

---

# Afghan Women

---



*"The struggle for women's rights is a story of ordinary women doing extraordinary things. And today, the women of Afghanistan are writing a new chapter in their history."*

*First Lady Laura Bush."*

**Information compiled by  
The Information Resource Center  
Embassy of the United States of America**

**April 17, 2007**

**This page intentionally left blank**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Introduction.	5
1. Participants:	7
- Gina Haidary, Director of the Education Department at the Ministry of Women's Affairs.	
- Azita Rafat, Committee of Immunities and Privileges in the Lower House of Parliament.	
- Muzghan Sadat, Finance Director for the Afghan Business Women's Federation.	
- Mahboubha Seraj, DVC moderator.	
2. A propósito del Consejo de la Mujer Estados Unidos-Afganistán. Historia y objetivos.	9
3. Hoja informativa del Consejo de la Mujer Estados Unidos-Afganistán.	11
4. U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Advances in Education.	15
5. U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Advances in Microfinance and Business Development.	17
6. U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Advances in <i>Ayenda</i> (Afghan Children Initiative).	19
7. U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Advances in Capacity Building .	21
8. U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Advances in Women's Resource Centers.	23
9. U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Advances in Health.	25

**This page intentionally left blank**

## **Introduction**

The Information Resource Center (IRC) of the Embassy of the United States in Madrid has prepared this information packet for the digital video conference with a group of Afghan women to mark International Women's Day and highlight democratic reforms in Afghanistan, which will take place on April 17, 2007.

**This page intentionally left blank**

## **1. Participants.**

**Gina Haidary, Director of the Education Department at the Ministry of Women's Affairs.**

**Azita Rafat, Committee of Immunities and Privileges in the Lower House of Parliament.**

Azita Rafat is a Tajik Sunni from Badghis province. She is on the Committee of Immunities and Privileges in the Lower House of Parliament. Azita was formerly a teacher and worked for an NGO involved in health care in her province. She is married, with four daughters. Azita has been a champion of women's rights for a long time.

**Muzghan Sadat, Finance Director for the Afghan Business Women's Federation.**

Muzghan Sadat, Finance Director for the Afghan Business Women's Federation. Muzghan is young, energetic, and committed. She was previously the Executive Director of the Afghan Women's Business Association. She also runs her own business- importing medicines and medical equipment from Turkey.

**Mahboubha Seraj, DVC moderator.**

She has held a variety of positions, most recently as a trainer for UNIFEM working with women MPs – training them about caucusing and lobbying.

**This page intentionally left blank**

## **2. A propósito del Consejo de la Mujer Estados Unidos-Afganistán. Historia y objetivos**



El 28 de enero de 2002, el Presidente Bush y el Presidente Karzai anunciaron la creación del Consejo de la Mujer Estados Unidos-Afganistán encaminado a promover la creación de asociaciones privadas y públicas entre instituciones americanas y afganas y a recaudar recursos privados que aseguraran que las mujeres afganas disfrutaran de la formación y educación de las que fueron privadas durante años bajo el gobierno talibán. Esta iniciativa también ayudará a asegurar que las mujeres afganas tengan un papel en la reconstrucción de Afganistán. Una vez anunciado, el Consejo recibió entusiasta el apoyo del gobierno afgano, varias agencias gubernamentales americanas, y del público en general.

El Consejo está co-presidido por la Subsecretaria de Asuntos Globales del Departamento de Estado de los EE.UU., el Ministro afgano de Asuntos para la Mujer y el Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores afgano. El Consejo cuenta en los Estados Unidos con personal procedente de la Oficina de Asuntos Internacionales de la Mujer del Departamento de Estado.

Advertencia: El texto oficial en inglés de este apartado se encuentra en <http://usawc.state.gov>, la presente traducción en español es un texto no oficial.

**This page intentionally left blank**

### **3. Hoja informativa del Consejo de la Mujer Estados Unidos-Afganistán**

Los Presidentes Bush y Karzai anunciaron el establecimiento del Consejo estadounidense-afgano sobre la mujer el 28 de enero de 2002. Se creó el Consejo para:

- Promover alianzas privadas y públicas entre los dos países; y
- Movilizar recursos para permitir que las mujeres obtengan la especialización y formación de las que fueron privadas bajo el régimen de los talibanes.

