July 2010 – June 2011

The year 2010 saw some important changes to the structure of SAWA-Australia. At the AGM of 28 September 2010, members decided to restructure the organization to enable the formation of state associations. A new Constitution was adopted and the name changed from SAWA-Australia to SAWA-Australia (SA). A second state association was incorporated in NSW in November 2010 with its own Constitution and committee. SAWA members can now choose which state association they wish to be affiliated with or indeed they can choose to be affiliated with both.

The two state associations decided to share the responsibility for SAWA's two main projects. SAWA (SA)'s focus is now on support for the Vocational Training Centre for Women in Kabul while SAWA (NSW) is managing support for Hewad High School for Afghan refugee students in Pakistan. This has meant that each state association can concentrate its skills, efforts and donations to one dedicated project allowing for greater efficiency.

The SAWAN continues as SAWA's national newsletter, but it now incorporates news pages from the two state associations.

SAWA has been trying for some time to offer supporters the option of tax-deductible donations. In September 2010 SAWA (SA) entered into a partnership agreement with Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA, the overseas aid organization of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). This means that donations to the Vocational Training Centre are now tax-deductible. Donations to Hewad High School unfortunately are not, as support for schools does not qualify for tax-deductibility. SAWA (SA) is excited about the partnership with APHEDA as they are promoting our work and helping us apply for further funding.

I am pleased to report the continued growth of the Vocational Training Centre since its inception in 2008. Hundreds of women, many of them war widows, have gained literacy and handcraft skills enabling them to find employment and care for themselves and their family. SAWA (SA) is making every effort to assist the Centre in its aim of self-sufficiency through setting up a commercial production system.

In Afghanistan RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, has marked International Women's Day with a huge event for many years. In front of an audience of over 1500 it spoke out against the oppression of women in Afghan society and showed the way forward to liberation. Rising attacks from fundamentalists forced RAWA to cancel the event in 2009. In 2010 OPAWC took up the tradition and organized again a public event. It was attended by over 1600 guests including representatives from several government ministries.

SAWA (SA) organized a special fundraising appeal to support the event. On behalf of SAWA (SA) I sent a Message of Solidarity to OPAWC (Organization for Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities).
who run the Vocational Training Centre, on the occasion of International Women's Day 2011. I would like to share with you the reply from Latifa, Director of the Centre:

Dearest Barbara and other supporters, thank you so much for your efforts and your kind message. OPAWC is proud to have supporters like you, we are struggling to achieve our goals, that is why we accept every risk. You will always be in our hearts, in the hearts of the suffering women you are supporting.

Latifa

In August 2010 one of our supporters decided to honour the birthday of her mother, who had spent a life teaching others, through a major donation to the Vocational Training Centre. The Centre decided to use the funds for a major student party in her honour. A later section of this report gives more detail about the party.

I am also pleased and excited to report that two new projects began in May 2011 at the Vocational Training Centre.

As stated in the Centre’s Annual Report for 2009/10 there existed a huge need for English and computer classes but SAWA (SA) had been unable thus far to raise the necessary funds. SAWA (SA) has been extremely fortunate in obtaining the assistance of two generous donors to address these two areas of need.

Firstly after explaining SAWA (SA)’s work to the DAK Foundation, this private charity donated $7882 to enable the Centre to run an English class with 70 students for 12 months. It is hoped that we will be able to provide this opportunity to more women in the near future.

Secondly, through the initiative of the Secretary of the SAWA (WA) group Chilla Bulbeck GlobalQuest, a charity managed voluntarily by staff of Coffey International, donated $9,950 for a computer lab and teacher salary.

We thank both the DAK Foundation and GlobalQuest for their generosity and willingness to help the women of the Training Centre and we look forward to hearing all about the progress of these two new projects.

Another exciting initiative has been that of Melbourne artist Gali Weiss’ "Unfolding Projects: Afghan and
Australian Artists Book Collaborations. It involves a dialogue between Australian women artists and Afghan women and girls through images and text and is described in more detail in a later section of this report.

"Unfolding Projects", displayed at the Annual General Meeting of SAWA-Australia (SA)

We are looking forward to Malalai Joya's speaking tour of Australia 28 August – 11 September to support SAWA-Australia. Many events have been planned both here and interstate. This will be reported in next year's Secretary's Report.

Finally SAWA (SA) would like to thank all our loyal supporters and sponsors for their involvement, enthusiasm and kind donations whether large or small.

