



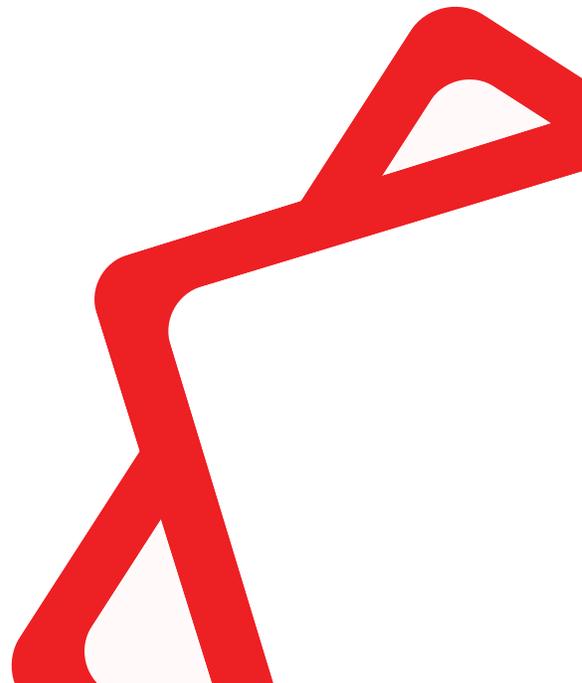
ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

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1. Message from the Executive Director

السلام عليكم (As-salâmo 'alaykom). سلام (Salâm).

I started Women Leaders of Tomorrow (WLOT) to empower women and girls from Afghanistan through education and sports. This last year has been very difficult for me and everyone who has ties to Afghanistan or cares about women's rights. But we can't give up. Supporting the female leaders of today and tomorrow has never been more important.

Since the Taliban takeover on August 15, 2021, Afghan women have been banned from education and sports. Women athletes who previously competed in regional and national events have received death letters and warnings of the death penalty. Many have gone into hiding and are seeking ways to leave the country. The Judo Dojo that WLOT has been supporting for many years has had to shut down. Despite initial promises that education would still be accessible, the Taliban has now outlawed education for females beyond grade six. Millions of girls and young women are now prisoners in their own home, with no opportunities to learn or develop.



WLOT continues to stand with Afghan women and girls. Since the crisis began, we have been working tirelessly to:

- advocate for athletes-at-risk to be offered refuge outside Afghanistan
- speak out about the situation in Afghanistan through the media and public events
- ask the Government of Canada to prioritize refugee status for female athletes
- facilitate scholarships and student visas at Canadian high schools and universities
- evacuate female students to schools in the USA
- fundraise for care packages to help families in Afghanistan get through the winter
- sponsor female athletes as refugees to Canada
- continue offering direct educational programming in Afghanistan

I am proud of what we have accomplished this year, but there is so much more to be done. We need the support of donors, volunteers, advocates, secondary and post-secondary institutions to continue addressing the immediate risks faced by Afghan women, while also investing in them as the leaders of today and tomorrow. Please join us!

Friba Reyazee
Executive Director and Founder



Women Leaders of Tomorrow: Because Afghanistan needs women leaders!

WHAT WE DO

WLOT is a group of Afghan women and supporters of women and girls' education and empowerment. Established in 2020, we seek to close the gender gap in Afghanistan by facilitating the emergence of a new generation of female leaders in sports, business, government and non-traditional occupations. Our primary focus is on helping Afghan women to obtain a world-class education. We are guided in this work by our Mission, Vision and Values. WLOT empowers Afghan women and girls through participation in sports and access to world-class education at home and overseas.

OUR VISION

A world in which Afghan women are equal in all aspects of life including access to education, career opportunities (including non-traditional fields), participation in sports, and decision-making roles in government and the private sector.

WHAT WE BELIEVE IN

We strongly believe that:

- All women and girls have the right to access to education, freedom of thought, and a life of dignity and purpose.
- Education is the single most important means to improve the status of women in Afghanistan.
- Women and girls' leadership is critical for developing the next generation of leaders for Afghanistan.

