



SUSTAINED PROGRAM FACT SHEET
Rubia, Afghanistan
November 2012

Organization Name: Rubia
Program Title: *Sewing Lasting Threads of Change (ToC) in Afghanistan*
Website: www.rubiahandwork.org

Mission:

Rubia's mission is to develop economic opportunities through craft heritage, to support education and to promote health and well being for Afghan women and their families.

Previously Funded Program:

The DFW grant of \$36,416 in November 2010 funded the development and implementation of Rubia's *Threads of Change Program* in Nangahar Province, as originally proposed, and also in the province of Farah. Through our grant, 450 non-literate women from Nangahar Province graduated from the *Threads of Change Program*, and 300 from Farah.

Sustained Program Objective:

The objective of the sustained program grant is to educate and empower 500 Afghan women and girls in Farah Province with Rubia's *Threads of Change* curriculum. *Threads of Change* teaches women and girls to exercise their human rights and decision-making power at the household and community levels in order to improve their well-being and that of their families.

Location of Program and Information about Afghanistan

Insecurity, due to thirty years of war in Afghanistan, compounded by conservative cultural norms, has kept



women and girls from realizing their basic right to education and accessing information that is essential for living a healthy life. Poverty, illiteracy, scarcity of clinics and insufficiently trained medical practitioners have resulted in poor basic health conditions. Afghans, especially those living in rural areas, do not practice basic hygiene that prevents disease transmission. Maternal mortality is the worst in the world (1.4%); and infant mortality is the second worst (14.9%). 24% of children die before their fifth birthday. Lack of economic resources, exacerbated by prolonged conflict, is at the root of women's deprivation from decent health, education, and other basic human rights.

Sewing Lasting Threads of Change in Afghanistan will be implemented in the following districts of Afghanistan's Farah Province: Anardara, Jowin, and Farah City (Markaz). Farah province is especially poor



and isolated. Most districts in Farah suffer from lack of health care services, such as equipped hospitals, doctors and nurses, and medicines.

Life Challenges Faced by Women and Girls:

The Situation for Women in Farah Province: Ignorance, Isolation and Immobility

Traditional gender norms and low literacy (8% for women) prevent women from awareness of -- and practicing -- their basic rights. Local culture is a critical barrier to girls claiming their basic right to education. 80% of Farah’s population is Pashtun. According to tradition, education beyond grade 6 may bring a girl’s “honor” into question: she may get “a bad name” and bring shame on the family. The result is a high dropout rate after grade 6. Furthermore, illiteracy has resulted in religious fanaticism, and most parents in Farah do not understand that Islam grants girls and women the right to education. Given these socio-cultural barriers, families do not allow their daughters to work or study in other provinces outside Farah.

With high poverty and unemployment (averaging 40% in the country) in the province, more families have been arranging for early marriage of their daughters. According to Zala Ahmed, the Executive Director of our Afghan partner NGO, Humanitarian Organization for Local Development (HOLD), older men are paying \$13,000 - \$15,000 for child brides. 40% of girls marry before age 14. Another option to early marriage for girls in Farah is to earn income for their families weaving carpets or making handicrafts. It makes more sense for parents living in Farah province to send their girls to work than to school. Women are also excluded from the learning, exposure to practical information and self-confidence that geographic mobility and civic participation afford. Even in the urban parts of Farah, husbands do not permit their wives to take part in community meetings. Females are restricted to the home.

Program Description:

In response to illiteracy, poor health and hygiene, and lack of knowledge of women’s rights, Rubia created the Threads of Change (ToC) Curriculum. While participating in guided discussions with the aid of a skilled facilitator, Farah women will learn how to embroider illustrations of the lessons promoting family health and



hygiene, women’s rights to education and voting, banning child marriage, and women as conflict resolvers. ToC combines civic participation and health and hygiene education with practical skills enhancement through refining women’s marketable embroidery skills. Embroidering these images introduces basic information that seclusion and illiteracy have blocked from their lives. For example, while embroidering a mother breastfeeding, women will hear about its advantages over bottle-feeding for their babies’ health.

With funding from DFW, our Afghan partner, Humanitarian Organization for Local Development (HOLD), will facilitate training of 500 rural women in the ToC curriculum and 200 men, the husbands of the married women.

Half of the women who will be trained are married, one quarter are widows, and one quarter are unmarried girls aged 13-19. The girls, who are especially eager to be trained, can influence their households positively through teaching their parents and siblings to respect each other's rights, be better citizens, and follow more healthy and hygienic practices. Similarly married women and widows can share their newly acquired

knowledge and understanding with their families. Accordingly, 4000 more Afghans indirectly benefit from the program, with a mean family size of eight in Farah province.

Male trainers will facilitate an orientation session for both community leaders and 200 male relatives of the female trainees. Male trainers will orient local leaders, including Maliks and Mullahs, about the educational value of the program. Respected elders can explain to the local men how women learning about the benefits of health, education and human rights can benefit the whole community. Local male leaders can champion the program and persuade other influential men to re-imagine long-held beliefs about the role of women in their society.

Furthermore, each month ToC trainers will gather fathers and brothers together in a community space, such as a mosque, to familiarize male relatives with the curriculum. Throughout the training, the husbands will have the opportunity to air their questions and concerns about their wives’ and daughters’ engagement in this new program.