Desarrollará programas concretos para:

- Complementar el programa bilateral de ayuda del gobierno de los Estados Unidos en Afganistán.
- Responder a las prioridades establecidas por la Ministra afgana de Asuntos de la Mujer en la primera reunión del Consejo celebrada en Washington, D.C. el 24 de abril de 2002.
- Asegurar que las mujeres participen en la planificación y el desarrollo de la reconstrucción de Afganistán, y se beneficien de la misma.

El Consejo está presidido por la Subsecretaria de Estado para Asuntos Globales, Paula Dobriansky y los Ministros afganos de Asuntos Exteriores y de Asuntos de la Mujer.

#### **Prioridades del Consejo**

El Consejo tiene el propósito de ayudar a reintegrar a las mujeres en la sociedad afgana y prepararles para asumir puestos de dirección y liderazgo. Su trabajo se centrará en:

- Educación y formación.
- Promoción de la sociedad civil, incluido el fomento de organizaciones no gubernamentales.
- Desarrollo de competencias, incluido conocimiento de lengua inglesa.
- Acceso y mejora de atención sanitaria para las mujeres.
- Microcréditos y desarrollo empresarial.
- Participación política.
- Asegurar el respeto y la protección de los derechos de la mujer.
- Apoyo para medios de comunicación libres con incorporación de mujeres periodistas.

#### **Objetivos globales del Consejo**

El Consejo es la única alianza pública-privada de los Estados Unidos dedicada enteramente a ayudar a la mujer afgana.

Los propósitos del Consejo son:

- Mobilizar recursos, conocimientos y capacidad de interrelación (networking) entre gobiernos, ONGs y empresas privadas;
- Establecer proyectos prácticos y creativos centrados en las áreas de principal preocupación; y
- Ejecutar programas concretos para llevar beneficios a corto y a largo plazo a las mujeres de Afganistán.

### **Miembros del Consejo**

El Consejo estará compuesto por representantes de los Estados Unidos y Afganistán de:

- Universidades.
- Instituciones médicas.
- Empresa privada.
- Medios de comunicación.
- Otros sectores.

Los miembros del Consejo incluyen a:

- Constantine Curris, Presidenta de la American Association of State Colleges and Universities (Asociación Americana de Universidades Estatales).
- Connie Duckworth, Presidenta de la Comisión de los 200.
- Patricia Harrison, Secretaria de Estado Adjunta para Asuntos Educativos y Culturales.
- Pat Mitchell, Presidenta y Directora Ejecutiva de PBS.
- Marin Strmecki, Vicepresidenta de la Fundación Smith-Richardson

El Consejo opera desde la Oficina del Alto Coordinador de Asuntos Internacionales de la Mujer y la financiación principal procede de la Oficina de Asuntos Educativos y Culturales.

### **La Mujer en el Gobierno**

La primera reunión formal del Consejo aprobó la formulación de un programa para mujeres afganas empleadas en puestos de dirección media del gobierno afgano para visitar los Estados Unidos bajo el Programa de Visitantes Internacionales del Departamento de Estado de los Estados Unidos. Recibirán formación en lo siguiente:

- Informática.
- Desarrollo de ayudas.
- Dotes de liderazgo.

Esfuerzos organizativos para desarrollar el proyecto incluyen:

- Formación por parte de las universidades miembros de la Asociación americana de universidades estatales.

---

Information Resource Center, Embassy of the United States of America  
Madrid, Spain

- Colaboración con el sector privado para conseguir la donación de ordenadores portátiles, impresoras y otros equipos informáticos para asegurar que las afganas regresen no sólo con conocimientos y competencias sino con equipos también.

El objetivo a largo plazo del programa de formación informática es permitir que estas mujeres formen a otras personas del gobierno afgano. Para lograrlo, se desarrollarán programas de seguimiento para asegurar que los formadores estadounidenses:

- Se mantengan en contacto con estas mujeres para ayudarles a desarrollar programas afganos;
- Faciliten formación mejorada a estas y otras mujeres en Afganistán.

### **Mensaje del Presidente**

Con ocasión de la primera reunión del Consejo, el Presidente Bush dijo:

"Durante la visita del Presidente Hamid Karzai nos comprometimos mutuamente a construir una alianza estadounidense duradera para ayudar a Afganistán a forjar un futuro libre de terror, de necesidades y de guerra... Hoy, las mujeres afganas gozan de nuevas libertades y oportunidades. Ahora los Estados Unidos y el mundo han de demostrar algo más que el compadecimiento por las injusticias del pasado. Hemos de trabajar conjuntamente para ofrecer (a las mujeres) un apoyo real para un futuro mejor. Estoy orgulloso de que el Consejo estadounidense-afgano sobre la mujer ha tenido un arranque tan prometedor frente a este reto vital."

