

---

---

## AIL's IMPACT IN 2018

- 1,334,654 Afghans received education, health services and teacher training or benefited from AIL teachers trained and magazines published (over 17.2 million since 1996)
- 246,152 Afghans (70% women) received health services (2.9 million since 1996)
- 177,406 Afghan women received health education (3 million since 1996)
- 766 teachers trained (28,171 since 1996)
- 848,580 students of trained teachers have a better education and learn critical thinking skills (9.9 million since 1996)
- 3,574 civil society members trained in leadership, human rights, peace, administration and health (39,917 since 1996)
- 48 grassroots community-based schools, centers and clinics supported (379 since 1996).



### Afghan Institute of Learning Program Overview

*“Education is the key that unlocks human potential but it is most effective when people are healthy, the economy is stable and the country secure. All of these things are linked together.*

*The country must be secure in order for people to feel safe leaving their houses. Security means they can go out to be educated, hold down jobs and contribute to society and seek healthcare. The education must give people knowledge but also critical thinking and problem solving skills and the ability to deal peacefully with conflict.*

*Educated people are better able to get jobs that support a family and are less likely to be lured into anti-social behavior. This in turn, helps to make society more secure. Ample job opportunity is founded on a secure economy. Finally, people need to be healthy in order to be able to learn and work and contribute to the economy. The malnourished and sick cannot learn or work effectively.*

*In order to fully realize human potential a holistic approach is needed that addresses all four issues together: education, security, economic stability and healthcare.”*

*Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, Executive Director*

#### **Mission of Afghan Institute of Learning**

The mission of AIL is to provide education, training and health services to vulnerable Afghans in order to foster self-reliance, critical thinking skills, and community participation throughout Afghanistan. The AIL is committed to bringing peace and dignity to Afghan people as they struggle to overcome poverty, oppression, devastation, and injustice wrought by the last quarter century of war and instability. In particular, AIL's internationally recognized work is improving the health and education of Afghan women and children.

## **About the Afghan Institute of Learning**

AIL is an Afghan non-governmental organization (NGO) run mainly by women. It was founded in 1995 by Dr. Sakena Yacoobi. We address the problem of poor access for Afghan women and children to education, training and health services. This lack of access leads to people being unable to support their lives and that has a huge impact on Afghan society and its development.

AIL has offices in Kabul and Herat, Afghanistan and employs about 450 Afghans, over 70% whom are women. AIL offers preschool through secondary education and training opportunities for teachers in modern interactive, critical thinking teaching methodologies. In addition, we provide training to teachers and members of civil society in subjects such as human rights, women's rights, leadership, and peace, democracy, health and other subjects. Our clinics provide health education and health care and support village based Community Health Workers posts.

AIL aims for its programs to become self-sufficient so in time communities are able to provide for their own needs. To facilitate this independence, AIL action is demand driven dictated by each community's requests and requires community participation from the start in all projects. Best results are achieved when everyone is integrally involved so AIL works closely with community leaders in the planning, development and implementation of all projects.

Communities now contribute 30% to 50% of the resources needed for a project. These contributions can be volunteer help, assistance with security, donated space, materials, and supplies and personnel to be teachers.

## **Learning Centers**

AIL improves lives by expanding opportunities for women and girls through education and training. The cornerstone of this effort is the community-based Learning Center model. A I L Learning Centers are educational and serve rural communities or areas of urban poor and each center is tailored to that community's needs.

Learning Centers offer preschool through secondary education, train teachers and administrators. Classes can include literacy, numeracy, computer, beautician, chemistry, algebra, physics, trigonometry, English, Dari, Pashto, Arabic, knitting, sewing/tailoring, carpet weaving, embroidery, calligraphy, and art.

In addition, centers incorporate into the classroom teaching about human rights, peace, health, democracy and current events. Centers hold leadership workshops, teaching how to be a leader and advocate for one's rights.

Some center students just want to learn to read and write while others want to learn an income generating skill such as sewing. Some children are behind their peer group in school so come to the center to take remedial classes to catch up. We find students become enthusiastic about learning once they have completed a class and go onto take other subjects.

AIL has an innovative literacy class using texting on mobile phones. This approach is highly effective with illiterate women and girls reaching 4th grade literacy in 4 months.

