2018/2019 Annual Report

SAWA-Australia (SA)
Secretary's Report

As forseen by SAWA-Australia (SA)'s late Convenor, we would be presented with challenges and a major change this year. Most notably and sadly, we lost our dear Matthias Tomczak after his long ordeal with cancer. Matthias was Convenor for the past 14 years and was pivotal in setting up the Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in Kabul. OPAWC (the Organisation for Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities) was enabled to teach thousands of illiterate women to read and write and to learn skills to empower themselves. Matthias also facilitated the means to donate a new ambulance and ultrasound system to OPAWC's Hamoon Clinic.

At the news of Matthias' death, there were moving gatherings across Afghanistan and Australia as family, friends, colleagues, the students and teachers of the VTC and young people and staff of AFCECO (Afghan Child Education and Care Organisation) came together to mourn, pay tribute and celebrate the life of Matthias. Time brought to light the extent of generous financial support Matthias gave to his beloved communities in Afghanistan. This was along with his care and devotion combined with his practical, entrepreneurial skill set. Matthias was a wise and kind benefactor supported by Christine Tomczak, his loving wife and highly esteemed former SAWA-Australia (SA) Treasurer. We are all deeply appreciative of Matthias' gifts of leadership and inspiration and for leaving a strong organisation to continue the work.

The situation for women in Afghanistan is just as dire as ever in the 40 years of war it is experiencing. The Global Peace Index has again put Afghanistan as the most unsafe place in the world to live, displacing Syria to second most dangerous. Civilian deaths have hit a record high. Serious, violent crimes against women still go unpunished while traditional mediation practices are used which deprives women of access to justice and hinders the realisation of their fundamental rights, despite long standing legal mechanisms.

Director of the VTC, Mursal Rahimi, said that “One of the biggest problems which we are dealing with is (the) security problem. Now a days, the Taliban and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan are targeting suicide attacks on
community centers, weddings celebrations and other crowded places. And we have seen such attacks over the past few years. Unfortunately, the main victims of these terrorist attacks are children and young people, and more than 100 young people were killed in each attack.”

Amidst these challenges, the teachers and students at the VTC continue striving to change their lives by attending the VTC. There has been less interest in literacy and the previous four classes weekly have been reduced. Students participate in a one-year course of study consisting of three semesters; Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced.

At the same time, the women are expressing greater interest in learning income generating skills. Mursal said, “The political turmoil, continuous wars with the Taliban and ISIS resulting in economic instability and dragged more people to poverty. Therefore, people are looking more to quick ways to make their living. The women feel the skills to make handicraft will enable them to earn for their families.

The growing demand by women to learn handicrafts made OPAWC shift the attention from literacy to learning sewing skills programs. We still maintain two literacy classes.“ The beneficiaries this year have been 480 women and girls.”

In 2018, OPAWC had a graduation ceremony for 195 women and girls who received certificates for literacy, tailoring and embroidering programs. Around 200 guests attended this ceremony including Kabul university teachers and student’s families.

Students of the literacy courses, particularly the younger ones, have successfully continued on to mainstream education. Attendees of the VTC are recruited from the surrounding neighbourhoods and enrol in four programs: 1. Literacy Classes 2. Tailoring Classes 3. Embroidery Classes and 4. Production Workshop. The success of OPAWC’s work can be seen when the graduates move on in their lives. Most have started working from home, some as employees in tailoring shops.

It has always been the aim of SAWA to not only assist women with literacy classes but also to free themselves from the shackles
of Afghan traditional society and gain their legitimate role in society. We are pleased to see that these aims are turning into reality through the joint efforts of SAWA and ACTED. ACTED is a large French humanitarian NGO: Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (Agence d'Aide a la Cooperation Technique Et au Developement) which awarded a grant to the VTC. New activities can now be added to its programs; food processing, beautician training and a child-care centre for women studying at the VTC.

