2017/2018 Annual Report

SAWA-Australia (SA)
Secretary's Report

Every person who supports SAWA-Australia (SA) is valued beyond measure for their contributions and commitment, which makes such a profound difference to the lives of 300 of the world's most vulnerable women and girls each year. As a committee we are in awe of the immense generosity of funds and spirit shown by SAWA – Australia (SA) members and supporters.

The 2017/18 report period saw our convener and newsletter editor Matthias Tomczak spend more than two months in hospital. This affected the operation of SAWA-Australia (SA) to some degree, causing delays in the mailing of our quarterly newsletter and hampering some of our fundraising efforts. At the same time the situation in Afghanistan has been getting more and more difficult for the women. Matthias reported in the newsletter that charities working in Afghanistan are attacked by terrorists moving from Syria and Iraq to Afghanistan to continue their activities in that country. In January 2018 Save the Children announced that it will withdraw its services from Jalalabad after gunmen attacked its Jalalabad office, killing five of its staff. The Red Cross announced a "drastic reduction" in its operations in October last year, having lost seven staff from attacks during that year.

The rising insecurity has led other NGOs to think twice whether to continue work in Afghanistan. So far the attacks have been directed to foreign NGO personnel, and our work with our partner organizations OPAWC and AFCECO has not been affected yet. But NGOs usually inspect the projects they fund, and some of OPAWC's sponsors are unwilling to continue support for projects they cannot visit on site because of a lack of security.

This affected the work of OPAWC, the Organization of Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities, who had to reduce its projects. Although some funds are still coming in from Europe, during the reporting period SAWA's support became the only source of funds for OPAWC's Vocational Training Centre in Kabul. This is a challenge for us to do even more, so that the poor women of Afghanistan are not left alone in their struggle for their rights to free themselves from the shackles of an oppressive society.

OPAWC celebrated International Women's Day in four provinces: Kabul, Herat, Farah and Nangarhar. Each province had its separate program with speeches, national songs and theatre performance. The themes of all speeches were approximately the same, about the present worsening conditions for women and the bad situation of the country in general.

This year SAWA (SA) held fundraising activities in several cities. In Tasmania Yabbo Thompson again held a screening of the documentary Frame by Frame on 7 August at Launceston College as part of the Tamar Peace Festival. About 90 people attended the screening and the earlier one in Hobart. In Adelaide the Notos Nonet, a group of nine accomplished musicians who gave a wonderful concert in support of SAWA (SA) last year, again offered its support with a new program of romantic music. More than 50 people attended the performance on 12 August. Also in Adelaide, the Mondegreens gave another fundraising concert. The Mondegreens are a nine voice a cappella and accompanied choir who perform original arrangements covering music from the Beatles, the Staple Singers and others along with a generous mix of standards from the 40s and 50s. They entertained a cheerful crowd of some 50 SAWA supporters.

On 8 November a group of friends and supporters came together at the Unitarian Meeting House in Adelaide to watch the movie The Patience Stone, a French-Afghan production of 2012 about a young woman whose husband is in a vegetative state after a shooting. The audience was moved by the powerful story.
The team that produced and distributed the outstanding documentary *Frame by Frame* that was such a wonderful fundraising tool for us in 2016 approached us in February with another suggestion for fundraising. They had produced *The Judge*, a documentary about the first woman ever appointed as a judge to a Shari'a court in the Palestinian Territories. We were offered to screen the movie for fundraising at the reduced rate of US$100 per screening. We were happy to take up the offer and started to plan screenings around the country. The first screening, at the Unitarian Meeting House in Adelaide on 20 April, has already been a success and taught the audience much about the Muslim legal system.

*Kholoud Al-Faqih, the first women appointed to a Shari'a court in Palestine, in a scene of the documentary "The Judge"*

In March the West Lakes Seaton Lions Club invited Matthias to give a presentation about OPAWC's Vocational Training Centre. Matthias' talk on 23 April was well received, and we thank the Club for its decision to support our work with a $1,000 donation.