Barbara James 28 July 2011

Project Reports

Hewad High School

Hewad High School is a school for the children of Afghan refugees who live in Rawalpindi in Pakistan. The school is operated by RAWA and supported financially by SAWA-Australia and Friends of RAWA Japan. With the establishment of SAWA-Australia (NSW) in October 2010 SAWA's support for Hewad High School became the responsibility of SAWA-Australia (NSW), but SAWA-Australia (SA) continued to provide the financial support until the end of 2010, when SAWA-Australia (NSW) came into a position to take full responsibility for it. The following report was provided by RAWA and covers the period 2010/11, which was partly funded by SAWA-Australia (SA).

Hewad High School had yet another successful academic year, starting in September and ending in June, helping to educate Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

There were about 150 students this year. The number of students has been relatively the same as in the previous year. If some students left for Afghanistan, others returned to replace them. Due to the lack of jobs and general poverty in Afghanistan many families have opted for the slightly better life in Pakistan. Afghan students from private Pakistani schools have also enrolled this year as their parents had financial problems or couldn’t keep up with the alien languages. The enrollments for this year
reached about 15. Ten students graduated this year and are ready to join universities in Afghanistan for a bright future. Exams of this year were held in May and June and spanned over about twenty days.

The school was a two storey building with a very small lawn, located in an area with many Afghan refugees. It had six large rooms, most of them divided into two classes each. One kitchen had been converted into a class while one was properly used. In addition there was a staff room and a room for the school keepers. The garage served as a class for the second graders. The laboratory was in the corner of the hall upstairs. The school wanted to make a library to further encourage students to read but unfortunately this has not been possible due to lack of space.

The school had six working days. The classes were held in the morning, four hours per day (8.00 am to 12.00 noon) for the seniors and about three hours for the juniors (8.00 am to 11.10 am). Like every year, students were taught science and languages in addition to religious subjects made compulsory by the Education Ministry of Afghanistan. The students also used a science laboratory and had sports activities, although very limited due to lack of respective facilities. Computer classes were offered in the afternoon for senior students. Unfortunately, extra classes with professional teachers held in previous years could not be held for students this year.

This year the school had 15 qualified teachers, one principal, while one teacher served as the vice-principal as well. Teachers for seniors have diplomas and at least ten years of experience. More than half are females. A couple also lived in the school grounds with their two children. The man was the school guard while the woman was the maid around the school, and their children joined the school.

This year, some changes have been implemented by the Afghan council in Pakistan. Girls and boys have to study separately. Under a great deal of pressure we have separated the students from sixth grade to the twelfth; although the new rule states separation from the very first grade. Due to this change, the school moved into a new bigger building to accommodate the students. Again there will
be two sessions, morning and afternoon. The morning session will be for seniors, afternoon for juniors. Boys and girls will be in separate groups, leading to the need to hire new teachers to teach all the students at one time, and making sure the level of teaching doesn’t change for our students.

We hope to bring some changes to our school as well. Most importantly, we need new tables, chairs and whiteboards. Also the need for a water filter has been felt to ensure safe water for the students. A bigger house with a bigger lawn has always been a demand as it would be a very healthy change for our students so they can take part in extra-curricular activities.

Students of Hewad High School perform on International Women's Day 2011

Vocational Training Centre

*From the report for the year 2010 provided by Latifa Ahmady, director of the Centre*

Towards the end of 2009 the Literacy Section of the Centre had moved from its initial location to a new area called Spin Kalay intersection, from where OPAWC received many requests from women. It is near Afshur, the previous location. Spin Kalay is an area where the warlord Sayaf lives along with his commanders, so working in Spin Kalay is very hard. Several times they created problems for the Center, as they went to the mosques and made propaganda and asked the men of the area not to let their wives or sisters or women of their houses attend the Literacy Course; they told the men: “The people who arrange such activities want your women to leave you and join the political parties, that they show bad ways to your women.” We lost many of our students as a result of such propaganda. Many women came to us and asked us: “Please come to our house and talk with our men to let us come to the course.” OPAWC teachers went to many houses. After talking to their men some of them agreed to let their women come to literacy, but others abused the teachers and asked them to leave their house. So this is the condition under which OPAWC is struggling to achieve its goals to empower women.

At the beginning of the first term of the course the teachers surveyed the households of Spin Kalay for two weeks, accepting every risk. They were able to gather more than 120 students in our literacy classes, mostly women deprived of education during their young ages. After completion of registration
the teachers took an intermediate examination of the newly registered students and divided them into three different classes according to their different levels:

- **Class One** are those women and girls who have started from alphabets, and after completion of 9 months, they are at the level to read and write and have acquired basic Mathematics and learned some knowledge of science and sociology.

- **Class Two** are those students (both women and girls) who are old students of the Center and continue the remaining part of the literacy program of 2009 and some new ones who have a basic literacy background, have the ability and are at class three level of formal schools.