Since the beginning, SAWA – Australia (SA) remained the prime donor for the VTC. In the August 2018 SAWAN, Matthias wrote, “Without SAWA’s support through many years of struggle, OPAWC would not have been in the situation to convince ACTED of its excellent work, so we can be assured that our work contributed much to this new success.”

Sending the funds through Afghanistan each year has often proven to be a challenge and various channels have been used and changed when Afghanistan changes its rules. This year for an unknown reason, the bank that SAWA uses in Kabul was unable to process receipt of the money. Matthias quietly worked on this for months to resolve it; right up until his last week. I told Mursal that AFCECO received a successful transfer and Pashtana, Director of AFCECO, graciously agreed to have the payment go through their account and immediately passed the money on to the VTC, to the great relief of all.

This year saw the cessation of the student scholarship program due to the lack of student/sponsor communication through AFCECO. The communication with OPAWC has always been excellent so it was decided to have a VTC teacher’s scholarship, but this did not get off the ground when it was decided that it may seem discriminatory if not all teachers receive dedicated funding.

Shazia is a former student, who grew up in an AFCECO foster home who was sponsored and graduated in 2016. Shazia is now the Managing Director of OPAWC.

There were multiple screenings of The Judge, a documentary about the first woman ever appointed as a judge to a Shari’a court in the Palestinian Territories. This was offered to SAWA to use as a fundraising tool by the team who produced the movie, Frame By Frame. It was shown in Hobart in September 2018 supported by a community grant and sponsored by the Hobart City Council. The Lord Major of Hobart, an Alderman of the Council and a Member of Tasmania's Parliament. Other showings were in St Oswald’s Anglican Church, Parkside, in Kerang, Victoria and another viewing in Tasmania.

There was a collaboration with local music students to raise funds for SAWA. Our WILPF Liaison committee member, Ruth Russell, is a mature-age violin student with well-known teacher, Jill Folauhola. Every year, every student (ranging in ages from 5 – 75) performs in Jill’s concert as preparation for public recitals later on. This year, SAWA was chosen as one of the two charities to pass donations onto. Those attending not only enjoyed a delightful concert but also afternoon tea and a chance to learn more about SAWA.

Sincere thanks to all involved in delivering these successful events.

The SAWA-Australia (SA) Committee appreciate the assistance of Sebastian Tomczak son of Matthias, who had helped enormously regarding technical matters. Thanks to all the SAWA-Australia (SA) Committee who stepped up to keep SAWA afloat without our captain and
engine. We have now come to realise just how many roles Matthias had and we are still trying to fill various roles. Special thanks to SAWA-Australia (NSW) who produced the SAWAN to keep our members informed. Of course, thanks and gratitude to all members of SAWA-Australia (SA) for your committed support.

Our special thanks go to Christine Tomczak, our outgoing committee member, who was also our Treasurer for seven years. Chris was committed, shoulder to shoulder, with Matthias, and her dedicated work to making a difference in the lives of Afghan women is greatly appreciated by SAWA and the women of the Vocational Training Centre.

I'll finish with the words of Mursal, “Thanks again for your continuing support and we hope to work together to expand VTC to become a centre of hope for impoverished Afghan women. Best wishes and love.”

Christine Gamble 2019
### Vocational Training Centre

#### INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title:</th>
<th>VTC</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Kabul, Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of beneficiaries</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting Period:</td>
<td>January 1, 2019 to November 10, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Budget</td>
<td>40934</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Budgets Period</td>
<td>January 1, 2019 to December 30, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor Agency</td>
<td>SAWA</td>
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</tbody>
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#### Acronyms:
- OPAWC: Organization of Promoting Afghan Women’s Capability
- VTC: Vocational Training Center

#### Background
OPAWC’s VTC in Kabul, funded by SAWA Australia began to operate in 2008 providing resources to the community in that poorest area. Since its inception, this project continued to offer vocational and literacy classes to hundreds of Afghan women and girls who, for plenty of reasons, were denied to formal education. The overall investment of this project is based on the understanding that such classes will empower the women and girls to gain formal education, and also earning skills.
Since the beginning, SAWA – Australia remained the prime donor for VTC, contributed an average of $50,000 budget annually. SAWA – Australia donated USD $40,934 to cover the annual budget for 2019 that was allocated from January 2019 till end of December 2019. This year budget had been designed to provide literacy classes to Afghan women and girls.