Advertencia: El texto oficial en inglés de este apartado se encuentra en <http://usawc.state.gov>, la presente traducción en español es un texto no oficial.

**This page intentionally left blank**

#### **4. U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Advances in Education**

**Women's Teacher Training Institute (\$10 million).** Located at Kabul University, the Women's Teacher Training Institute opened in September 2004. In cooperation with USAID, the First Lady announced the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council Initiative to establish a Women's Teacher Training Institute in Kabul at the opening of UNESCO. The first program, the Afghan Literacy Initiative, is underway and is designed to help teach basic literacy to Afghan women in rural areas of Afghanistan. The Institute's second program, Learning for Life, has also started. This innovative program is an accelerated health focused literacy project designed to reduce maternal and child mortality. Additionally, MicroSoft facilitated a donation by DELL Computers in March 2005 of \$100,000 worth of computer equipment and software with teaching applications to support the Women's Teacher Training Institute, the International Association of Women Judges, the Ministry of Education, and the Women's Resource Center in Kabul.

**Fulbright Scholarships.** Since the resumption of the program, nine Afghan women have received Fulbright scholarships for academic years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006.

**Afghanistan Teacher Education Project.** Since 2002, the Bureau of Education and Cultural Exchanges (ECA) and the Council have supported a multi-year project at the University of Nebraska - Omaha to provide training for 85 women educators and teachers. The program enables small groups of teachers to upgrade their skills in English teaching and curriculum and materials development, and acquire basic computer literacy and train-the-trainer skills in six/eight -week seminars in the U.S. By the end of 2005, the 85 alumnae will have trained 500 local teachers through in-service workshops in Afghanistan.

**Sports Exchange.** In Summer 2004 and 2005, girls from Afghanistan visited the U.S. to learn soccer techniques and leadership skills so that they could organize school and city teams when they returned home. The girls, who ranged in age from 11 to 16 years, were part of the Afghan Youth Sports Exchange--a program whose mission is to develop Afghan youth into leaders who will bring athletics to their communities. The program hopes to create a lasting change in Afghanistan by building youth recreation programs.

**U.S. Leadership Management and Computer Education.** The Council's first major program, in September and October 2002, brought 14 women from various Afghan government ministries to several cities in the United States for an educational exchange program. During their 4-week stay, they received training in computer skills, proposal writing, communications, and leadership management. Each participant received a laptop computer to use while training in the United States and to take home to use in Afghanistan. In Austin, Texas, they observed the interaction among federal, state, and local entities.

Source: State Department <http://usawc.state.gov/c7546.htm>

**This page intentionally left blank**

## 5. U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Advances in Microfinance and Business Development

### Economic Opportunities

**Community Banks.** The Council views microcredit as an important means of helping women gain self-sufficiency through starting their own businesses. Through an original \$10,000 donation to the Council from Daimler-Chrysler, the Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA), a leading non-governmental organization in microfinance, helped start two village banks in Herat. Daimler-Chrysler contributed an additional \$25,000 in February 2004 to construct another five community banks to support microfinance loans for women in Herat province, with additional funding of \$29 million from the U.S. Government and other donors, FINCA announced in October 2005 that it would expand the program to assist more than 30,000 clients in Afghanistan over the next 3 years.

**"Artemis" Project at Thunderbird Graduate School of International Management.** The Artemis project, which was initiated by a Council member, brought 15 Afghan women entrepreneurs to Thunderbird University's Garvin School of International Management (Phoenix, Arizona) for a 2-week intensive business seminar in January 2005, and linked each entrepreneur to an American mentor. Each of the participants owns a business and is committed to creating jobs for women, and to serving in turn as mentors inside Afghanistan. See the April 4, 2005 Financial Times business section for a complete story about Artemis.

**Global Summit of Women.** The Afghan embassy in Washington D.C. and USAID funded an Afghan delegation of entrepreneurs to the June Global Summit of Women in Mexico City and USAID funded a similar delegation for the May 2004 Global Summit in Seoul, Korea, to discuss trade opportunities and receive entrepreneurship training.