In the media it is noted that the situation of women in Afghanistan is in "regression." It is true that the security situation has been deteriorating, and bleak news is reported including that illiteracy among Afghan women is still high. OPAWC believes that the range of illiteracy in the country is higher than the percentage that has been announced by the Deputy of Literacy. OPAWC is proud to work hard against this trend and pleased to always receive a high score from the Department of Education. OPAWC accepts all risks of the current situation and promises to continue its reliable work in the education field in this war-torn country.

In November 2017 SAWA was formally notified of Latifa Ahmady's retirement from her position as Director of OPAWC. Latifa had stepped down earlier but continued for some months in a supervisory role for the new administration to transition.

Latifa worked for OPAWC for 12 years, acting as an administrator from 2005 until 2009, when she was appointed OPAWC director. The seven years during which she served as director saw OPAWC grow from a small outfit with just a handful of teachers and few students to an organization with literacy centres in several cities and a clinic in Farah province. Her safe hand with all projects and good relations with supporters have made our work for OPAWC easy and efficient, and we are deeply grateful for the way in which she answered every request for information immediately in great detail.

OPAWC has a policy to rotate administrative positions every two...
years to avoid cronyism and other malpractice, and Latifa’s nine year stay as director has been something of an exception. But it did OPAWC well, since Latifa’s professionalism and reliability are hard to match. We thank Latifa for all she has done to make our relationship with OPAWC work well and allow us to help the women of Afghanistan over all these years.

SAWA (SA) is now on Twitter with the hash tag #sawaafghanistan in an effort to connect more with the younger generation, who follows world events more on social media than elsewhere. We’ll use our Twitter page to broadcast news about Afghanistan not usually reported by Australian news outlets.

HAWCA, the Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan, has worked with OPAWC in the past, offering workshops and training sessions about women’s rights in OPAWC centres. Although SAWA does not have the means to support HAWCA financially, we regard its work as extremely important and consider HAWCA a sister organization to OPAWC. We thank them for their work.

Special thanks to our wonderful Treasurer, Christine Tomczak, for her important work and to our heroic Convener, Matthias Tomczak for his unceasing devotion to helping the women of Afghanistan despite having to manage ongoing health issues. Thanks go to WILPF members for their ongoing support.

Our thoughts and hopes remain with the valiant women of Afghanistan.

Christine Gamble, October 2018
Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan (SA)

Project Reports

Vocational Training Centre

The reporting period brought a major change for the Organization for Promoting Afghan Women’s Capabilities. Latifa Ahmady stepped down from her position as OPAWC Director and handed the organization over to a younger generation. OPAWC had grown under her leadership and expanded its activities into several cities in different provinces. The new generation now in charge of OPAWC management had been raised and trained in AFCECO’s foster homes and infused with a strong sense of social responsibility. Nevertheless, the transition from experienced leadership to passionate but inexperienced new staff caused some disruption in SAWA-Australia (SA)’s work, which was finally overcome towards the end of 2017.

Another major change was the loss of funding support from some European charities, which forced OPAWC to reduce its activities and close activities in some cities. For several months it looked as if the support from SAWA-Australia (SA) would now be the only source of funding for the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul. The situation improved in June 2018 with a small grant from ACTED, a French NGO based in Kabul but operating worldwide. Hopefully this will continue into the next reporting period.

The following report is based on a text provided by Mursal, OPAWC’s new communications officer

The Vocational Training Centre for Women in Kabul was funded through an initiative of SAWA-Australia (SA). It aims to provide resources to Afghan women and girls who have been denied access to public education for a variety of reasons, notably wars and gender discrimination, and help them to earn a living on their own. In addition to providing a literacy program, the Centre also tries to include a full range of income-generating skills such as tailoring and learning to make handicraft objects. The program started in 2007 with an establishment of a centre in Kabul that has served thousands of young girls and women since its establishment.