AIL began its Learning Centers in 1996 with support for a refugee school and since then has opened or

supported more than 359 centers. AIL currently operates or supports 44 Learning Centers, including specialist centers for street children, orphanages and the disabled. AIL continues to expand add centers and to reach new provinces and distant rural areas.

### **Training**

AIL's Teacher Training Program focuses on quality, in-depth education for Afghan teachers in Afghanistan. Quality teacher training means quality education for students. Once teachers are trained in the basics of teaching, AIL offers multi- day and mini workshops to provide continuing education for teachers. The provision of intensive workshops for small groups, in close proximity to where the teachers work is effective in reaching many teachers who lack sufficient training.

Training includes the basics of teaching techniques, capacity building, and preschool education. In addition, workshop subjects include creating the classroom environment, communications, report writing, management, lesson materials, testing, evaluation, history, IT, writing, and English. Other topics include general health, reproductive health, women's rights, role of women, self-immolation, leadership, peace and democracy. AIL continues to reach out to rural, insecure areas where the quality of teaching is low and often men and women must be taught in separate classes. AIL's impact, through its model of training, supervision, and monitoring is most clear in these areas.

Many of AIL's workshops, particularly those in health, women's rights, leadership, democracy, and peace are attended by teachers but also by older women and girls, members of civil society. We find people are now asking for more in-depth information about subjects. Workshops build people's capacity whether they are teachers or others.

### **Health Services**

AIL considers access to health care a human right and takes a holistic approach to providing health care to women and children. Health education is integral to all of AIL's activities, as knowledge about health empowers individuals to care for themselves and their families.

AIL was the first organization to teach about health at centers and schools and recently provided health training to teachers in public schools in cooperation with the Ministries of Health and Education in Herat.

AIL presently operates 4 clinics (2 in rural Herat, 1 in rural Kabul, 1 in a suburb of Kabul) and provides clinical services and health education to two orphanages and a street children program. The clinics provide pre and post- natal care, safe delivery, well-baby care, immunizations, and primary-care services.

AIL clinics also have mobile teams that visit AIL centers and mobile outreach units at 4 Learning Centers and supports 14 Community Health Worker (CHW) teams through its clinics in Herat. AIL has taken the next step toward improving maternal/child health by offering Expectant Mothers Workshops. These workshops teach expectant mothers and their caregivers about safe pregnancy and childbirth practices so they have a better chance of both mother and baby survival. Most women who attend go on to choose the safer option of a medical facility for birthing.

## **Culture Revival Program**

In April, 2011, the Afghan Institute of Learning signed an agreement with the Ministry of Information and Culture to work in the cultural sector with officials of the local government in Herat. Immediately, the staff members of AIL set to work on setting up a wide array of cultural programs.

The Gawhar Shad Musalla Complex in Herat dates back to the 15th century. It was chosen to house many different aspects of the culture program. AIL provided support for the Gawhar Shad Begum Library and Research Center which opened in the Gawhar Shad Mausoleum. Thousands of local students and members of the general public have visited the library

Close to the Gawhar Shad Musalla Complex is the Citadel where AIL has several classrooms which teach traditional Afghan arts and crafts. Classes are offered in calligraphy, miniature painting, carpet weaving, silk weaving, glass and tile making. Some instructors have art degrees from Herat University and others are skilled practicing craftsmen.

AIL publishes a magazine and books. The magazine focuses on education and health topics and is published at least twice a year. The books published include those on topics such as leadership skills, teacher training, health, peace education. School books include poetry, English for Kindergarten, lessons plans for teachers and school policies.

## **International Conference on Love and Forgiveness**

Although AIL has made a significant impact on the education and health of Afghans, the negative impact of continuing violence and war on communities is difficult to reverse. AIL's cultural program that has begun to reconnect people with the ancient culture and peaceful values of Afghans. The next step for AIL was to host an international conference on love and forgiveness in April 2012. This event highlighted Afghan writers, poets, scholars, and musicians. Scholars made presentations about the historical way of life and the writings of poets such as Rumi. Musicians, linked with Rumi's poetry, reminded participants of the beauty of music and Afghanistan's poetic traditions.

International and Afghan leaders attended the event and live streaming enabled Afghan school children and communities to share in the learning experience. The conference was a huge success and widely publicized throughout Afghanistan which resulted in many requests for such conferences in other areas.

