WAW’s other programs, please visit: womenforafghanwomen.org

WOMEN FOR AFGHAN WOMEN (WAW) is a grassroots civil society organization dedicated to protecting and promoting the rights of disenfranchised Afghan women and girls in Afghanistan and New York (NY). In particular, WAW works to help Afghan women and girls exercise their rights to pursue their individual potential to self-determination, and to representation in all areas of life—political, social, cultural, and economic. WAW relentlessly advocates for women’s rights and challenges the norms that underpin gender-based violence to influence attitudes and bring about change.

WAW was founded in April 2001 to advocate for women then living under Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Since its inception, WAW has become the largest organization for Afghan women and girls globally, and the largest women’s organization in Afghanistan. To date, WAW has served over 30,000 clients and trained more than 330,000 individuals on women’s rights. WAW provides life-saving and life-changing services, education, and advocacy for women and children across Afghanistan and NY who have endured human rights violations. WAW’s capacity has grown from being volunteer-run when it was founded to now employing over 750 staff members, the vast majority of whom are Afghan and female.