The overall investment of this project is based on the understanding that a secure, well-rounded literacy education augmented by income earning skills will create a foundation from which these girls, who otherwise would be lost to the statistical tragedy of Afghanistan’s women, can now develop into productive and healthy citizens.

The Vocational Training Centre is comprised of vocational classes for women and girls divided into two main sections: Literacy Program and Handicraft Program. These classes are only allocated to adult girls and women who could not attend school and now cannot enroll at public schools because of their age. In addition to help them with literacy, this Centre will also promote their skills to earn a living for their families.

The Literacy Program:

The reallocation of funds received from SAWA-Australia (SA) meant that the Literacy Program is now supported by two teachers trained by the Department of Literacy of Ministry of Education. They are well-experienced in their field. The Centre has four literacy classes, each class with more than 20 students, and at the end of the course most of them are able to read and write fluently. All students are keen to become literate, some of them even plan to enter public schools after graduation from the Centre to continue their education, especially the younger ones. Around 20 students entered public schools every year.
A literacy class of older women

since the Centre started; some went on to tertiary education, even graduating from Kabul university, which is Afghanistan's most prestigious university.

The Handicraft Program:

During previous years SAWA-Australia (SA) only funded the literacy program, while the handicraft program was supported by funds from Europe. With the drying up of those funds the financial support from SAWA-Australia (SA) was reallocated, allowing the continued employment of the instructors who have been working in that role almost 10 years, to keep the handicraft program afloat. The program is an essential part of the work of the Centre, as it provides the basis for income generation for women who are the sole providers for their families. The Centre has four classes of handicraft program:
**Tailoring (dressmaking):**

This program plays the most important role for women who want to earn a living on their own. The courses are fitted out with sewing machines, and the women learn how to make dresses for women and children, including fitting, altering and cutting. 70 students attend two classes of tailoring.

Examples of the success of the courses are Zakira, Farziya, and Trina, who came together last year and started a tailoring group for which they opened a shop selling Afghan dresses for women and children. Basmina is another student who plans to start her own business, she is trying her best to open a sewing centre in Kabul. Haliya, also one of the students from the Centre, today works as a tailoring teacher with an international NGO.

Interest in OPAWC’s tailoring program is very high. Unfortunately the capacity of the program is limited to 70 students per year. Nearly 100 very poor women and girls are on a waiting list.

**Embroidery:**

The Centre has two embroidery classes. 25 students benefited from this program, and most of them are able to use embroidery machines and know how to draw designs on cloth and sewing them.

Embroidered items are very popular in Afghanistan and can attract good prices. Many of OPAWC’s students start working at home after graduation to earn money. An example from the embroidery program is Gul Ghutai, the mother of four girls and three small boys who lost her husband four years ago and is the only supporter of her family. She bought an embroidery machine and started working at home a few years ago and feeds her children through her work.

2018 Graduation Ceremony

Each year, nearly 500 girls and women pass the one year literacy program and learn skills in tailoring and embroidery and get graduate certificates at the end. Most of the graduates have started working at home, some of them working in tailoring shops, and earn money for their families. Last year more than 20 students that graduated from the centre entered into government schools.
A graduation ceremony for 450 girls and women who received their graduation certificates from OPAWC’s literacy and handicraft programs was held on 25 April 2018. More than 400 guests attended our ceremony. As in previous years the ceremony included speeches, poetry readings, a drama performance and music, most of it performed by students. The ceremony concluded with the presentation of gifts to students with the highest scores in the final exam.

New Programs:
A small grant received from ACTED in June 2018 provides training classes in business administration, food processing, beauty parlor skills and peace building. It also funds a nursery for children of staff and women studying at the Centre. These activities will continue into the next reporting period. First opportunity to enroll in the new courses is given to those who completed the literacy program, because in addition to being literate they will now also learn new skills that help them to find a job in the general economy.
**Hamoon Clinic**

The funds raised by SAWA-Australia (SA) were never sufficient to expand our support much beyond the Vocational Training Centre. For many years Planet Wheeler, the private ancillary fund established in 2008 by the founders of Lonely Planet Publications Maureen and Tony Wheeler, has been a generous and reliable partner and supplied an ever increasing amount of base support for the clinic in Farah. SAWA (SA) has contributed on two occasions, first by raising the funds for a new ambulance through crowd funding, and two years ago by obtaining an ultrasound machine through the services of the DAK foundation.

