Today, Women for Afghan Women (WAW) is the largest women’s organization in Afghanistan with over 850 staff members providing education, legal aid, mediation, vocational training, and protection services to women, children, and their families. WAW is constantly expanding, adapting, and improving the scope of our services to meet the needs of Afghan women, girls, and communities.

In the US, WAW’s New York Community Center has become a lifeline and second home to the Afghan-American, immigrant, Muslim, and refugee communities. WAW serves the direct needs of this underserved population in Queens, New York and throughout the US by providing culturally-sensitive, holistic, and comprehensive support.

Women for Afghan Women is a grassroots, civil society organization dedicated to securing and protecting the rights of disenfranchised Afghan women and girls in Afghanistan and the US, particularly their rights to develop their individual potential, to self-determination, and to be represented in all areas of life: political, social, cultural, and economic. WAW advocates for women’s rights and challenges the norms that underpin gender-based violence and influence harmful attitudes to bring about change.

Since its founding in 2001 to date, WAW in Afghanistan and in the US has:

• Provided services to 57,000+ women, children, and their families.

• Trained 396,500+ individuals on women’s rights and 13,000+ on peacebuilding and on the role of women in peacebuilding.

• Provided 850,120+ IDPs and refugee returnees with protection and monitoring services.

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PHOTOS BY LESLIE KNOTT, 2019
Afghanistan

Women for Afghan Women (WAW) is deeply rooted in the religious, cultural, and community contexts across 24 Afghan provinces and in the 32 facilities where WAW works. Today, our programs in Afghanistan positively impact over 100,000 lives annually. Moreover, every facility and program operated by WAW employs local Afghans from that community, all of whom are trained to provide mediation, protection, legal aid, psychological support, and empowerment services and training programs through WAW’s:

12 Family Guidance Centers that provide family counseling, mediation, legal representation, education, and life-skills training to individuals who have suffered human rights violation;

12 Women’s Protection Centers that offer safe and confidential homes to women and girl survivors of abuse and gender-based violence until the resolution of their legal cases;

4 Children’s Support Centers that provide safe homes, stability, loving care, and education for orphans and children of incarcerated mothers;

3 Transitional Houses that serve as safe homes, which offer education, counseling, and vocational training to women transitioning out of prison;

1 Halfway House that provides shelter, education, counseling, and vocational training to women transitioning out of WAW centers or shelters, but who cannot safely return home;

Protection Monitoring Project that supports local community reintegration efforts for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugee returnees in Afghanistan by strengthening the monitoring and efficacy of protection environments, such as camps;

Women’s Rights ARE Human Rights Training Program that educates individuals at every level of Afghan society on the rights of women and girls under Islam and Afghan civil law;

Peacebuilding Program where WAW builds understanding of the ongoing peace process with local Afghan communities, advocates for the need for women’s meaningful role in the process, and amplifies the voices of Afghan women to ensure their substantive participation in all levels of decision-making. This program includes outreach, education, and trainings on peacebuilding throughout Afghanistan; and

Scholarship Program that facilitates the applications of Afghan students from marginalized communities to the Education for Leadership in Crisis Undergraduate Scholarship program at the renowned American University of Beirut in Lebanon.

New York

WAW’s New York Community Center (NYCC) is located in Queens, New York and provides comprehensive pro bono services to the Afghan, Muslim, and immigrant communities across New York City. All NYCC staff members possess a deep understanding of and close affiliations with the communities we serve, ensuring our programs are in line with community and cultural needs. The NYCC also serves its clients with language competencies in English, Farsi/Dari, Pashto, Urdu, Hindi, and Spanish.

In New York, the impact of WAW’s programs has steadily increased from 238 clients served in 2010 to serving over 1,000 individuals and their families each year, through:

Case Management and Onsite Legal Support that confidentially assist individuals and families dealing with domestic violence, immigration, public benefits, education, employment, language interpretation, and other challenges;

Adult Empowerment Classes, such as English as a Second Language (ESL), citizenship, driving test preparation, and other life-skills classes, such as financial literacy, and a new vocational sewing class for survivors of domestic violence;

Women’s Circle, a monthly support group that provides a safe and confidential space for discussions on topics relevant to WAW’s clients, including domestic violence and women’s rights;

Washington, DC

WAW’s Advocacy Program operates strategically from Washington, DC, and works tirelessly to raise awareness about the situation of Afghan women and girls and to advocate for the preservation and expansion of their rights. Through this proactive program, WAW seeks to inform United States (US) and international laws and policies that impact Afghan women and girls, and works to pursue sustained support for foreign aid and development initiatives in Afghanistan, services for Afghan women and families, and the recognition of women’s rights as human rights around the world.

WAW’s advocacy program also takes a leading role in preparing staff and women’s rights activists to advocate for the full and active participation of women in the Afghan peacebuilding process, government, and all facets of society, and actively builds, allies, and engages with coalitions and networks to ensure that the hard-won social, political, and economic gains of Afghan women and girls do not backslide.

“Many around the world have expressed concern for the state of Afghan women. Some have initiated programs to address their problems and to elevate their suffering. But very few have been able to tackle the situation with the understanding and dedication, the wisdom, and the patience of Women for Afghan Women.”

— Her Excellency, First Lady of Afghanistan, Rula Ghani

Girls Leadership Program for girls aged 10-15 that provides empowerment through life-skills training and education on leadership, advocacy, human rights, professional development, and other pertinent issues, such as combatting child marriage, bullying, and racism;

Boys Leadership Program for boys aged 10-15 that examines the rigid roles with which Afghan and Muslim boys are raised, and explores how gender norms, cultural attitudes, and religion may impact the treatment of girls and women in the community;

Afghan Youth Rising Program for young women and men aged 16-20 that works to develop leadership, community engagement, and advocacy skills, while providing assistance with college readiness; and

Senior Program for women aged 55 and over that offers weekly social and community activities and education to promote physical and mental wellness.