

# QUARTERLY REPORT

April- June 2024

## A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Valued Supporters,

At CW4WAfghan, we have benefitted so much from an internal consensus on the transformative power of education. You could say our community has been filtered in a self-selection process: if you count yourself among our members, supporters, donors, staff or volunteers, it's a pretty safe bet that you recognize the necessity of education for the wellbeing and rights of women and girls and that you see education as the most strategic pathway towards empowerment and equity. But it's worth asking: *how do we know when we've achieved that vision of empowerment and equity?*

At a time when equitable access to high-quality education for all seems like such a distant reality, this can seem like an esoteric question; but any good map needs its destination clearly marked, no matter how long it may take to reach there.

UNICEF's best estimate is that there are over 21 million children in Afghanistan; around 10.5 million of those children are girls. Using the global rate to calculate the percentage of children who are school-aged, we end up with around 9.3 million girls who should be attending school at the basic education level (up to grade 12). But in 2023, UNESCO estimated that an astonishing 80% of school-aged girls and young women in Afghanistan were out of school.

It's hard to find a measure more telling of the devastating impact of gender apartheid than these figures. Conversely, it will be progress on moving this dial that tells us we are making headway. So when I ask myself, how do we know when we've won? The answer is: when every single one of those 9.3 million girls and young women has a school to call their own.

In some ways, it's a crude measure. We know simply accessing education is not enough. We know meaningful learning needs to be happening in the classroom, and that takes more than just getting girls through the door. We know education must be relevant; it must be aligned with the aspirations of young people who want to be part of the modern world, who want an education that will give them agency and opportunity. But we've also learned from our experiences of restoring access to secondary education for girls to whom it's been denied, that attending school can restore a sense of dignity and hope. It can make dreaming possible again. It can reignite the planning for the future that comes when you're back on the pathway you choose for yourself. **School, even one accessed from a laptop, can be a sanctuary, from the instability, unfairness, and chaos outside. It can be a lifeline.**

We will continue to create educational opportunities and extend this lifeline to everyone struggling to access them. By now, we know what it takes. We have built a school. Its desks are digital, but its students and teachers are real. And we will continue adding more rooms until there is a seat for everyone.

With my sincere gratitude,



Lauryn Oates,  
Executive Director



## Programs Update: April–June

- We released our **2023 Annual Report**.
- We have established a collaboration with Mount Royal University in Calgary, to adapt and translate their *Editing for Business Professionals* course for Afghan audiences, which will be housed on **DD Courses**.
- We have translated and added more than 300 new resources to the Darakht-e Danesh Library (**DDL**) this quarter, bringing our current number of available resources to more than 7,700! The DDL website is visited an average of 59,000 times per month.
- Our Learning Content Manager continues with a special project, personally translating storybooks into Uzbek language for the DD Library. To date, he has translated 13 children’s storybooks!
- We completed our first enrolments of grade 10 students to **DD Classroom**, with a total of 378 students in grades 7–10 enrolled in Afghanistan.
- We have enrolled 151 Afghan refugee students in grades 7 and 8 to DD Classroom through our two **Digital Learning Centres** (62 students in Turkey, and 89 students in Pakistan).
- CW4WAfghan has received **Sponsorship Agreement Holder** status with Canada’s government ministry responsible for immigration and refugees, IRCC, and is supporting Afghan refugee students and their families seeking to access resettlement pathways to Canada through our **Safe Harbour** program.
- Between April and June 2024, we have received 64 applications, bringing the total since January to **233 applications** (232 from individuals and 1 group application on behalf of 37 individuals) to our **Shafia Fund** scholarship program. Since January 76 applications have been approved. The demand for this program is already surpassing the demand from 2023.
- We have received 450 applications to our **Remote Communications Assistance (RCA)** program between April and June, and have awarded a total of 960 RCA grants this year.
- Our Chapters hosted several successful events, including a collaborative Breaking Bread in **Calgary** catered by students at North Trail High School, a gala dinner in **Edmonton** with Juno award-winner Maria Dunn, the Tamarack Race in **Ottawa**, and **Peterborough’s** 14th annual Red Pashmina Walk!
- Lauryn Oates (Executive Director) and Murwarid Ziayee (Senior Director) attended the 2nd meeting of the **Alliance for the Education of Women in Afghanistan** in June, where progress was made to develop standards to be upheld by members committed to the education of Afghan women and girls.
- Lauryn Oates was the keynote speaker at Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s **Network to Eliminate Violence in Relationships (NEVR)** Annual Conference. Her address described gender apartheid, and the role of education, advocacy and awareness in preventing violence against women and girls in Afghanistan.