Given the precarious security situation in Farah province it was always understood that site verification visits to monitor the implementation of the grant by non-Afghans were not feasible. Over the years we had to rely on site visits by OPAWC Director Latifa Ahmady and video meetings between clinic staff and our convener Matthias Tomczak during his infrequent visits to Kabul. This was sufficient to give Planet Wheeler the confidence to increase its annual support from $30,000 in 2011/12 to $73,000 in 2016/17.

Unfortunately the deteriorating security situation in the country made it more and more difficult for Planet Wheeler to justify support for Hamoon Clinic in comparison with its other projects around the world. Administrative upheaval during OPAWC's transition to the new Executive Director did not help, and in October 2017 we were informed that Planet Wheeler had decided to discontinue support for the clinic. From July 2017 the clinic was kept operational on a reduced schedule supported by funds allocated to special medical programs not covered by Planet Wheeler's budget. By January 2018 those funds were exhausted, and the clinic was closed temporarily, awaiting new funds. Such funds were no longer forthcoming, but in February an Italian donor agreed to fund the clinic at least till July 2018. So the clinic resumed operation. It remains to be seen what the situation will be in the next reporting period.

Closing down, or mothballing, the clinic is a major operation. The clinic is the best equipped in Farah province, better than the government's health institutions. In a province with erratic power supply it has 24 hour electricity through solar cells and batteries, so it can keep medicine under refrigeration if required. It has a blood laboratory and an ultrasound department and operates its own ambulance. Unfortunately SAWA-Australia (SA) can only hope that others keep the clinic operational, as our own resources cannot be stretched that far.

**Student scholarships**

The scholarships project with AFCECFO, the Afghan Child Education and Care Organization, has been operational for almost six years now and guided several gifted young women – and the occasional young man – through university or college. Most of these students have graduated, while some are still enrolled at private universities in Kabul. Those who graduated have found important and rewarding work.

It is particularly rewarding to see how young women from the most underprivileged poor families have taken on responsibilities for hundreds of desperate women by working in core management positions of charities, including our partner organization OPAWC. Here is an overview of where life has taken the students that were sponsored by SAWA-Australia (SA) members over the years.

**Zubaida** graduated in law. After several attempts to find employment in the legal area that only resulted in unpaid volunteer offers she decided to go back to her remote village in Nuristan and work as a schoolteacher in the middle school for girls. Given the lack of teachers, Zubaida teaches as many subjects as possible, such as biology, chemistry, history and Pashto, all subjects in which AFCECO's education has given her a solid grounding.

**Shazia**, who also graduated in law, is now the national Executive Director of OPAWC and successor to Latifa Ahmady, a big step in life for a woman who as a young girl roamed the streets of Peshawar to sell odds and ends in support of her family. She now also has to care for her paralyzed mother and adopted younger brother.
Setiza teaches literacy courses at OPAWC's Vocational Training Centre. Being also a young mother she will benefit from the new kindergarten established at the Centre.

Mursal who is also a mother now herself, works as OPAWC's communications officer and manager of the new kindergarten in OPAWC's Vocational Training Centre.

Pashtana is AFCECO's Executive Director. She manages and runs all AFCECO orphanages. As Chief Operations Manager from 2014 to 2016 she travelled with AFCECO music students to Europe, the Middle East, Turkmenistan and Turkey. She became Executive Director in 2016.

Barakat completed his law degree and is now working as the logistics and finance manager for HAWCA, the Humanitarian Assistance for Women and Children of Afghanistan. Since he lost his eldest brother in an emergency case in Nuristan before he could be taken to a hospital for treatment he now takes care of his family and also his orphaned nephews.