NEW CHANGES IN 2019

For years, the Vocational Training Center was offering mainly literacy classes to women. OPAWC received additional fund in 2015 and began offering handicraft classes. The women at the community in the neighborhood showed more interest to handicraft classes as compare to literacy. Following the end of handicraft project in early 2019, the women at VTC began to lose interest in literacy program and demanded to resume the handicraft program. In the past few years, the political turmoil, continuous wars with the Taliban and ISIS resulted in economic instability and dragged more people to poverty. Therefore, people are looking more to quick ways to make their living. The women feel the skills to make handicraft will enable them to earn for the families.

The growing demand to handicraft by women made OPAWC to shift the attention from literacy to earning skills programs. We still have two literacy classes.

The new plan has two parts:

- **Vocational Trainings:** This is the beginning phase where women get training on two programs:
  - Tailoring
  - Embroidery

- **Production (Manufacturing and sale):** The second phase is to help women produce good quality handcraft products for sale. Three wholesale vendors in Kabul have so far made a deal with OPAWC to buy our products. The vendors place special orders for specific items. The production phase is still in early stage and we expect to grow and improve it in 2020

**TAILORING:**

We hired a master tailor for training and a professional designer for production. There are four training classes for tailoring of around 160 students. These students are divided in various categories and levels. The first level is for the beginners where young girls learn the basic of tailoring and the advance level is for a relatively experienced women who learn how to make pant suit and coat.
The tailoring section makes traditional Afghan dress for women, children and men. In addition, they make curtains, cover sheets, paint suits and coats.

**EMBROIDERY**

There are two embroidery workshops at VTC equipped with 10 embroidering machines. In addition to machines, women learn and make handmade embroidery items. There are 40 women and girls who benefit from this program.

We hired a trainer for embroidery as well. The trainer knows well the local market and has years of experience in this field. Our designer

**PRODUCTION WORKSHOP**

In the past, women were getting only training in handicraft and then they were left to run their business on their own. As a result, some of them could manage to setup a small tailoring shop at their houses and they often had difficulty to find customers and maintain their shop.

We have allocated a large room at the basement as production workshop where women are helped to make handicraft items for sale. The workshop has the basic machines and
equipment and around 80 women can work simultaneously. The designer and master tailor supervise their work.

We get orders so far from three vendors for very specific items. Since we began this section very recently, it is still in early stage to talk about the profit. We plan to expand this section and get new equipment next year and will develop a business plan for it. Our goal is to let the women get a share of profit.
**Impact of VTC on women:**

**Nasrin**
- **Name:** Nasrin
- **Age:** 48
- **Job:** Working in OPAWC’s workshop
- **Year of Join:** 2019

She is mother of 7 children and her husband can’t work because his backbone is broken in an accident 6 years ago. She lives in a rented house in a poorest area of Kabul and she have a very difficult live. Before coming to our center, she was selling some Afghan traditional food on the side of the roads and had lots of problem. Now she works in our workshop, and she is very happy, and she said that her life is getting changed day to day.

**Frishta**
- **Name:** Frishta
- **Age:** 27
- **Job:** Working in OPAWC’s workshop
- **Year of Join:** 2019

She is mother of 3 children and she lost her husband 8 years ago in a Bam Blast in Kabul. She said before coming to this center her children were selling plastics in streets, but now she enters her children in school, and she works in our workshop and earns money.
She was born in Kuner province in a poor family. Her parents are very old and most of the times they are not able to pay for their treatment. Before her young brother was responsible for all expenses of his family but now Sabra works in OPAWC’s workshop and earns money, and she helps her family too. She is very happy to be working with OPAWC and she said that now they have a better live.