Summary of Program Budget:

Each year \$15,000 will be spent on implementing the training program in three districts of Farah province. This includes salaries of the trainers and monitoring staff, transportation, and costs of printed materials.

| Program Budget | |
|--|-----------------------|
| Expense | Amount (US \$) |
| Salaries for ToC Trainers and Monitoring Staff | \$18,900 |
| Transportation for Trainers and Trainees | \$ 8,190 |
| Curriculum Materials and Training Costs | \$17,910 |
| Program Total | \$45,000 |

Projected Impact and How Impact will be Measured:

The six criteria for successful impact are:

- *Household Bargaining Power*
- *Economic and Financial Empowerment*
- *Respect for Women’s Rights*
- *Health and Hygiene*
- *Girls’ Education*
- *Women’s Leadership*

The last criterion, women’s leadership is reflected in the program’s participatory approach. One goal of Threads of Change is for women to practice and develop leadership skills that they will use in their community. Women’s emergence as leaders of change in Farah will begin with raising awareness of their rights. Understanding their rights and believing in their power—will enable women to exercise more influence in their families and communities.

The means of measuring achievement of the impact criteria are identified in the table below.

Impact of Sewing Lasting Threads of Change

| Criteria for Measurement of Impact | Household Bargaining Power | Economic, Financial Empowerment | Girls' Education | Respect for Women's Rights | Health and Hygiene | Women's Leadership |
|---|---|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Measure of Evaluating Impact | Reduction in Domestic Violence | No. of women with income generating skills | Enrollment in primary and secondary school | Women's Perception of dignity and self-respect | No. of families who wash hands often | No. of Women who Participate in Local Meetings |
| Measure of Evaluating Impact | Greater influence over family decisions | Money earned from sale of embroideries made after ToC training | Number of girls completing primary, secondary School | No. of Men who respect women's rights | Families have fewer illnesses | No. of Women who vote in local elections |
| Millennium Development Goals Achieved | 1-Eradicate Hunger, Poverty, 3,9 | 1-Eradicate Hunger, Poverty, 3,9 | 1, Primary Educ. 3,9 | 3-Gender Equality, 9- Security | 4-Child Mortality 3,9 | 3-Gender Equality, 9- Security |

Achievement of each criterion is matched with the **Millennium Development Goals** it advances. All of the criteria achieve the third MDG of Gender Equality. Similarly, the measures of economic security, human rights and leadership promote the ninth MDG that Afghanistan added to recognize the importance of peace in achieving the other 8 goals: *enhancing security*.

Rubia aspires that in 2017, the communities we have served in Farah Province will have achieved the following improvements in the status of women and girls:

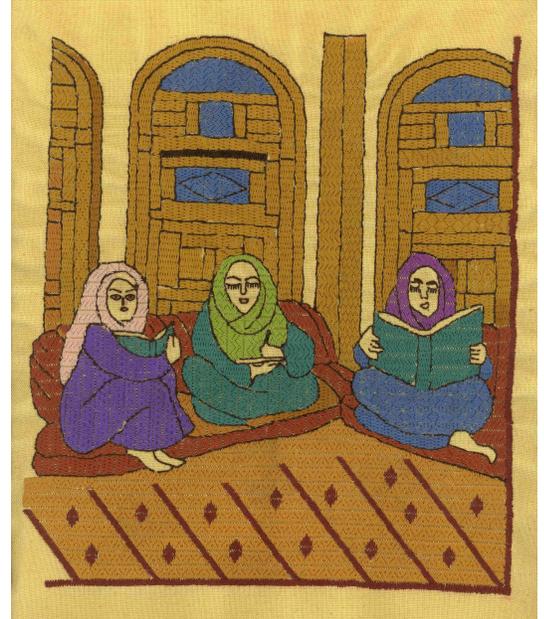
- More men will support women's rights
- Women will be more respected in their communities as leaders
- Women will have more decision making power at household level
- Women's Literacy will double from 8% to 16%
- Child marriage will fall from 40% to 20%
- Girls primary education will double from 40% to 80%
- Twice as many girls will finish 12th grade
- Women will apply their knowledge of health and hygiene to their families

Voices of the Women

Quotes from *Threads of Change* Participants in Farah Province

"After joining these classes, I understood that I have the right to land inheritance. When my father died, two of my brothers took all the land. I am married and have 7 kids and my family hardly meets the daily necessities of life. After learning about my right to inheritance, I discussed it with my brothers, who were completely against it. Finally, after a year, I got my share of property from my brothers. It was a long and difficult procedure, but I made it with the courage and confidence I learned from the trainers. I learned in these classes that if I fight for my right, no one can take it from me as it is my right." - Participant from Kohdank village (Farah province) after 2 months of *Threads of Change* training

"I thank my son for convincing my husband to let me attend the classes. These classes not only provide me the chance to get aware of my rights and what is happening in other worlds, but also let me share my ideas. This is the first time in life that I was asked about my opinion on an issue as a woman. In Farah, both at home and in society, women are not allowed to share their point of view on anything and often are not asked their opinion. Due to these classes, I worked hard on not letting my daughter be married until she completes 12th grade. Before the classes, my husband did not understand her right to education and would have forced her to marry at a younger age." - Participant from Karizak village, in response to ToC curriculum



Hand-stitched "*Threads of Change*" embroidery, representing the importance of women's literacy.

"We are happy with the hard work of our trainer Miss Rahila. We learned about all our rights, before this training we thought a woman is a weak being and has no rights." - Participant of Joyan district in response to the training

"I think it is good to add men as well as direct beneficiaries, because it is not very much effective if we don't include men in awareness sessions. In Afghanistan, men are the prime decision makers at community level, and if they don't believe in women's rights and that their women should enjoy their rights such as education, employment, inheritance, and participation, then how would they let their women enjoy these rights?" - Zala Ahmed, Executive Director of HOLD, Rubia's implementing partner, on why sessions for men should be added to the *Threads of Change* training

Our special thanks to **Catherine Rielly, Ph.D., Executive Director, Rubia, Inc.** for creating the *DFW Sustained Program Fact Sheet November 2012*