



FEMINIST MAJORITY FOUNDATION

FEMINIST CAMPUS

WORLD'S LARGEST FEMINIST STUDENT NETWORK

Campaign for Afghan Women and Girls

WWW.FEMINISTCAMPUS.ORG

WWW.FEMINIST.ORG

BACKGROUND

The Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF) has been working to help Afghan Women and Girls since 1997, starting with our campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid. We continued our work after the Taliban regime collapsed. Our campaign was the first of its kind to build a US grassroots constituency around a foreign policy issue of women's rights. It successfully brought the Taliban regime's atrocities against women and girls in Afghanistan to the attention of the United States and the world. In 2002, the Feminist Majority Foundation intensified its nationwide public education campaign for Afghan women and girls to win the full and permanent restoration of women's rights, to promote the leadership of women in the planning and governing of post-Taliban Afghanistan, to increase and monitor the provision of emergency and reconstruction assistance to women and girls, to urge the expansion of peacekeeping forces, and to support the Afghan Ministry for Women's Affairs, the Afghan Independent Rights Commission and Afghan women-led non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Because of our work on behalf of Afghan women and girls, the Feminist Majority Foundation was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2002. With the support of literally tens of thousands of people, our work was key in stopping US and U.N. recognition of the Taliban and in winning extensive funding for Afghan women's programs.

GAINS FOR AFGHAN WOMEN AND GIRLS SINCE 2001

Afghan women and girls have made amazing progress in the past 15 years despite constant attacks by Taliban forces.

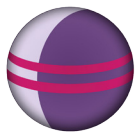
Just some of the gains of Afghan women and girls in the last 16 years.

- Millions of girls are going to school. During the Taliban regime, girls were banned from attending school and at most 5,000 were attending underground schools. Now, according to the Afghan Ministry of Education, more than 9.2 million children are enrolled in school, 3.6 million of whom are girls.
- According to the World Health Organization, life expectancy for Afghans has increased from about 44 years in 2002 to 59.3 years for men and 61.9 years for women today.
- The maternal mortality rate, which was the second highest in the world has decreased from 1,600 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births to 460. Some report that the maternal mortality rate is even lower at 327. However, a recent study of maternal mortality found much higher rates in rural areas,

placing it at about 800 deaths for every 100,000 births.

- Over 4000 midwives have been trained and now 23% of pregnant women have professional assistance while giving birth. USAID alone has built more than 600 health facilities and has trained 12,000 community health workers and 2,000 midwives. According to USAID the children-under-five mortality rate has also decreased by 62%. A report of the Council on Foreign Relations by feminist Gayle Tzemach Lemmon found that the number of health facilities capable of providing adequate reproductive care nearly doubled, increasing from 1,214 to 2,047.
- Many women are now active participants in public life. 35% of voters in the 2014 presidential and provincial elections were women, despite threats and acts of violence by the Taliban at the polls. A record number of women ran for provincial councils in 2014 - around 300. Today, women are 11% of the sitting judges and 20% of judges in training.
- The Afghan Women's Ministry and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission both have offices in many parts of Afghanistan that teach women's rights, literacy, job and professional skills, and fight sex and ethnic discrimination. Violence against women is an extremely serious problem; some call it pandemic. A revolutionary executive order, "The Elimination of Violence Against Women," was signed, but efforts by Afghan women's groups to have EVAW approved by parliament have so far failed. There are now domestic violence shelters in 11 provinces by Women for Afghan Women.
- Rates of women in the paid workforce are still quite small. Lemmon estimates "just 21% of the entire female urban workforce is employed." What's more there is a dire shortage of women teachers, lawyers, doctors, and professionals. For example, says Lemmon, women are "less than 10% of the judges, attorneys, and prosecutors."

There is no question that the gains for women and girls in Afghanistan are fragile and need substantial improvement, but no one can deny they are impressive given the nation's poverty, a nearly constant state of war for over 40 years, a strong patriarchal tradition, and the hostility of the insurgent Taliban and some 21 other extremist militia. FMF staff and researchers admire the determination of countless Afghan women and girls to move forward and seek education, employment and health care and Afghan feminist leaders - all of whom daily risk their lives in their struggle for advancement and equality.