We invite you to read through our Annual Report 2021-22 to see the many ways that WLOT has been standing up for and with Afghan women and girls over the last year.



PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

WLOT operationalizes its mission through four program areas:

- Education in Afghanistan
- Leadership through Sports
- Education Overseas
- Advocacy

Due to the evolving crisis in Afghanistan, this year we added **Humanitarian Response** activities and **Evacuation and Refugee Sponsorship** support for Afghan women and girls. We also ramped up our efforts to link the women and girls in our network to scholarship opportunities in North America.

Here are some highlights of what we engaged in and achieved over the last year.

By the Numbers: 2021-22

45 young women participating in weekly English-language training

45 volunteer English-language teachers and mentors

3 judo coaches training the next generation of female athletes

15 Afghan female athletes training in judo

148 female students evacuated to the USA

22 female athletes sponsored as refugees to Canada

3 young women linked to scholarships at Canadian high schools

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING IN AFGHANISTAN

WLOT was able to continue offering English language tutoring and mentorship even after the Taliban takeover. In fact, more young women are participating in our program than ever before. It has become an important social and educational connection for the participants as they have been forced to stay at home and are no longer able to attend school. WLOT one of the few Canadian organizations still offering educational programming in Afghanistan.

There are 45 participants in our English language and mentorship program, provided by 45 amazing volunteers. Yes! You read that correctly. We provide a 1:1 ratio between the teachers and students. The program is about much more than learning English. Our volunteers act as mentors, someone who will walk with the student on their academic, athletic, and personal journey. The goal is to make them feel that they have someone in their corner who will listen, provide support, guidance, and champion their academic and life endeavours.

Donations to WLOT for this program are going directly to cover the cost of internet connection for these English language students, since the program runs virtually. Our Executive Director and volunteer lead teachers support the volunteers with their lesson planning and building their capacity as mentors for our incredibly strong and resilient participants. WLOT keeps the number of the students in this program low to focus on the quality rather than quantity. However, with more funding and volunteers, we could do more.



LEADERSHIP THROUGH SPORTS

Girls of Afghanistan Lead (GOAL) was established to help underprivileged Afghan women gain leadership in sports coaching roles and to become instructors to open their own sports clubs or to become professional athletes. GOAL has a particular focus on judo, but also supports women's cycling and volleyball. Since 2020, our support for a judo dojo in Kabul, with 3 coaches and 15 emerging athletes, was active and impactful. Unfortunately, as of August 2021, we have had to suspend this activity as the Taliban banned all female participation in sports.

Since then, WLOT's Executive Director (ED) has been working non-stop to coordinate evacuation and refugee sponsorships for Afghan female athletes who are at risk of violent punishment (100 lashings for playing sports) or the death penalty (for leaders and women who competed internationally). She organized evacuation of female athletes to the USA and Canada, with most also being linked to educational opportunities (see next section). Most recently, twenty-two (22) members of Afghan national women's cycling team were sponsored as refugees to Alberta, through WLOT's advocacy and mobilizing efforts.



EDUCATION OVERSEAS

The ban on female education above grade six in Afghanistan since March 2022 is devastating for millions of girls and women. While WLOT has always worked to link Afghan women to quality educational opportunities, the need has increased exponentially. Besides women's desire to pursue their education, there is now the added urgency to bring women at risk of violent reprisals to safety.

Since August, our ED has been working day and night to facilitate access to scholarships overseas and student visas for Afghan women. By partnering with educational institutions and humanitarian organizations, WLOT has been able to secure:

- 3 full scholarships for young Afghan women at two private high schools in BC
- 22 full scholarships through WUSC (World Service Canada) at universities in Ontario
- the evacuation of 148 female students to the United States, all of whom are currently studying at various universities with full scholarships

All the women supported by these scholarships are highly talented, with so much to offer the world. One example is a female athlete who competed at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games as a member of IJF (International Judo Federation) and IOC (International Olympic Committee). She is now studying in Canada thanks to sponsorship from WUSC.

