



# ALLIANCE NEWS

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## Alliance Launches New Website!

Thanks to the generous support of USAID's Higher Education Project (HEP), the Alliance has completely updated and revised its website. The new website will soon contain many interactive features for its Central Asian partners and volunteers. These interactive features include a private Alliance Chat page, where Central Asian women can sign into a private, password-protected chat room to practice English and have a direct cultural exchange with an Alliance volunteer.



The Alliance plans to launch the Alliance Chat by the end of May, 2008. Alliance volunteers and partners will also soon be able to sign into a password-protected section called the Alliance Forum, where guest experts will post lectures on topics related to women's rights in Central Asia and then lead an online follow-up discussion relating to the lecture. Stay tuned for more information about these and many other new features! And please take a moment to take a look at our new site: [www.aiwr.org](http://www.aiwr.org).

## Thank You to Our New Donors

Over the last six months, the Alliance has been able to leap forward in its work with Afghan women due to three generous grants from The Gratia Ainslie Foundation, Washington Mutual Bank, and USAID's Higher Education Project (HEP). All three of these grants have been in support of the Alliance's Armchair ESL Program for Afghan women.

With the help of the three grants, the Alliance has been able to completely revise its website and to triple its Armchair ESL Program from ten Afghan students to over forty women and girls. The Alliance hopes to continue to expand its Armchair ESL Program so that it can continue to open the world to more Afghan women and girls. We are deeply grateful to the Gratia Ainslie Foundation, USAID/HEP, and Washington Mutual Bank for their crucial support. Thank you!!

## Introducing Our New Kazakh Armchair ESL Program

In November of 2007, the Alliance launched its Armchair ESL Program in Kazakhstan. The Alliance is working in partnership with the Feminist League, one of Kazakhstan's oldest and most influential women's rights organizations, to offer Armchair ESL classes to the Feminist League's key staff members.

The pilot project is currently limited to four Kazakh women, but given the great success of the pilot project we hope to soon expand the project to many more Kazakh women leaders and future women leaders. For more information about the Feminist League and our Kazakh Armchair ESL Program, please see our website: [www.aiwr.org](http://www.aiwr.org).

## Volunteer Spotlight - Anne Ford: Connecting Rural Australia to Remote Northern Afghanistan

Few Westerners have had the opportunity to interact with Afghanistan's remote northern Badakhshan province. However, one woman from rural Australia spent over six months donating two evenings a week of her time to volunteer in the Alliance's Armchair ESL Program to teach an Afghan woman faculty member from Badakhshan University. Anne Ford is an experienced ESL Teacher and a radiographer with an impressive international background of living and working in many different countries, including teaching English in Yemen, working with a medical team in Dharamsala, India, working with children in France, tending property in Scotland, and traveling extensively throughout Asian, European, and Middle Eastern countries. Yet, by volunteering in our Armchair ESL Program from her own home, Anne was accessing one of the most remote regions of her travel career – Badakhshan, Afghanistan.



*The city of Faisabad, in Badakhshan province, where Badakhshan University is located*

## Alliance Founder Wins Phi Beta Kappa Pathfinder Award

On May 1, 2008, the Alliance's founder and Executive Director, Lisa Herb, was presented with the Pathfinder Award by the Puget Sound Association of Phi Beta Kappa. The award was presented to Lisa for her work in providing long-distance educational opportunities for women in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Lisa accepted the award on behalf of all the Alliance's hard-working and dedicated volunteers who make the Alliance's programs possible. Lisa also dedicated the award to the women and girls of Afghanistan, who, despite years of extreme hardship and conflict, continue to reach out to the world for opportunities and education. It is their courage and strength that inspires us to do what we do.



*Anne signs into Skype twice a week to meet with her Afghan student in Badakhshan*

Twice a week, Anne signed into Skype to meet with an Afghan woman professor from Badakhshan University, to provide live, one-on-one English classes. Anne worked with the same student since early Fall of 2007 – thus providing a service that is not otherwise available in Badakhshan – English classes with a trained, native English speaking ESL teacher. We would like to thank Anne for all her hard work and dedication. Thank you!!!



## Partner Spotlight: A Message From an Afghan Armchair ESL Student

One of our Armchair ESL Students is a young woman who heads the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) Youth Committee in Kabul. We asked this very talented, very inspiring young woman to write an article for our newsletter and she submitted the following essay. We thank her, very much, for this powerful contribution to our newsletter.

### *Essay on Women in Afghanistan*

Afghanistan is a country where the whole power is the hands of men and they can use it the way they want whether by ignoring women's right, whether by beating them or whether by using them as their bought toys. In this country women never enjoy their rights that are given to them in Islam or the rights that they have according to the constitution.

I am the one who has always been against these all because I am an open minded girl and I have grown in a family where daughters and sons are treated in the same way. Unfortunately, there are so many families who never give their sons and daughters the same right and they believe that the ones who can do something for them, who can brighten their names are only their sons and the girls are worth for nothing as they would go to another house and would do nothing for their parents however it isn't so ... They are the girls who give them full respect and love, who are kind to them than anyone else, who can give any kind of sacrifices just for their happiness and who are the only ones who will look after them when nobody wants to do that.

If it was in my hand and I had that power to bring a change in the society I would want the women enjoy all their rights and do what they want by their own choice not by force of anybody. I would want women to get the highest degree of education to be a good mother for their children. I would want women to be able to take part in any discussion whether inside home, whether for the society or for the country. I would want that women should never face any kind of violence (physical, economical, domestic, psychological...), by their brothers, fathers or their husbands.

I want never wanted anybody think of girls as nothing and treat both girls and boys equally. I would want the girls and women should be given the chance to give their ideas and it should be respected. And the most important I would want the women understand their rights completely and then stand for their rights.

I just hope to see an Afghanistan where there is no discrimination between men and women and they both enjoy equal rights in all aspects. May my wish come true one day (but there is no light I can see, unfortunately)...

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