**LITERACY PROGRAM**

Now we have 2 literacy classes in our community center 65 women and girls are benefited from this program. Now most of them are able how to read and write at all and most of them are interested to continue their education after graduation from OPAWCs VTC especially young girls.

**THE EFFECTS OF THE VTC ON THE STUDENT’S LIFE**

From the beginning, our community center has had many positive effects on the lives of our students. Most of our students are succeeding to continue their education in public schools after graduating from our literacy course, and some of them have been able to stand on their own feet by learning the sewing and embroidery skills.
I was born in Wardak province of Afghanistan. When I was very young Taliban close down all-girls school in our village. And the severity of insecurity forces us to leave our home and came to Kabul. We lost our everything in Wardak and now living in Kabul is very difficult for us. We are six persons in family and my father is the only one to run our family life. A few months ago, I started literacy class in OPAWCs VTC and now I am able to read and write at all and I planned to start studying school after graduation from OPAWC.

The biggest lesson I learned from OPAWCs Community center is that women need to work alongside men in order to have a better life.

I am from Wardak Province of Afghanistan. We are 9 persons in our family and all of us are illiterate. 6 years ago, we lost everything in Wardak and we moved to Kabul. My father searched a lot to find a job but, unfortunately, he couldn't finally he decided to go to Iran and work there to feed his family stomach. This year we came to one of the poorer districts of Kabul due to insufficient money, and fortunately here we known about OPAWC Center which provided us literacy and vocational skills. Now I and my younger sister both learned how to read and write and after passing few months I will attend public school. Thanks to OPAWC and its generous donors to provide us this great opportunity for us.
I am from Paghman district of Kabul. I am mother of two girls and two boys. My husband is illiterate, and he is jobless since 2015. Life was very difficult for me before I learned sewing skills, most of the time I did not have the treatment money of my children and even it was difficult for me to find dry bread to feed my baby's belly. and I earned a little money by cleaning and washing clothes in people's homes. Now I'm happy to learn sewing skills and I earn an enough money through tailoring at home and it help me to make a better life for my family.

Humaira (32 years old) Sohaila (27 years old) Roma (21) and Rawzia (12) are four sisters from Wardak Province and they lost all their family members in one of Taliban attack in Wardak. Now they live to gather in a rented house. Sohaila and Humaira learned sewing and also embroidering skills and now they make Afghani cloths for women and children and earn money. Now they can run their live easily and also they decided to open a shop in one of women's bazars in Kabul.
SPECIAL EVENTS

On the occasion of the Independence Day of Afghanistan, Ministry of Agriculture, irrigation and livestock organized a big exhibition in Kabul. We also attend in this exhibition we rent one booth for three days to exhibit and selling our handicrafts which are made by OPAWCs students.
KEY STAFF

- **Director**: Mursal Rahimi is the new director of OPAWC. She is responsible to provide leadership in developing program, organizational and financial plans with the board of directors and staff, and carries out plans and policies authorized by the board.

  She also works with the staff, finance, and the board in preparing a budget; see that the organization operates within budget guidelines.

- **Financial Officer**: Mohammaduddin Jana is financial officer of VTC. He prepares the financial report for both donor and government, Distributes Salaries, paying taxes and also he is responsible for all works that related to financial part of this project.

- **Admin Officer**: Mr. Noor Mohamad Saqib is our admin officer. And he is responsible for collecting and filing student information, preparing and filing employee contracts, responsible for monthly purchases for vocational courses, register new students and he is responsible for solving office administrative problems.

- **Literacy Teachers (1)**: Ms. Fahima is our literacy teacher and she is trained by Department of Literacy of Ministry of Education of Afghanistan. now she is well-experienced in their field.