**\$1.2 million, Arzu Carpets** is a program that provides training and literacy skills to Afghan women in the hand-knotted carpet industry. Over 1150 people are currently in the program and Arzu has expanded its operation to Bamyian Province. With support from USAID, Arzu has more than doubled initial investments. Arzu has been profiled in Time magazine's Global Business World Briefing, the Financial Times, Chicago Tribune, the Wall Street Journal and was featured in Town & Country and Traditional Homes.

**Women's Conservation Corps.** A division of the Afghan Conservation Corps, this \$1-million initiative trains vulnerable and unskilled women to rehabilitate Afghanistan's environment by growing flowers and vegetables and planting trees. During the delegation visit to Kabul in March 2005, First Lady Laura Bush and a member of the Women's Conservation Corps planted a tree on the grounds of the Women's Teacher Training Institute.

**U.S. Department of Agriculture Cochran Fellowships.** Twelve women representing five provinces came to the United States in Spring 2004 for job training as managers and technicians in agribusiness.

**Handicraft Training (\$130,000).** The Global Summit of Women (July 2002 in Barcelona, Spain) donated approximately \$10,000 for job-skills training for women. Through this program, Shuhada, a local organization, is training women in weaving skills. At the conclusion of the program, the women will receive their own looms to produce textiles for market.

**Agricultural Entrepreneurship Program (\$72,000).** The U.S. Department of Agriculture, the University of Nebraska, and the U.S. Department of State in 2005 initiated a training and exchange program that provides training for women in agriculture, and provides micro-loans.

**Afghan Women's Business Federation.** On October 2, 2005 the Afghan Women's Business Federation was inaugurated in Kabul thanks in large part to a \$250,000 grant from USAID. The Federation will provide critical information for new entrepreneurs.

Source: State Department <http://usawc.state.gov/c7531.htm>

## **6. U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Advances in Ayenda (Afghan Children Initiative)**



The purpose of Ayenda, Afghan Children Initiative is to support projects that promote the welfare, education, health, shelter, safety, artistic and athletic abilities of Afghan children -- especially girls. Ayenda will select projects for funding based on critical needs, potential for high impact, efficiency and visibility, among other factors, for Afghan children.

Ayenda is intended to bridge financial resources in the United States with the critical needs of Afghan children, who are the future of Afghanistan. Afghan and foreign nonprofit organizations may submit unsolicited proposals to Ayenda, which will be considered based on the needs and the availability of resources. The implementation will depend on the funding provided by donors.

If donors have a specific area of interest, they may request their donation to be earmarked and utilized for such area. Ayenda will use best efforts to utilize the proceeds in such manner and where not possible, to a project that is as close as possible to the donor's request.

Ayenda, Afghan Children Initiative is a special project of the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Mrs. Shamim Jawad, a Council member, a long time advocate of children's issues and wife of the Afghan Ambassador to the United States and Timothy McBride, a Council member and Senior Vice President of Government Relations at Freddie Mac, one of the nation's leading financial institutions, are in the lead on this important project.

Source: State Department <http://usawc.state.gov/ayenda/>

Information Resource Center, Embassy of the United States of America  
Madrid, Spain

**This page intentionally left blank**

## **7. U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Advances in Capacity Building**

Afghan Women Leaders Connect (AWLC) (\$30,000) is supporting the Afghan Women Judges Association by providing 80 Afghan women judges and lawyers with training in Afghan civil law/civil procedure codes and international conventions on civil rights. In association with this grant, some of the participants will attend Harvard Law School in 2006. AWLC has also supported the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation and International Afghan Judges Association.

U.S. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs/USAWC Department of State Grants (\$750,000). Five grants were awarded to organizations for proposals that include: business and political leadership training (grant to World Learning); entrepreneurship training (grant to Women for Afghan Women); education and literacy training (grants to American Council for International Education and Institute for Training and Development); and women's leadership training (grant to University of Delaware). For example, in July 2005, the non-government implementing organization, World Learning, conducted leadership training for six Afghan women at Bluefield College in West Virginia. Three of the six were candidates for parliament. Each grantee will help organize training in Afghanistan to provide leadership and advocacy training to 71 Afghan women. The remaining grants will be implemented within the year.