FEMINIST MAJORITY FOUNDATION

FEMINIST CAMPUS

WORLD'S LARGEST FEMINIST STUDENT NETWORK

Campaign for Afghan Women and Girls

WWW.FEMINISTCAMPUS.ORG

WWW.FEMINIST.ORG

CURRENT HOSTILITIES

Since the fall of the Taliban, over a 1000 girls schools have been burned down or destroyed, teachers of girls have been murdered; women's rights leaders have been assassinated; policewomen leaders have been murdered; school girls have had acid thrown in their faces; and women social workers and health care providers have been assassinated. But despite these attacks and threats of attacks by Taliban and other militant groups, courageous Afghan women and girls go to school, work, seek health care, and voted in record numbers in both the 2014 elections.

GOALS

- Increase security and safety for and an end to violence against Afghan women and girls;
- Increase public awareness of the plight of Afghan women and girls;
- Support Afghan women's rights, health care and education;
- Increase and monitor the provision of emergency /reconstruction assistance to Afghan women and girls;
- Work to ensure that women are at the center of the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the peace process.

1. PUBLIC EDUCATION

Through our website, media interviews, news stories, op-eds, visibility events, speaking engagements, organizational briefings, online organizing, and public education materials, the Feminist Majority Foundation has worked to bring public attention to the fragility of women's rights in Afghanistan, the need for major reconstruction activity, and persistent security needs as well as the return of extreme militias and the Taliban to regions of Afghanistan. Our online Feminist Newswire provides ongoing reports and updates on the situation of women's rights and human rights in Afghanistan. Alongside news stories, we provide online action alerts related to topic like the need for US security troops and reconstruction aid as well as educational and health care programs for women and girls and direct aid to Afghan-women led NGOs.

2. AFGHAN WOMEN'S SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

This FMF program helps young Afghan women to pursue higher education in the US. Each of the scholarship recipients are committed to helping other Afghan women and girls. In any given academic year, over 30 Afghan women are studying in the United States with the help of our program. Since its inception in 2001, 111 women have been aided by this program. The Feminist Majority Foundation also helps

cover tuition costs, books and other expenses for Afghan women pursuing AA, BA, MA, and Ph.D degrees in the US.

With the aid of this program, eleven young women have received Associate degrees from two-year colleges, and 50 have received Bachelors degrees from four-year colleges or universities. Additionally, eleven have received Masters degrees, one has received a Ph.D. in Political Science, three are currently in medical school, one has earned a Doctorate in Pharmacy, and two more are currently in Doctor of Pharmacy programs. Many have returned to Afghanistan and several have worked in Afghan governmental agencies. Others work to further the status of Afghan women and girls through education, healthcare, and the media.

3. POLICY RESEARCH

From its inception, our Campaign for Afghan Women and Girls has been based on primary research. Throughout the campaign, we have interviewed Afghan women leaders about the plight of Afghan women and girls and our staff has traveled into the region and to Afghanistan many times. Our ability to report first-hand on conditions in the region has significantly increased our credibility with policy makers, enhanced our ability to propose concrete policy changes, and strengthened our advocacy campaign.

4. AFGHAN WOMEN'S CRAFT PROJECT

Our Afghan Women's Craft project raises additional funds for Afghan women and girls through online and event sales. Crafts are made by Afghan women or provided by Afghan organizations with all proceeds benefiting Afghan women and girls.

ORGANIZATIONAL OUTREACH

The Feminist Majority Foundation has provided leadership for the US feminist community on the issues faced by Afghan women and girls for the past 20 years. We have constantly briefed and provided materials to our colleagues in other US women's and human rights organizations about developments in the country and the need of Afghan women led organizations, the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs, and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. We work in coalition with Afghan women's organizations, as well as US and international women's rights and human rights organizations.



FEMINIST MAJORITY FOUNDATION

FEMINIST CAMPUS

WORLD'S LARGEST FEMINIST STUDENT NETWORK

Campaign for Afghan Women and Girls

WWW.FEMINISTCAMPUS.ORG

WWW.FEMINIST.ORG



FEMINIST MAJORITY FOUNDATION

FEMINIST CAMPUS

WORLD'S LARGEST FEMINIST STUDENT NETWORK

Campaign for Afghan Women and Girls

WWW.FEMINISTCAMPUS.ORG

WWW.FEMINIST.ORG