- **Handicraft Instructor (3)**: Ms. Frishta, Ms. Noria, Ms. Farida and Mr. Mirwais are the instructors for tailoring and embroidery. Frishta and Mirwais have been working in VTC almost 10 years. Ms. Noria and Ms. Farida are our new tailoring and embroidery instructor.

Targeted Population

Community: VTC is located in Afshar district of Kabul, with more than 100,000 people population. And the majority of the population is the Hazara people. Those are the poorest and most deprived people in Afghanistan. Afshar is the warlord’s city and still it’s the poorest area of Kabul. So OPAWC is working continuously in this area to help people come out of the misery and make their destiny themselves.

Almost 90% of our beneficiaries are from this area. And all of them are those who have been deprived of education during the criminal wars in Kabul or those are unable to attend school because of poverty.
PROJECT RESULTS

As a result of this activity 120 women and girls learned sewing and embroidering skills. And it’s bringing a big change in their life. Today most of them are able to make women’s and children’s clothes, and also most of them working at home and they are earning money. Also, 65 women and girls learned writing and reading and most of them will go to public schools after graduation from the literacy program.

Challenges

One of the biggest problems which we are dealing with is the security problem. Nowadays, the Taliban and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan are targeting suicide attacks on community centres, weddings celebrations and other crowded places. And we have seen such attacks over the past few years. Unfortunately, the main victims of these terrorist attacks are children and young people, and more than 100 young people were killed in each attack.

January 1, 2019 to November 10, 2019

Prepared by

Mursal Rahimi

November 2019
Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan (SA)

Financial Report

Report for 2018/19
Income and Expenditure show the total financial activity.
Support payments to Afghanistan are transferred in US dollars through Compass Global Markets.¹

Account overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bank balance brought forward (30/6/2018)</td>
<td>$40,982.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total income (includes $643.40 interest)</td>
<td>$52,248.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer to Afghanistan (including medical support)</td>
<td>-$67,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other expenditure (including auditor fee)</td>
<td>-$6275.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAWA-AUSTRALIA (SA) bank balance at 30 June 2019</td>
<td>$19,956.11²</td>
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Income and expenses by source and destination

### Income

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<tr>
<td>Account balance on 1/7/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations and memberships via GiveNow³</td>
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<td>Hamoon Clinic</td>
<td>$692.17</td>
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<td>Literacy classes (VTC)</td>
<td>$9,919.48</td>
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<td>Teacher Sponsorship</td>
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<td>Rural Education Centre (SAWA-NSW)</td>
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<td>Total income</td>
<td>$18,877.00</td>
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### Expenses by destination

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<tr>
<td>Support sent to Afghanistan - OPAWC from SAWA (SA)⁷</td>
<td>$60,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conversion to US dollars⁸</td>
<td>$41,124.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support sent to Afghanistan - AFCECO from SAWA (SA)</td>
<td>$2,500.00</td>
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<td>Conversion to US dollars⁸</td>
<td>$17,135.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support for Latifa’s medical bills – donated by Matthias and paid through SAWA</td>
<td>$4,500.00</td>
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### Expenses in Australia

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Payment to SAWA-NSW for Rural Education Centre⁹</td>
<td>$6,085.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor fee</td>
<td>$190.00</td>
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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 bank balance at the end of June 2019 therefore represents part of the funds that will be sent to Afghanistan in early 2020.
4. SAWA ceased support for the Hamoon Clinic in February 2019.
5. Donations received through cheque, direct bank deposit into the SAWA-Australia (SA) Bendigo Bank account, and PayPal.
6. Special events and activities (film nights; concerts; sales at markets and stalls).
7. The transfer to OPAWC was set up on the 11.02.2019. However, due to difficulties with the intermediary bank the transfer did not take place. OPAWC received the money on 25.06.2019 when it was agreed to send it through AFCECO’s bank account in Kabul.
8. Conversions into US dollars are performed using the exchange rate given by Compass Global Markets on the day.
9. SAWA-Australia (SA) collects donations for SAWA NSW through GiveNow and forwards this money to them prior to the end of each financial year.