Political Training and Leadership: USAID and the Department of State sponsored an Afghan women's delegation to attend the 49th plenary sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2005 at the United Nations and for a week long program in Washington D.C.

Women Journalists. Since 2003, Public Broadcasting Services (PBS), through USAWC auspices and with private donations, has trained five Afghan women journalists who work for AINA, a Kabul-based media training non-governmental organization and donated modern digital video production and editing equipment for the women video filmmakers to use in Afghanistan. AINA was an implementing partner for a U.S. - funded documentary film oral history project in 2002 with The Asia Foundation that produced an award winning film called "Afghanistan Unveiled" and trained 14 aspiring women film makers. PBS indirectly helped sustain the project by paying \$20,000 for broadcast rights for the film, which depicts life under the Taliban and the journalists' journey for the truth. PBS broadcast the film in November 2004. The women trained for this project made a second film, "If I Stand Up" that toured Afghanistan via mobile vans in the months before the October 2004 elections. These films and several short videos to encourage women to vote were made by the "women's project" at AINA with Department of State and USAID funding (from Summer 2002 through the October 2004 elections). The Asia Foundation (TAF) continues to host training sessions and screenings of "Afghanistan Unveiled" (California, Maryland and Sundance Festivals.)

Source: State Department <http://usawc.state.gov/c7545.htm>

**This page intentionally left blank**

## 8. U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Advances in Women's Resource Centers

U.S. and Afghan officials agree that the most pressing needs of Afghan women--education, job training and basic health services--can best be addressed through developing a network of Women's Resource Centers, where women can come to receive these services. The Ministry of Women's Affairs of Afghanistan, in coordination with the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council, USAID, and other donors, plans to establish Women's Resource Centers in each of Afghanistan's 32 provinces. Some centers are already operating in temporary facilities, but permanent facilities are desperately needed. Centers will strengthen Afghan women's legal, economic, political and social standing and will also promote visibility at the local level of U.S. support.



*The goal of the Women's Resource Centers is to provide access to:*

- **Education**, including **adult literacy** programs, **human rights awareness** courses and **vocational/career training**;
- **Income generation** projects, such as **microlending**;
- **Basic health services** and instruction
- **Support networks**
- **Child care**
- **Entertainment**

These centers are rooted in their communities, and it is planned that graduates will ultimately staff the centers, ensuring sustainability. The centers in Kabul are extremely popular; waiting lists are long. With proper funding, a center can be up and running in less than one year.

**Women's Resource Centers.** As announced in 2003, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is committed to building 17 Women's Resource Centers in Afghanistan. Since then 11 Centers have been completed, and six are under construction with completion scheduled in 2005. Through the Council, women executives of AOL (Time Warner) donated \$60,000 for the construction of the resource center in Parwan. USAID formally contributed \$2.5 million in 2005 to support the network of Women's Resource Centers and the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Source: State Department <http://usawc.state.gov/c7547.htm>

Information Resource Center, Embassy of the United States of America  
Madrid, Spain

**This page intentionally left blank**

## **9. U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. Advances in Health.**

**Health Committee.** On July 26, 2004, the Council's newly formed Health Committee sponsored a special session to discuss health issues and create public/private partnerships to utilize resources for greater impact and sustainability. Under Secretary Paula Dobriansky hosted the organizing meeting for the committee.

**Midwife Training.** The \$5-million Rural Education and Community Health Care Initiative (REACH) provides health-related accelerated learning and basic literacy training for women and girls. Training takes place in the Women's Centers and targets provinces with the highest maternal mortality rates such as Ghazni, Baghlan, and Badakhshan. In April 2004, REACH graduated its first 25 midwives from the program, after they completed an 18-month program in Jalalabad. The goal is to train 700 women by the end of 2005 and 1,830 in 2006. For each new midwife, the U.S. is supporting a lifetime of lives saved.

**Afghan Family Health Book.** In Fall 2004, U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson initiated the roll-out of the "Afghan Family Health Book" across Afghanistan. This "talking book" provides useful and practical information about health practices and hygiene, focusing on health promotion and disease prevention. The books are being distributed via hospitals, clinics, and women's centers. The project was developed with Leapfrog Enterprises Inc., a developer, designer, and manufacturer of technology-based educational products.

Source: State Department <http://usawc.state.gov/c7530.htm>



*The Information Resource Center*

**Embassy of the United States of America**

**<http://www.embusa.es/irc>**

**April 17, 2007**