**"I studied law and political science, aiming to advance my career. However, after the country fell to the Taliban, I began working as an assistant in a school until women were banned from working. This left me deeply disappointed and sad for months. I started searching for online job opportunities, realizing that I needed a strong command of English to pursue them. Unable to afford English courses because my husband was the sole provider for our two children and me, I applied to the Shafia Fund program, requesting support for my course fees. Fortunately, my request was accepted. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity to study and learn English. I attend classes every day and am happy to be learning. Thanks to the Shafia Fund and your support."**

*– Tahmina, 2024 Shafia Fund Applicant*

## Program Spotlight: Collaborations & Partnerships

CW4WAfghan is dedicated to empowering Afghan women, girls, and their families through education. A cornerstone of our success lies in our robust partnerships with various organizations and institutions. These collaborations enhance our ability to deliver impactful programs and extend our reach. This spotlight highlights some of our key collaborations and partnerships in various areas of our work.



### International Institutions

CW4WAfghan holds official consultative status with **UNESCO**. As such, we align our programs with global educational standards and practices, ensuring quality education for Afghan women and girls, we participate in international forums, and we contribute to global discussions on key priorities for advancing education and gender equality. In this role, we can work to ensure that priorities for the situation of Afghan women and girls are reflected in the global agenda.

Our Special Consultative status with the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** provides us with a platform to influence policy and advocate for the rights of Afghan women and girls on a global stage. It also facilitates collaboration with other NGOs and international bodies working towards similar goals.



### Program Development and Delivery

Over the past 25 years, CW4WAfghan has established strong relationships with local NGOs operating in Afghanistan and in the region. In response to the displacement of Afghans, CW4WAfghan has established Digital Learning Centres in Pakistan and Turkey, in partnership with local organizations **My TOEFL House** and **Afghan Refugees Solidarity Association (ARSA)**, respectively. These centres provide Afghan refugees youth and their families with access to basic education and digital literacy, helping them continue their education despite the challenges of displacement. Our partners in these regions are crucial in providing on-the-ground support and resources, drawing on the trust they enjoy with Afghans locally, and their local knowledge.

CW4WAfghan also works with a number of partners to help identify, develop, translate, and promote content for our DD Academi. Examples of our content partners for DD Library include: **Storyweaver**, **Hoopoe Books**, and **Save the Children**. CW4WAfghan also grants access to our Learning Management System (LMS) to other NGOs, such as **Afghan Female Student Outreach** and **Girls on the Path of Change Academy**, so they can deliver their own programs on an established and quality platform.



In addition to supporting individuals with connectivity and hardware through our Remote Communications Assistance (RCA) program, CW4WAfghan also funds applications submitted by local organizations in Afghanistan who are doing critical work to support Afghan women and girls. Some examples of grants we have awarded through the RCA program are: devices and internet for 100 students to **Victory Afghanistan**, internet costs for 95 students to volunteer-based online school **Universal Necessity Relief Organization (UNRO)**, and laptops and internet to **Ascend Leadership Foundation**.



### Quality Assurance and Collaboration

CW4WAfghan is dedicated to quality education programs of the highest standard, and collaborates with other organizations to streamline processes and create minimum standards of practice. We are a Steering Committee member of the **Alliance for the Education of Women in Afghanistan (AEWA)**, a consortium of more than 70 organizations committed to providing educational opportunities to Afghan women.



