



GIVING
FOR GOOD

DINING FOR WOMEN
SUPPORTS
VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN :-
MUSHROOM CULTIVATION
EXECUTED BY:- MATRICHAYA
HEAD OFFICE :- VEDAANSH CAMPUS, HARISHCHANDRA VIHAR,
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Women of Jharkhand, India take classes on mushroom cultivation on a rooftop.



DINING FOR *women* SERVES UP EMPOWERMENT

Child marriage is a controversial practice that is widespread across Middle Eastern countries like Afghanistan. Sometimes it is done through a custom called badal, whereby two families exchange women or children as brides. Other times, the marriage is a baad, with the bride serving as compensation for a crime to the groom's family. Repayment of debt or the acquisition of bride price serves as another motivation for families to marry off their female relatives at a young age.

Early child marriage puts girls at a substantially higher risk of abuse, sexual infections, pregnancy complications and maternal death. In fact, the World Health Organization states that outside of sub-Saharan Africa, Afghanistan's rate of maternal mortality is the second highest in the world. Pregnancy complications account for 32% of all deaths for girls ages 15-19.

Because of exclusionary local customs and pregnancy, young child brides are often unable or disallowed from continuing their education past their wedding day. Only about one in five adolescent Afghan girls can read—compared to one in two adolescent

boys—and there is a strong correlation between child marriage and illiteracy.

For 500 girls and teens in Northern Afghanistan, this fate may be avoided with the help of some women half a world away. About 8,000 women will gather in groups across the United States this month to share food and community in each other's homes. Most of them will share potluck-style meals, although some will meet over coffee, and others may enjoy dessert. While they take part in this "socializing with substance," they will learn about these young women and get to know the challenges they face. There is no required amount, but most of them will donate roughly the amount they might have spent in a restaurant: about \$35. These women are part of the world's largest educational giving circle. Dining For Women is dedicated to eradicating poverty among women and girls in the developing world.

Dining for Women began humbly 14 years ago, when one of its co-founders read an article that inspired her to host a potluck dinner in support of Women for Women International. A group of

about 20 friends raised over \$700 that first night and were inspired to continue their efforts. Co-founders Marsha Wallace and Barb Collins made it their mission to grow the power and reach of the organization. And grow it did.

"We're creating global citizens here from the US that are aware of international issues and are taking action," said Wendy Frattolin, Communications & Membership Director at Dining For Women.

Each month, a carefully-selected grantee is supported by the organization's 400 chapters. The money raised this month will go directly to Sahar Education in the Balkh Province, where it will be put to use in the prevention of early marriage of female students in two Northern Afghanistan schools.

"The single best thing we can do to end extreme poverty is to create equality for women and girls internationally," said Beth Ellen Palleman, President of Dining For Women. "Dining For Women's grantees are in 40 different countries, and we've funded about 214 grants to 142 different organizations."



Left: DFW President Beth Ellen Palleman visits Peru to meet the girls of Chicuchas Wasi, the featured grantee for the month of April 2017. Top right: Dining For Women supports grantee Community Cloud Forest Conservation, here educating young women on stream ecology to limit environmental degradation. Bottom right: Women of both the Lima, Peru chapter and several US chapters share dinner at a monthly DFW meeting.

Last year they raised over \$1 million in monthly chapter donations.

In addition to their monthly Featured Grantees, the organization selects Sustained Grantees, giving them longer-term support in achieving their goals. Dining for Women also partners with the Peace Corps in support of its Let Girls Learn Fund, providing grants which are used to fund grassroots projects in countries where the Peace Corps operates.

For members seeking to form a deeper understanding of the lives they are changing, a travel program brings them face-to-face with the grantees they have served. Members are given the opportunity to close the physical distance and get to know not just the women and girls benefitting from their efforts, but also their cultural and regional history.

Francine Fleming, co-leader of a Dining For Women chapter in Houston, TX has traveled to Kenya, Vietnam and Cambodia with the organization. "We were able to meet DFW grant recipients and hear their stories, see what their lives were about, their difficulties and their joys," she said. "I have not only loved the travel opportunities because of the connection with the grantees, but also have made wonderful friends from all over the US because of these trips."

The organization is in the process of developing an advocacy program, which will address the root causes of poverty and gender inequality through efforts like phone calls to elected representatives, speaking to community groups, and writing Letters to the Editor. Palleman hopes to grow active membership from 8,000 to 20,000

in order to expand the global reach through grants, travel, partnerships and grassroots advocacy.

"We are making a difference together and touching the lives of women just like us who have families and hopes and dreams," said Fleming. "We are making their dreams come true and that is indeed very, very important in our global world with all that we have here in the United States."

If you would like to help Dining For Women and Sahar Education end childhood marriage for these 500 girls and young women of Afghanistan, visit diningforwomen.org/donate. To join a chapter or to start one of your own, visit diningforwomen.org/join-us.