- **Class Three** are girls and women selected from new students of Class Two who are particularly intelligent and passed the intermediate examination. Some of the students of 2009 also joined this class.

OPAWC held a small party, the "Stella Watson Party", to encourage those students who progressed from second to third grade; this was arranged with several goals in mind:

- Firstly, to celebrate Literacy Week, using the money we received from our Australian sister Stella Watson in a good way, by bringing some rejuvenation to the process of study and encouraging the students so that they are motivated to attend the Literacy Course.

- Secondly, to create positive competition between students of different classes and to enhance their level of education and raise their knowledge.

- Thirdly, to show the warlords that OPAWC is not weak or afraid of their threats and their forces and to show them that we are successful in our struggle.

The Party was held on 26th of September 2010, attended by more than 150 students. A guest from the Literacy Section of the Ministry of Education and OPAWC staff were also present.

The party was opened with some Verses of the Quran. This was followed by a speech given by the representative of the Ministry about Literacy Week and the main speech, given by instructor Fatima, about the importance of education and its values. Fatima encouraged the students not to stay back from the line of progress and told them how she went to the mosque to fight with the Mullahs as they created problems for them. The speech was liked by all, and they were smiling and clapping admiring her braveness.

The speeches were followed by a wonderful debate competition among students of different classes. Firstly the teachers made a questionnaire of 50 questions of different subjects, which they gave to all students one week before the party to get ready for the debate. Than they selected eight among them and divided them into group A and group B. On the day of the party they selected eight questions for the debate and divided the students into two groups. The debate started and it was wonderful and the two teachers made it even more attractive by asking the students of the groups some additional questions; those who answered them correctly received a present and their group received extra points. The result was excellent; both group received the same scores and some presents were giving to both groups. They were happy and laughing.
Following the debate the guest from the Ministry congratulated OPAWC for its hard work and meaningful activities to improve the lives of women. He said that OPAWC got the highest score of all NGOs working in this field. He praised the students and encouraged them to come to their classes regularly.

At the end of the Party the guest and students were invited to tea and cake.

OPAWC graduated 100 students from both sections of the Training Centre (Literacy and Handicrafts) on 27th of January 2011. The function was supposed to be held in November 2010 but was delayed due to problems created by concurrent political events.

Highly ranked members of several Ministries such as the Ministries of Education, Economy and others were present. Mr. Jam, head of NGOs in Afghanistan, gave a speech and praised OPAWC for its good work and said that OPAWC is one of the best NGOs among those that work regularly and do what they say they do. He promised to support OPAWC in any way he can.

The agenda was made up of speeches, songs, a marvelous theatre performance and the distribution of certificates to 100 students. The theatre play described the real condition of an Afghan woman, whose husband is addicted to drugs and left her with children and no income. After passing several difficulties she receives an education and becomes a good tailor. At the end her husband comes home and promises his wife not to take drugs any more and to work together to have a happy family.

The students were happy to receive good results for their hard work. Their representative talked for a few minutes addressing the guests: “We want books to study, we want security to go to school, we want sources to help us like OPAWC does. We don’t want a car, we don’t want a house from you, so to ask you these questions is our right because we learnt to ask for our rights.” Most of the guests and the parents who participated started crying and promised the students to help them in any way they can.
Staff of the Vocational Training Centre visited the beautiful Pagman district of Kabul. The main purpose of this excursion was to provide a refreshing experience for the staff, who were tired from continuous work. They were happy and enjoyed their trip to Pagman.

Staff excursion to Pagman district.
See also the photo of all staff on the front page.

Handicraft Training Courses

Note: The Handicraft Section of the Vocational Training Centre is not part of the project budget. It is supported by an Italian NGO. A brief report on the section is included here because many women from the Literacy Section join the Handicraft Section after completing their literacy course.

The Handicraft courses are mainly designed to empower women with earning skills like tailoring, embroidery, carpet weaving, making wooden craft, crocheting, using beads making craft objects, and other crafts. Five women experts have been hired to train women in these skills, and one supervisor has been hired to help the instructors and show them better ways of making craft objects and to make objects that have more market appeal. The students have been provided with the required tools and materials by the Center so that they can learn and practice at the same time.

The women have been divided into morning and afternoon sessions. They train in the use of machines and all aspects of production, including pattern design, measuring, cutting, sewing, hemming and the most advanced aspects of embroidery using a variety of materials such as beads, silk and mirror sequin and crocheting and other textile ornaments typical of south-central Asian styles.

The compound affords space for a pressing room, a room large enough for full cutting tables and rooms for embroidering, general tailoring, industrial sewing and storage. There is also a regular classroom in the basement, and a showroom just inside the entrance to the main building.

