

# TRANSFORMING WOMEN'S LIVES

## AFGHANISTAN PROJECT INFORMATION

### BISHOP'S LENT APPEAL 2014

**In Afghanistan under the Taliban rule women were banned from education and leaving the house alone. Today, inequalities in Afghanistan persist; few women are literate and maternal mortality is the highest in the world. A new project by Christian Aid and partner Afghan Women's Educational Centre will enable women to have an education, a voice in decision making, and to receive funding to start small businesses**

#### Summary

Christian Aid and our local partner the Afghan Women's Educational Centre (AWEC) are undertaking a three-year project to empower over 1,000 Afghan women and young people to speak out for change – through adult education, literacy training, and participation in community and national decision making.

The European Union has pledged to support this project over the next three years, and will provide match-funding to a ratio of 3:1. In effect, every £1 we raise will be worth £4 towards this project, so the £5,000\* your group pledges will be worth an incredible £20,000 to the project. Your support has the potential to transform the lives of women and girls in Afghanistan for generations to come.

#### Background

Years of conflict have brought suffering and devastation to the Afghan people, which has reversed the country's development and left communities struggling with a plethora of complex and interlinked social and economic problems. Where women were once an integral part of society – active in employment and various government offices – now they are mainly occupied in domestic activities.

Furthermore, women are excluded from decision making processes. Due to the consistent presence of Islamic extremists and unstable security conditions, female participation and access to government and public authorities has severely declined. The shura,



**Nozeni Izatullah was 15 when she was sentenced to five years in prison for running away with her boyfriend whose family had held her captive and abused her. Christian Aid partner AWEC supported Nozeni in prison, teaching her literacy and embroidery skills which would help her to earn a living when she is released. In 2011, AWEC's legal support helped her to apply for a presidential pardon, securing an early release halfway through her sentence**

which means 'council' in Dari, is a traditional community governance body. It has roots in many Islamic societies and enable communities to have a voice in the decisions that affect all citizens. However in many communities there are no female shuras; all decisions are made by men, and women are not consulted on matters that affect them or their children. Despite some social progress and legal changes over the last decade, changes are often slow to reach community level – particularly in remote regions. For example, the Afghan constitution now grants women and men equal rights, but this is rarely enforced in practice.

70 per cent of Afghanistan's population is under 25. These young men and women have the potential to guide Afghanistan towards a thriving and peaceful future. Yet young people – especially girls – have limited opportunities to access vocational, literacy and peace-building education training. There is also a lack of trust and an absence of communication between communities and policy-making institutions. It is vital that this next

## The power to make decisions is vital if women and girls are to secure fair and equal treatment in Afghanistan

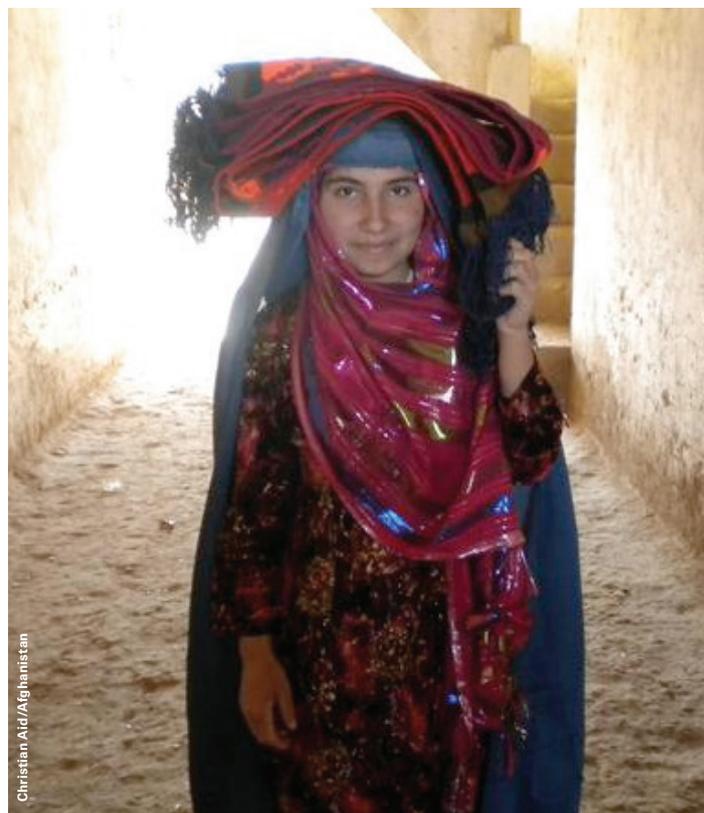
generation is equipped and inspired to bring Afghanistan out of war and to build a better future for their families and their country.