Since then, AIL has held 9 additional conferences, including one in Mazar e Sharif and one in Panjsher. Herat school students and poets have already begun meeting in symposiums to discuss a variety of topics and concepts presented in the conference. They are learning about the history and characteristics of Afghans as a cultured, loving, peaceful and forgiving people.

## **Legal Services for Poor Women**

In 2015, AIL worked with the Ministry of Women Affairs (MOWA) and the Human Rights Commission (HRC) to open a Women's Legal Clinic Project in Herat. This provides legal support for indigent women. There are five experienced female lawyers in an office near Herat's courts. The clinic assists women referred by the MOWA and HRC, as well as women who hear about the project on the radio or through other means. Women with no

financial resources are represented for free; others pay as they are able.

Staff lawyers work on a variety of cases affecting women, including child custody battles, protecting property or inheritance rights, child marriage, marriage without consent of the girl, and abuse, divorce and business issues.

The lawyers also regularly speak on legal issues on Radio Meraj. This broadcasts inform people about legal matters such as rule of law, constitution, human rights and the services offered by the center.

### **Support for Radio Meraj**

In 2015 Dr. Sakena Yacoobi founded Radio Meraj in Herat. The station is housed in AIL Herat's offices and ALL staff provides some programming and technical support. The station is highly regarded and has won a number of top awards. It broadcasts 20 hours a day to 9 of the 15 districts of Herat reaching a population of 2.9million. A major purpose of the programs on Radio Meraj is to enlighten minds and public opinions of listeners. There are programs on health, human rights, VAW, values and many other topics. Programs are specifically designed to help women take an active role in society and to educate them in how to look after their families. Women are given the knowledge to plan and manage and to develop self-expression in social situations.

There are also programs directed toward the development of youth emphasizing the importance of education, core values, respect for elders and hopefulness. Meraj had a special program in relation to International Day against Drugs to motivate youth to avoid drugs and not to destroy their future through substance abuse. The station regularly has graduate students from Dr. Yacoobi's Leadership Class as guest speakers.

### **Support for School Programs**

Dr.Yacoobi founded 4 private schools, two in Herat and two in Kabul. AIL staff provide teacher training and give support to particular programs run within the schools, such as girls' computing coding and a co-ed leadership project. The girls coding program is very popular and one of the teams that entered the 2017 Technovation Challenge competition, won first place at the regional level. The girls designed a literacy app which has audio, alphabet, words and phrases to help illiterate people work on literacy from home on their mobile phones.

The Leadership Project, supported by AIL, provides 30 students (15 female) with a two year course in leadership including studying human rights, English, how to be a leader, how to conduct discussions, management, racial discrimination, peace, transformation leadership, transaction leadership and social and societal issues. In addition to classroom study, the group also goes on visits to government and organization sites and conducts community work such as environment clean-up, greening projects and outreach to hospital patients. Graduates of the course set up Student Parliament in their school which is involved in student relations, student/staff matters and work on ways to improve the learning environment. This helps students remain engaged in political and social issues and actions, learning to express their opinions and work towards a better functioning society whether that be within a family, community, school or city.

## **AIL's Impact**

AIL's visionary long-term goals have defined its programming and this has created lasting impact on the lives of women and others in the communities where it works. Learning Centers have now become community centers and networking places for women. AIL has held Women's Networking Conferences in Herat.

Data can show impact but stories give a sense of the depth of impact and changes in thinking and behavior following the acquisition of skills, knowledge and self-confidence. We hear from workshop participants through closing surveys. Uniformly women are pleased with the experience in class or workshop and come away with greater knowledge and more belief in their own capacity to think critically, problem solve and get on with others to resolve issues.

AIL continues to set up new projects in response to requests from communities through its basic programs. It is expanding its geographical reach into new provinces. Areas of continued growth include, culture revival and tree planting/greening projects that help restore both the historical and physical past of Afghanistan. The facilitation of Emerging Leaders Groups support their efforts to develop their own community projects. AIL continues to be innovative in its thinking and expands outreach through new means such as radio programming and soon educational television programs as well.

AIL's programs are making a difference in the lives of many who have few resources or opportunity to improve their circumstances. Lives are changed through the acquisition of literacy and job skills and leadership and capacity building. AIL is helping people and communities be ready to take the next steps toward independence self-sufficiency creating a momentum towards systemic change and improvement in society.

*September 9, 2019*