Currently, 10 women who made it to safety in Kazakhstan are waiting to receive student visas to begin Engineering studies at universities in British Columbia in in Fall 2022. WLOT is in touch with many more women who need the same opportunity.



HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

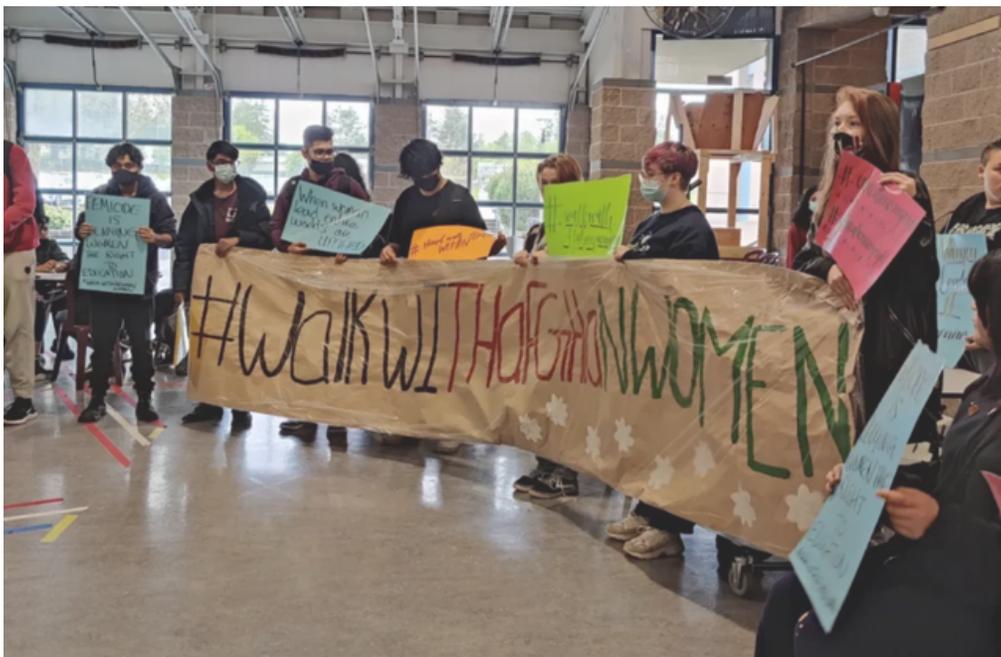
Afghanistan is in crisis internally. The Taliban takeover has had an enormously negative impact on the economy, impacting people's income and access to necessities. According to UNICEF, more than 23 million Afghans are experiencing acute hunger, and 9 million of these are starving. Millions of households have been left with intermittent electricity and a lack of supplies to heat their homes through the harsh winter months.

WLOT was able to issue an urgent appeal for supplies to help families get through the winter. With the help of generous donations from individuals in the USA and Canada, WLOT volunteers purchased and delivered survival packages to ten Afghan families. The packages included food staples, firewood and basic medications.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

Our ED has been speaking out for Afghan women and girls. Her key messages are:

- To prioritize female athletes from Afghanistan as refugees
- To expedite student visas for Afghans accepted to study at Canadian schools
- To stand with Afghan women and girls and amplify their voices



Public talks

Friba spoke at *Crisis in Afghanistan: An Afghan Perspective* at UBC for International Development Week, hosted by the Simon K.Y. Lee Global Lounge and BC4Afghans.

Friba participated in a panel on the *Global Refugee Crisis* organized by the University of Toronto Student Union.

Friba was invited to speak at UBC for Remembrance Day. She thanked the Canadian military for their service in Afghanistan and called for the values and legacy of democracy, human rights and freedom to live on. Listen to her speech here.

Friba spoke at Crofton House in Vancouver. Her talk inspired the school to offer two scholarships for Afghan girls (tuition, international travel and living costs).

Public Campaigns

WLOT launched the hashtag #WalkWithAfghanWomen last fall calling for groups to organize 45-minute walks to increase public awareness about the persecution of Afghan's female students and athletes with the return of the Taliban.

