



Afghan Women's Network – Biographies

Afifa Azim

Ms. Azim is the General Director and co-founder of the Afghan Women's Network. Ms. Azim studied at the Kabul Institute of Teacher Training in Pakistan and has worked as a trainer, coordinator and facilitator for 15 years with Save the Children Sweden and the Government of Pakistan. Currently she is a board member of NAHID, an organization working for the enhancement of women and children's rights in Afghanistan and a member of Global Network Women Peace builders. She has also held the positions of President of the Afghan Women's Resource Centre, member of steering committee for the international peace network "Peaceful Tomorrow," was an active participant of the Consultancy Commission in Afghanistan's first elections, and holds membership to the Afghan-American council. Her passion on the subjects of women's rights and empowerment is further complemented in her extended membership with the Gender Advisory Group for the Afghan Women's Ministry from 2004 to 2006.

Samira Hamidi

Ms. Hamidi is the Country Director of the Afghan Women's Network and the leader of the AWN delegation to Bonn. In her role, Samira is instrumental in catalyzing women's engagement in advocacy across the country, bringing together thousands of voices from individuals and women's organizations. She leads policy dialogue on gender equality with government agencies, and offers a chief point of contact to Afghan women for international NGOs, researchers, and activists. Before joining AWN, Samira worked with the UNDP in Afghanistan. She received the Active Organization Award in 2010 for her participation in the peace process, and is the recipient of the Presidential Medal for her participation in the National Peace Consultative Jirga. Ms. Hamidi completed her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration in Pakistan in 2009.

Shinkai Karokhail

Ms. Karokhail is a renowned women's rights activist and an active elected member of Afghan Parliament. She worked for more than 10 years as a volunteer and then the Director of the Afghan Women's Educational Center (AWEC), which runs programming on child rights and women's education and empowerment. She is the founder and coordinator of the Afghan Civil society and Parliamentarian Network of women. She has been vocal on issues of justice, human rights and women's rights throughout her five year parliamentary career and has built a strong alliance with Afghan civil society on issues of women's rights advocacy, including the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) bill, reform of proposed Shiite Personal Status Law, and the National Plan of Action for Women in Afghanistan (NAPWA). Shinkai studied medicine and political science.

Mary Akrami

Ms. Akrami has been the Director of Afghan Women Skills Development Center (AWSDC) since 1999. She set up AWSDC during her exile in Pakistan in order to build the capacity of Afghan women through English and computer

literacy classes. Mary's organization established the first women's shelter in Afghanistan. She saw a need for such a shelter when a woman was arrested after being accused of disrespecting her father-in-law. The woman was found innocent, but was afraid to leave the jail for fear of how her family and society would react to the incident. Akrami realized that others like this woman needed a safe place to go. Today the shelter takes in runaways and women released from prison who do not feel safe returning home. Under Mary's leadership, several women at the shelter have made the virtually unprecedented move of denouncing their abusers publicly and filing court cases against them. In 2001 she represented Afghan Civil Society in Bonn and has since conveyed her experiences of civil society work at numerous international fora. In 2007, Mary received the International Women of Courage Award (USA).

Wazhma Frogh

Ms. Frogh, the former Afghanistan Country Director of Global Rights, is a graduate of International Development Law and Human Rights from Warwick University, UK. She began her activism at age 17 through exposing the poor living conditions and abuses of women's rights in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan. Ms. Frogh has devoted her career to the mobilization of social change to benefit Afghan women, focusing on issues of peace and security, legislative advocacy and public policy engagement from a women's perspective. Since 1996, Ms. Frogh has worked with over 100 civil society organizations throughout Afghanistan and in Pakistan on empowering women and promoting women's human rights. She has vast specialized training on peace and security, women in leadership and public policy from institutions like Warwick University, Harvard, and George Washington University.

Suraya Pakzad

Ms. Pakzad is the founder and director of the Voice of Women Organization, which promotes education, job training, emergency shelter, and legal and social aid for women. She grew up during the years of armed resistance against the Soviet-backed government in Kabul. When she was 12, she saw her headmistress assassinated in the schoolyard simply because she had refused to wear a headscarf. Another of her teachers was shot on the street in Herat for teaching young girls. But Suraya persevered with her education, and began to help Afghan women in Kabul by setting up covert schools for girls in 1998, which ran until the Taliban government fell in 2001. This work evolved into the extraordinary and indispensable organization that VWO is today. Suraya has received the Women of Courage 2008 award (USA), the Malalai Medal in 2008 (Afghanistan), the Clinton Global Citizen Award in 2010 (USA), and an honorary Associate of Arts degree from Burlington Country College in 2010 (USA). In May 2009 she was recognized by the TIME Magazine as one of the world's 100 most influential people.

Humaira Rasuli

Ms. Rasuli is the Executive Director of Medica Afghanistan (formerly *medica mondiale* in Afghanistan): a women's rights organization she has worked with since 2002. Humaira's strategic priority is to enhance women's rights and protect and support survivors of gender-based violence. Medica Afghanistan supports traumatized women and girls whose integrity has been violated being by family, society or war through three strands of work: legal aid, advocacy on women's rights, and psychosocial health. Before working with Medica, Humaira was active in the field of humanitarian assistance through her work with an Afghan NGO (HDCAW) located in Peshawar, Pakistan. She has a Degree in Business Administration and is a certified psychosocial counselor specializing in Sexual & Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and trauma.

Mahbouba Seraj

Ms. Seraj is the founder and director of Soraya Mashal Consulting, working with Afghan NGOs to empower women, disseminate information and implement Monitoring and Evaluation of women's projects and initiatives all over the country. Born in Kabul, she graduated from Malalai High School for girls and Kabul University, and is now working on her Masters Degree on line. After 26 years in exile, she returned to her beloved Afghanistan at the end of 2003 and has been working with the women and children of Afghanistan ever since. She is the creator and announcer of a radio program for women by the name of "Our Beloved Afghanistan by Mahbouba Seraj" which has been broadcasted all over Afghanistan. She also established Women's Listening Circles in the villages of Afghanistan, where women would gather to listen and discuss different topics of previously recorded radio programs. She has been a tireless advocate for Women's rights, pushing for women's participation in the Peace Jirga, as well as in the Peace High Council.

Asila Wardak

Ms Wardak is currently the Director General of Human Rights and International Women's Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Afghanistan, as well as a dedicated Human and Women's right activist, and one of the founders of AWN. Previously she worked with the World Bank, UNDP, UNAMA, CARE and Canada Fund. In her work, Asila served Afghan women during the Taliban regime through the provision of aid, and offered capacity building programs for women. She has a solid track record advancing issues such as gender, transitional justice, community mobilization, and women's leadership. Asila is equally committed to civil society empowerment. She participated actively in the Afghan Delegation at the Bonn Conference 2001, the Emergency Loya Jirga, the Constitutional Loya Jirga, the Afghan –Pak Peace Jirga, and the Consultative Peace Jirga, where she raised women's voices. She was one of the female candidates from Wardak province in the preliminary elections of 2005.

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