### Educational Institutions

CW4WAfghan advocates for Canada's higher education institutions to help restore access to higher education for Afghans affected by crisis, including displacement, through our Higher Education Campaign [Toolkit](#). Through our collaboration with **Arizona State University**, thousands of Afghan women are able to access free English language classes. CW4WAfghan has begun a new collaboration with **Mount Royal University**, who is offering business course content to be adapted into a DD Course for Afghan audiences.



*Lauryn Oates presents virtually at the 2024 AEWA gathering.*



### Advocacy Partners

Working with CW4WAfghan's Chapters across the country, youth advocates, and other volunteers allow us to raise awareness and engage the community to advocate for the right to learn for Afghan women and girls. We support and work alongside organizations such as **Her Story** and **Afghans for Progressive Thinking** to amplify the voices of Afghan women and girls. We can do this important work thanks to the trust and support of the **Donner Canadian Foundation** and the **Malala Fund**.



### Research Partners

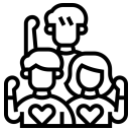
CW4WAfghan has been involved in several research projects, including "School Leaders As Agents Of Change Towards Equity And Inclusion," a collaborative effort involving partners in three Global Partnership for Education (GPE) countries—Afghanistan, Nepal (**Kathmandu University**), and Pakistan (**Allama Iqbal Open University**). With technical leadership from the **Open University UK**, and management support from **Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development, Inc. (FIT-ED)**, this initiative focused on building the capacity of school leaders to address local access and participation issues for girls and marginalized learner groups. Through this partnership, we aim to create a more inclusive educational environment in these countries.

We are also currently involved in a research project "Care-Centred Networked Improvement Communities (CC-NICs) for Schools Servicing Displaced Afghan Students in Pakistan" in partnership with the **Area Study Centre (University of Peshawar)**. This research looks at how working together in supportive groups, called Networked Improvement Communities (NICs), in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan helps teachers share knowledge, think about their teaching methods, and improve their classroom practices to best support Afghan refugee students. It also examines what helps or hinders making this model successful and expandable to other communities in Pakistan and places hosting refugees.



**“The partnership between the Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar, and CW4WAfghan on the project titled ‘Care-Centered Networked Improvement Communities (CC-NICs) for Schools Serving Displaced Afghan Students in Pakistan,’ has been immensely fruitful. The entire CW4WAfghan team, under [Project Manager Sacha Innes’] excellent leadership, has been cooperative and professional, making our in-person and predominantly online interactions productive and respectful. Together, we have achieved remarkable results in the professional development of Afghan refugee educators, demonstrating the power of effective partnerships in driving success.”**

*- Dr. Muhammad Ali Dinakhel, Principal Investigator (CC-NICs), Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar*



### **Volunteers**

Volunteers are the heartbeat of CW4WAfghan, driving our mission forward with their dedication and passion. Our network of **10 Chapters across Canada** plays an indispensable role in our success, mobilizing local communities, raising awareness, and organizing fundraising events. These committed volunteers bring a wealth of skills and energy, helping to amplify our impact, and enable us to operate efficiently and effectively, allowing more resources to be directed towards educational initiatives in Afghanistan. We are deeply grateful for our volunteers and Chapter members whose tireless work and unwavering support make a profound difference in the lives of Afghan women and their families.



### **Financial Partnerships**

CW4WAfghan’s ability to fulfill our mission of making the right to learn a reality would not be possible without our incredible financial partners – our donors. The unwavering support from our **individual donors, foundation partners, service clubs, government partners**, and beyond is what makes our work possible. Your contributions provide the critical funding needed to sustain and expand our programs and our reach. We are deeply grateful for your trust, generosity, and commitment. Thank you for standing with us and making a difference for Afghan women and girls every day.

**THANK YOU** to all of our incredible collaborators and partners. Together, we stand in united in our commitment to support Afghan women and girls, and upholding their **right to learn**.

For more information on CW4WAfghan's programs, collaborations, and partnerships, please visit our [website](#) or contact us at: **info@cw4wafghan.ca**



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