

# Women's Society in Today's Afghanistan

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# Women's situation through history

- ▶ Women During Kingdom (1926-1973): Women didn't have equal rights as men but from cultural perspectives, they were in a much better situation than now.
- ▶ Women during Mujahedeen (1992-1996): Mujahedeen started the oppression of women and Taliban authorized that process and staying home became mandatory for women. Today, due to Afghanistan's internal policies, not only all the Mujahedeen's mistakes and offences have been covered, but they have been admired.
- ▶ Women during Taliban (1996-2001): Taliban closed all female schools. They prohibited women from working outside. Taliban even separated the public transportation vehicles. These strict rules made women think about the oppression and the media delivered their voices to the world.



# After September 11<sup>th</sup>

- ▶ It was the time when Afghanistan had changed a lot and for the first time, Afghanistan wanted to build a government based on democracy. A lot of afghan refugees started coming back to Afghanistan. Female schools reopened.
- ▶ Law of Elimination of Violence against Women (2009)
- ▶ Art. 22 of constitution: Any kind of discrimination among citizens of Afghanistan is forbidden and both men and women have equal rights. This rule was not accepted by the traditional and radical Afghan communities, and it caused serious problems for women.

# Social problems:

## Afghan Women's Most Serious Problems:

- ▶ Street harassment
- ▶ Work violence
- ▶ Domestic violence
- ▶ Early marriage
- ▶ Forced marriage

As much as the United Nations support Afghan women to participate and involve in social affairs, the religious and radical countries create new barriers. The only positive point in conflict between fundamentalism and democracy is that women's rights have been known and discussed in every Afghan family.

## Civic activities

- ▶ Several Women's Rights organizations with focus on violence against women have been formed. However, they do not operate under common guidelines and in coordination with one another.
- ▶ This has resulted in the poor quality of their performances despite their abundance. There are no credible research sources to provide these organizations with a psychological and sociological definition of the contemporary society of Afghanistan.
- ▶ The number of researches conducted on the women communities are very little. This has caused a lack of perception of the problems that women face in the society which in turn has resulted in the failure of civil activities towards women.



# Social Women`s center Association 2003 to 2018

# The idea of the women's association

- ▶ Neswan Social Association was founded in 2003, two years after the overthrow of the Taliban Regime, in Jebraeel, Herat. However, the idea of founding this association was conceived many years before the overthrow of the Taliban:
- ▶ When the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan in 1995, they immediately had forbidden women's education and shut down all female schools. My sisters, Roqia Nazari, Shahrbanoo Nazari and I decided to open a small, secret school for little girls where we taught them the elementary school subjects. We also secretly received first aid and injection training from a medical doctor to be able to provide basic healthcare services to women.

- ▶ Our home had turned into a small clinic where we helped women administer injections prescribed to them by their doctors. I did not like this job at all but we felt responsible for saving these women's lives; on one hand, clinics were not allowed to hire female nurses, and on the other hand, women could not receive help from male nurses. After the Taliban was removed from power, we experienced further and new problems for women.
- ▶ Taliban's anti-women sentiments had influenced the minds of our people, especially men. Families did not want to send their young girls to school.
- ▶ These problems gave us strong reasons to establish the Neswan Social Association to advocate for women.



# The Association's visions

- ▶ Neswan Social Association focused its efforts on three principles to support women:
  1. Women's Education
  2. Women's Awareness
  3. Women's Economic Empowerment

We launched our activities with much idealism, pride, and emotions and insufficient information about women's situation in Afghanistan. We had a feeling that the American and European models would be good, but not perfect. Sociocultural factors are the root causes of women's problems.

# Goals of Neswan Social Association

- ▶ Ensure that women have access to education
- ▶ Empower women economically
- ▶ Encourage/support women's involvement in politics
- ▶ Improve women's legal awareness
- ▶ Support and encourage female intellectuals
- ▶ Neswan Social Association Programs

## Educational Classes

1. Literacy
2. Computer
3. English As a Foreign Language
4. Accounting
5. Management
6. Neswan Social Association Programs

## Vocational Training

1. Tailoring
2. Hairstyling
3. Furriery
4. Carpet weaving
5. Embroidery
6. Food processing
7. Pastry
8. Cellphone Repair

# Classes in Neswan Social Association



Tailoring & Literacy Classes  
(2003)



Computer & Cellphone Repairing Classes (2017)



Hairstyling Classes (2015)

# Neswan Social Association Programs



Offering legal workshops in cooperation with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission



Running book reading contests

# Activities of Neswan Social Association



Neswan Social Association supporting a female provincial council candidate to succeed in the elections in 2008.



Women Bicycle Race July 2017

# Construction of a building for the Neswan Social Association

- ▶ In 2006, the German organizations TERRE DES FEMMES – Human Rights for Women and Deutsch-Afghanische Initiative (DAI) sponsored a trip for me and one of the Neswan Social Association staff, Ms. Ziba Ahmadi, to Germany.
- ▶ On this productive trip, we met with a number of donors and supporters of human rights. It was through the monetary assistance of these donors that the Neswan Social Association was able to purchase the land for a building. In 2014 the Neswan association's building was constructed and became immediately operational.



# Women's coffee shop

- ▶ In 2015, Neswan Social Association, besides other activities, came up with the idea of initiating a microenterprise center for women to be able to showcase and sell their handcrafts and other commercial products at the basement of the Neswan Social Association building.
- ▶ At the same time, a coffee shop was established there in an effort to attract other women to visit this place. This initiative was warmly welcomed by many women.





# Women's Center's Annual Activity Report-2017

Women's Center's 2017 work plan was planned in accordance with existing equipment and budget as following:

- Providing educational programs for 250 women
- Providing vocational programs for 200 women
- Providing health and legal rights awareness seminars for 60 women
- Celebrating 8<sup>th</sup> of March, the international women's day
- Celebrating November 25<sup>th</sup>, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

## Evaluating the most in-demand professions in market-January 2017

- ▶ Women's Center's employees had the responsibility of a survey assess the market demand for vocational careers.
- ▶ Based on research and the questionnaire, as well as the budget, facilities and women's interests, the association decided to start with tailoring, embroidery and knitting courses.
- ▶ Computer, English and literacy courses were selected as educational trainings.

## March 2017



Baking course



Health seminar

8<sup>th</sup> of March

## Total number of students in 2017

<b>courses</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Number of courses</b>
Computer	01.02.2017	20.07.2017	40 students	2
Computer	22.07.2017	25.12.2017	40 students	2
English	01.02.2017	25.12.2017	85 students	4
Literacy	01.02.2017	25.12.2017	90 students	3
Tailoring	01.02.2017	25.07.2017	60 students	2
Tailoring	22.07.2017	25.12.2017	60 students	2
Knitting	01.02.2017	20.07.2017	25 students	2
Knitting	22.07.2017	25.12.2017	25 students	2
Embroidery	01.02.2017	20.07.2017	15 students	2
Embroidery	22.07.2017	25.12.2017	15 students	1
Hairdressing	01.06.2017	25.12.2017	50 students	2
Cellphone Repairing	01.06.2017	25.12.2017	20 students	1
Accounting	01.06.2017	25.12.2017	12 students	1
<b>Total</b>	537 students			

# TERRE DES FEMMES & Neswan Social Association

- ▶ TERRE DES FEMMES supports since 2004, together with the German Afghan Initiative (DAI), the Neswan Social Association with yearly donations.
- ▶ With these donations the course offers and seminars, amongst other activities, are supported.
- ▶ Together with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, assistance was provided in the construction of the new Neswan Building in 2014.





Thank you for  
your attention !