Zubaida-Shazia-Mursal-Pashtana

Other students are still sponsored by SAWA-Australia (SA) members. Rima and Hajira continue their dentistry degree, which will take them another two years. At the same time Rima is helping at the AFCECO orphanages, while Hajira works in a HAWACA project as a health trainer in internal displaced people's camps. Malalai is enrolled in a midwifery course, and Saeeda is studying Pashto literature.

Zubaida-Shazia-Mursal-Pashtana

Rima-Hajira-Malalai-Saeeda

Zarmina who was sponsored in 2016/17 to study fine arts, specifically sculpture at the prestigious Kabul University, completed her studies but is now a women's emancipation rights activist. Given the lack of work opportunities in sculpturing in Afghanistan, she decided that she would rather work as a political and women's rights activists. After completing her studies SAWA-Australia (SA) commissioned a sculpture from her to show the friendship between the women of Afghanistan and Australia. Zarmina's new direction caused a break in the work on this commission, but she plans to complete the sculpture project on which she agreed and will continue to work on it over the months to come.

Rima-Hajira-Malalai-Saeeda

Zarmina receives a parcel from Australia
Financial Report

Report for 2017/18

Income and Expenditure show the total financial activity.

Support payments to Afghanistan are transferred in US dollars. To minimize losses from currency exchange SAWA-Australia (SA) established an account in US dollars in February 2014. This account was closed during this financial year and its remaining balance of US$484.18 transferred into the operating account. SAWA-Australia (SA) now transfers funds through Compass Global Markets.¹

Account overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bank balance brought forward (30/6/2017)</td>
<td>$29,595.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total income (includes $474.41 interest)</td>
<td>$80,506.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer to Afghanistan</td>
<td>-$67,530.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other expenditure (includes art material for Zarmina)</td>
<td>-$1,589.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAWA-AUSTRALIA (SA) bank balance at 30 June 2018</td>
<td>$40,982.35²</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Income and expenses by source and destination

**Income**

- Account balance on 1/7/2017: $29,596

**Vocational Training Centre (VTC)**

- Donations and membership³: $56,571
- Fundraising events and activities⁴: $4,700
- Interest on term investments: $475
- Total income for VTC: $61,746

**Hamoon Clinic**

- Donations³: $580
- Total income for Hamoon Clinic: $580

**University scholarships**

- Zamira's art project⁶: $6,200
- Total income for scholarships: $18,180

**Overall income for 2017/18**: $80,506

Expenses by destination

**Support sent to Afghanistan**

- Available for transfer: USD 51,298
- Vocational Training Centre: USD 42,264
- University Scholarships⁸: USD 9,034
- Total to Afghanistan from SAWA (SA): USD 51,298

**Expenses in Australia**

- Auditor fee: $190
- PO Box fee: $191
- Return of SAWA (NSW) cheque: -$50.00
- Total expenses in Australia: $331

Conversion to US dollars⁷: -$67,530 USD 51,298

Available for transfer to Afghanistan: USD 51,298
Notes:

1. Australian banks do not allow money transfer to Afghanistan. SAWA-Australia (SA) handles all transfers through the foreign exchange company Compass Global Markets.

2. SAWA-Australia (SA) sends funds to Afghanistan at the beginning of the calendar year but operates on Australia's financial year. The significant bank balance at the end of June 2018 therefore represents the first half of the funds that will be sent to Afghanistan in early 2019.

3. Donations received through cheque, direct bank deposit into the SAWA-Australia (SA) Bendigo Bank account, and online through www.givenow.com.au.

4. Special events and activities (film nights; concerts; sales at markets and stalls).

5. Only the amount required to cover the VTC budget for 2018 was transferred to OPAWC. The remainder is held over for 2019.

6. Purchase in Australia of material for a sculpture from crowd funding and shipping to Afghanistan.

7. Conversions into US dollars are performed using the exchange rate given by Compass Global Markets on the day.

8. Includes USD 441 import duty for Zarmina's art project sent to Afghanistan.
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