

FIVE YEARS AFTER THE FALL OF KABUL

One Mission. Five Years On.

That Afghan women lead — wherever they are. Two programs carry that mission: one reaches women whose safety cannot wait, the other builds the political and economic power of Afghan women for the long term.

1,236

AT-RISK WOMEN LEADERS AND FAMILY MEMBERS
EVACUATED IN 2021, THEN FOLLOWED THROUGH
TO PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT

CRISIS RESPONSE

18

WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS
SUPPORTED THROUGH DIRECT ASSISTANCE
FOR SAFETY AND RELOCATION, 2025–26

CRISIS RESPONSE

483

WOMEN LEADERS SUPPORTED THROUGH AGHAAZ,
2024–25 — REBUILDING PATHWAYS, FELLOWSHIPS
AND ADVOCACY

AGHAAZ

The Afghan crisis has only deepened

In the five years since the fall of Kabul, the Taliban has removed women from public life almost entirely — from classrooms, from workplaces, from parks and gyms, from courtrooms, from the street. Girls remain barred from secondary school and university. Women have been pushed out of most employment, restricted from travelling freely, and stripped of legal protection. United Nations experts, human rights organizations and legal scholars increasingly describe this architecture by its proper name: gender apartheid.

The effects compound. When women are forced out of work, household income collapses. When mobility is criminalized, gender-based violence and child marriage rise and the routes out of them close. Years of isolation have produced a mental health emergency alongside the economic one.

“It does not simply restrict daily life. It polices women's very existence, turning every street, every home, and every interaction into a site of surveillance and fear.”

AFGHAN WOMAN LEADER AND VITAL VOICES PARTNER

WHAT HAS BEEN DECREED

Since August 2021, the Taliban's supreme leader has issued more than **260 decrees and directives**. Roughly **166 of them** restrict the rights, dignity, autonomy and freedom of women and girls — not a series of restrictions, but a system built deliberately, one instrument at a time.



Yet Afghan women and girls remain defiant. When U.S. policy shifts in 2025 cut funding that had reached thousands of women inside the country, most international organizations closed their Afghanistan portfolios. Vital Voices did not.



Vital Voices evacuation mobilization, Afghanistan, August 2021. Within weeks of the Taliban's return to power, Vital Voices joined a coalition of Afghan and American women leaders to move at-risk women leaders and their families to safety.

CRISIS RESPONSE PROGRAM

When a woman's safety cannot wait

Women who once led classrooms, businesses and clinics now reach out to us in secret, and the requests have grown more urgent as the space to operate inside Afghanistan closes. The program finds women leading their communities from the shadows, and meets each one in the moment: relocation, legal assistance, mental health services and livelihood support.

Crisis response cannot be delivered at arm's length. Each case runs on trusted, longtime referral partners who maintain women's rights networks inside Afghanistan — relationships built over years, impossible to rebuild once they lapse. In 2026 this work continues as individualized case support for women inside and outside the country.

Safety Confidential planning, relocation and emergency resources

Legal Representation and refugee advocacy through resettlement

Care Culturally responsive mental health and livelihood support

STORY OF IMPACT Rana and Sahar taught girls literacy out of their homes for three years. When Taliban authorities discovered the underground school, both evaded arrest and fled with their families. Vital Voices carried their relocation through a trusted, longtime referral partner.

AGHAAZ - REBIRTH PROGRAM

Rebuilding power in exile and at home

Aghaaz means “the beginning, or rebirth” in Dari. Where crisis response answers the emergency, Aghaaz answers what follows: standing beside Afghan women who stayed, building the political power of those who fled, and pushing gender apartheid onto the world's agenda — through three pillars: **Rebuild, Lead, Advocate.**

REBUILD — CANADA & THE UNITED STATES

65 women received English language classes in Canada

42 women completed driving lessons

29 women received small grants to start businesses

60 Afghan women in the U.S. took part in the needs assessments that shaped Women for Afghan Women's assistance

LEAD — FELLOWSHIPS

6 of 10 Leadership Journey fellows secured permanent positions after six-month host placements

10 women technologists placed in remote international work through Aseel

“A safe space to work without fear or restrictions — to support my family and rebuild my career.” — ALIYA, WOMEN IN TECH FELLOW

Global advocacy and gender-apartheid accountability

ATLANTIC COUNCIL

Established the Coalition to End Gender Apartheid — a global coalition led by Afghan women with a 12-member steering committee — and a centralized evidence repository.

WOMEN FOR PEACE & PARTICIPATION

Convened a 15-member political participation group and a plan for engaging the UN Security Council, Moscow Format, SCO, OIC and Doha Process, validated by 60 women leaders.

FARAGEER

Secured engagement from **4 new UN Member States** at the ICJ and ICC; hosted 2 webinars (160+ participants), CSW and UNGA side events and 4 bilaterals; and mentored 30 young Afghans on gender apartheid.

AFGHAN AMERICAN FOUNDATION

Advanced advocacy capacity across six U.S. states: 20 leaders completed workshops and 6 community campaigns were implemented.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS FIRST

Trained 35 Afghan women lawyers across 16 sessions; launched a secure microsite documenting Taliban decrees; supported **50+ anonymized legal inputs** to the ICC and CEDAW.

THE TIRANA RESOLUTION, 2024

Vital Voices supported 39 delegates behind a shared platform: aid direct to women, a seat at every Taliban negotiation, and gender apartheid named a crime against humanity.

“My voice reached people who have the power to influence change, and that gave me hope. Even though I could not be there in person, having this platform meant that Afghan women were seen, heard, and remembered.”

SANA, SPEAKING TO A UN SESSION FROM KABUL VIA FARAGEER

WHY CONTINUITY MATTERS

The infrastructure already exists — vetted partners, secure channels, and Afghan women leaders who know precisely where new funding goes. The lifelines that closed in 2025 did not fail; their funding stopped.