The center is fully fitted out with equipment and supplies necessary to complete this training phase. Machinery includes 15 Sepro industrial sewing machines for general production, 2 Joyee industrial high-speed twin needle machines, 2 Janome “buttonhole” machines for detail work, 8 embroidery machines and 3 overlock machines. There is a full array of hand tools, cutting, measuring and pressing tools, as well as all the textiles to accommodate a variety of training projects; this includes anything from traditional ethnic dresses to elaborate handbags to uniforms to curtains to business suits.
In July 2009 Melbourne artist Gali Weiss approached SAWA with an idea. As a woman living in Australia Gali felt fortunate and privileged that she had the freedom and encouragement to realize her potential. Having heard about the conditions under which Afghan women struggle to pursue what she views as a basic right, she felt compelled to act.

Apart from donating money for their cause, Gali suggested to promote the cause of Afghan women through the arts. She proposed a plan of collaboration between Australian women artists and Afghan women and girls. It would involve images in book-like forms that would be created in Australia and would somehow be transported to Afghanistan to be overlaid with writing by women and girls - any kind of writing in any language, whether stories or poetry or words alone. The books would then return - somehow - to Australia and exhibited.

After some initial discussions between Gali and SAWA the idea turned into reality. Gali contacted friends in the Melbourne art community, and six months later 14 artists had produced a series of concertina-type books, collectively called *Unfolding Projects*, in many different styles. When SAWA convener Matthias Tomczak visited OPAWC’s Vocational Training Centre in April 2010 he took the books with him and handed them over to Latifa, the Centre's director.

Another six months later 36 books arrived in Adelaide by mail. (Not all books came back to Australia. Some women who studied at the Centre encountered domestic problems and had to drop out of the course. Their books remained in their households.) The books are all absolutely beautiful, and the combination of Australian art with Dari and Pashto text written by women who a year ago were illiterate is deeply moving.

In Adelaide SAWA members Reyhana and Aziza prepared brief summaries of the text. Understanding the texts from Afghanistan greatly adds to the spiritual value of the books. The experiences and hopes expressed in their words turn the project into a message to the world: Do not forget your sisters in Afghanistan, who have the same hopes as you but so much less opportunity to turn them into reality.

SAWA-Australia (SA) plans to publish a book with all personal stories of the women and reproductions of the art. Possibilities to exhibit the books are also explored. It is hoped that the *Unfolding Projects* will become an ongoing fundraiser for the Vocational Training Centre.
SAWA transfers funds to Hewad High School in four installments in January, April, July and October. The Vocational Training Centre receives its full annual allocation in January each year. In 2010/11 SAWA-Australia (SA) only transferred quarterly payments in July and October 2010 to Hewad High School. Payments for January and April 2011 were made by SAWA-Australia (NSW) and are not included in this financial report.

### Income

- Donations & membership: $28,903.04
- Fundraising: $12,754.00
- DAK Foundation: $7,882.00
- GlobalQuest: $9,950.00
- Sale of handicraft: $260.00
- Interest: $768.86
- APHEDA account: $4,629.00

### Expenditure

- Hewad High School: $9,739.99
- Vocational Training Centre: $47,060.00
- VTC English class: $7,881.99
- VTC computer class: $9,954.99
- VTC Stella Watson party: $886.11
- VTC handicraft purchase: $604.99
- Administration: $760.83
- SAWA (NSW) seed money: $200.00

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<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bank balance brought forward (30/6/2010)</td>
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<td>Total expenditure</td>
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<td>SAWA (SA) bank balance at 30 June 2011</td>
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<td>APHEDA account at 30 June 2011</td>
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### Notes:

APHEDA account relates to donations sent through Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA for tax deductibility purposes. These donations remain in the APHEDA account until they are transferred to the Vocational Training Centre in January 2012.

SAWA (NSW) seed money relates to a one-off payment made to assist SAWA-Australia (NSW) with administrative costs during the setting up of the NSW branch.

The balance brought forward for 30/6/2010 has been adjusted downward by $269.58. This amount has been unaccounted for in SAWA-Australia’s books since 2005. When the new treasurer was elected at the 2010 AGM she decided to bring the books to accurate balance.
SAWA-Australia (SA)
PO Box 90
Flinders University PO
Bedford Park SA 5042

www.sawa-australia.org
info@sawa-australia.org

Bendigo Bank Adelaide
BSB 633-000
Account: 126035633

Secretary: Barbara James   Convener: Matthias Tomczak   Treasurer: Christine Tomczak
Committee: Libby Drew, Christine Gamble, Kath Jones, Ruth Redfern