It is absolutely critical that these issues are addressed at a community level in order to bring about meaningful and lasting change. With nearly two decades' experience in this type of work, our partner AWEC is well placed to do this.

### The project

Over three years, this project will enable women and young people to voice their interests and grievances in local and regional political arenas, and become increasingly involved in decision making processes at district and provincial levels. The power to make decisions is vital if women and girls are to secure fair and equal treatment in Afghanistan. The project will provide vital literacy education for women, which will enable them to stand on an equal footing with men in decision making processes.

The project will work in eight districts in three of the country's most vulnerable provinces: Herat province in the west, and Faryab and Balkh provinces in the north. These areas have experienced huge displacement of people during and after the Taliban regime, and women and young people are particularly vulnerable with little access to education, as well as very limited availability of water and healthcare services.



Woman in Faryab province carrying silk scarves which she makes and sells with support from her local community fund

### Project activities will include:

- Establishing 80 women's shuras and 24 youth councils, in coordination with local community authorities.
- Providing literacy and adult education training, following the Ministry of Education's curriculum.
- Establishing 40 community funds for projects benefiting marginalised women and young people, such as funding for small businesses.
- Providing training on issues such as peace-building, women's rights, and governmental transparency.
- Linking groups to relevant government offices and interacting with men's shuras and religious leaders to raise awareness on state laws, human rights, women's rights and religious interpretation (delivered by respected religious figures).

## What the project will achieve

The impact of this project will be far-reaching, with the possibility to improve the lives of generations of women and girls to come. More than 1,000 women and young people will be involved with, and benefit from, the project activities, representing women's shuras, youth councils

## The cascade effect will enable the project to reach an additional 264,378 people

and civil society organisations. These organisations will pass their knowledge on to others in the community and government sectors. This cascade effect will enable the project to reach an additional 264,378 people across Herat, Faryab and Balkh provinces (around 25 per cent of the total population of each district). This will be vital in ensuring local people have ownership of the project which, as a result, will encourage public authorities to behave more responsibly and transparently. By the end of this three-year project, the following will have been achieved:

- **The needs and interests of marginalised groups in Afghanistan, particularly women and young people, will be better represented at both the local and provincial levels.** 80 women's shuras and 24 youth councils will be created.
- **All members will receive literacy and adult education training.** In addition, a new peace-building manual will inform local and government authorities of women's issues.
- **Community and state authorities will be more accountable to the communities they serve.** All shuras and youth councils will be in regular contact with relevant government offices.

If there is any way we can help your group please email [cpartnership@christian-aid.org](mailto:cpartnership@christian-aid.org)



With just 13 per cent of women able to read and write, literacy classes are vital in ensuring equal rights for women in Afghanistan

- **Women and young people will be fully involved in decision making processes within their own communities due to greater interaction with men's shuras and religious leaders.** The 40 newly established community fund projects will enable women to provide livelihood and employment opportunities to vulnerable women and young people within their communities.

Please send donations for this appeal to the Diocesan Office, 14 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3QZ  
Email: [nick.wraight@churchofengland.org](mailto:nick.wraight@churchofengland.org)

The deadline for donations is March 2015

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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