

TOGETHER ALBERTA

Building Resilience Through Education: COVID-19 Response in Afghanistan

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WAfghan) is working to develop adaptable COVID-19 responses that address both the immediate public health concerns arising from the virus spread, the associated social and economic impacts, and their links to our core mission as an organization – to empower Afghan women and girls through access to quality education.

We know that the nature of the pandemic is deepening gender inequalities globally, meaning that girls and women in conflict settings, and particularly those from single mother households are carrying the heaviest burdens in this public health crisis. For CW4WAfghan, this means that our beneficiaries are among the most vulnerable, spurring us to action to address both immediate material needs and to think big about how our programs can mitigate the long-term consequences for communities where we work. Our Country Office staff in Kabul have been working tirelessly on the frontlines to develop and promote these initiatives.

In order to address material needs, we have engaged our support base here in Canada to create an [emergency food security campaign](#), allowing us to distribute packages of staple foods to lone mother households whose daughters normally attend our [Fatema Tul Zahra Girls School](#) in Kabul, which is now closed. The girls would normally receive a hot lunch each day, which is the main meal for many in this economically disadvantaged neighbourhood of Kabul, where wage earners have lost already meagre income as a result of quarantine. One distribution of food packages has already taken place in May, and with lockdown measures in Afghanistan likely to continue for the foreseeable future, and schools to remain closed until September, we are planning further distributions in June, July and August.



Food packages being distributed to the families of students at the CW4WAfghan's girl's school in Kabul

Through our [Darakht-e Danesh](#) digital library, we have also been supporting the Afghan Ministry of Education in their wider pandemic response, adding new content relevant to addressing the pandemic itself, including translation of a comic book about hygiene, handwashing and physical distancing to prevent virus spread. We are supporting the development of new distance education tools including localizing a reading program for children established by our partner [Storyweaver](#) specifically for use in Afghanistan, and launching our new courseware site, DDL Courses, which includes modules developed in partnership with University of British Columbia. Our DDL staff have been busy producing video lessons for different grades and subjects that will be broadcast on television by the Ministry of Education (See attached photos and video).



CW4WAfghan staff filming video lessons for students to be broadcasted on television.

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For those families who are experiencing lockdown and do not have access to computers or internet, we are developing “learning baskets- at home learning essentials” that will include a number of learning resources for safe home use by children and families. This project will close the learning gap for female students in particular, ensuring that when schools do re-open, girls haven’t lost ground in terms of educational attainment. By distributing home learning packages to students and their families, including learning materials suitable for every family member, and nutrition and hygiene educational resources for parents specifically, household heads will see the benefits of ongoing learning at home.

While many of these virtual learning resources have long been a part of the CW4WAfghan toolkit, they have become invaluable for many of our partners too, in the face of a global quarantine. These are just some of the innovations we are developing as we respond and adapt to the rapidly changing situation on the ground and we are so happy to have the opportunity to share our insights and evidence base for the benefit of more communities. As Afghanistan faces the double threats of a public health crisis and tenuous peace process, CW4WAfghan is on the ground, working with Afghans to limit the risks and long term impacts for the most vulnerable in this crisis.

CW4WAfghan relies on the continuing generosity of individual donors and volunteers and work hard to ensure that every dollar donated will directly impact the quality and sustainability of our education programs in Afghanistan.

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