- *Crofton House* secondary students organized a #WalkWithAfghanWomen event in Vancouver, BC after hearing Friba speak. They also fundraised to provide care packages for newly arrived Afghan refugee families.
- Students at *L.A. Matheson Secondary* organized a #WalkWithAfghanWomen event in Surrey, BC after a teacher, Ms. Annie Ohana, contacted WLOT.
- On *International Women's Day*, members and partners of WLOT hosted a rally in downtown Vancouver to #Standwithafghanwomen and #WalkWithAfghanWomen

Advocating to the Canadian Government

On November 25, 2021, WLOT wrote to Prime Minister Trudeau and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship about the extreme danger faced by female athletes in Afghanistan. Read the letter [here](#).

On March 28, 2022, Friba spoke to the Special Committee on Afghanistan in the House of Commons. She stressed the urgency of prioritizing female athletes for refugee status in Canada, as well as expediting the approval of student visas for Afghan women who have received acceptance letters from Canadian schools.

Very soon after her presentation, many Afghan female athletes were accepted as refugees, including the 22 members of the national women's cycling team. Watch her presentation [here](#).

Advocating to the IOC

Afghan female athletes feel abandoned by the international sports community (*see sidebar story*). Since last fall, WLOT has been writing letters to the IOC (International Olympic Committee) asking for the immediate evacuation of female athletes who were on national teams.



Media interviews and articles

<p>CNN wrote an article in August 2021 about Friba’s journey as an athlete and refugee and the risks facing Afghan’s women athletes under the Taliban. Read the article here.</p>
<p>CNN interviewed Friba for a second time in December 2021. Read the article here.</p>
<p>CBC Radio interviewed Friba about the situation for her family and female athletes soon after the Taliban takeover in August 2021. Listen to the interview here.</p>
<p>DW Deutsche Welle (a German media company) interviewed Friba in April 2022 about the worsening situation for women athletes in Afghanistan. Read the article here.</p>
<p>BCIT News wrote about how WLOT is finding ways to empower women in Afghanistan amidst the current crisis in March 2022. Read the article here.</p>
<p>Saltwire Network published a commentary piece by Friba in March 2022 on the Taliban’s announcement of the ban on women and girls’ education. Read her piece here.</p>



FINANCIALS

Our organization operates without paid staff or overhead. Our ED volunteers her time while also maintaining a full-time job supporting Afghan refugees. Our teachers are also volunteers. All donations received go directly to our programming except for a nominal amount for bank fees and office supplies. We also leverage scholarships through relationships with educational institutions and organizations in Canada and the USA.

Financial Statement 2021-22

Donations received	\$15,440
Program expenses	\$3,170
Admin (bank fees, supplies)	\$127
Current Balance	\$12,143

ALL FUNDS RAISED OR LEVERAGED

DIRECT DONATIONS RECEIVED: \$15,440
RAISED FOR CARE PACKAGES: \$3,250
SCHOLARSHIPS LEVERAGED: \$1,000,000+



SPECIAL MENTIONS

We would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all the donors, sponsors, volunteers, and community members who support our work over the last year.

You did it! You stood by Afghan women and girls when the Taliban took over and banned female participation in education and sports. Your support demonstrates that the international community cares about women's rights and will not give up on Afghan women and girls.

We would especially like to acknowledge:

- All the teachers who volunteer weekly in our English-language program
- Crofton House
- World University Service Canada (WUSC)
- L.A. Matheson Secondary
- Cultivator Japan

LOOKING AHEAD

\$150,000 CAD

That's how much we want to raise in 2022-23 to support:

- English-language and mentorship programming for young women in Afghanistan
- Scholarships to access post-secondary and secondary studies overseas
- Support for Afghan female athletes to continue training and coaching

We also plan to continue developing and deepening our partnerships with educational institutions and WUSC to support more opportunities for Afghan women and teens to access a quality education in safety.

We will of course be continuing our advocacy work, and efforts to sponsor female athletes and students to reach safety in Canada.



GET INVOLVED

We rely on community members to help with fundraising, partnership development, legal advice for student visas and refugee applications, refugee sponsorship and donations to support our scholarships and programs. There are many ways to support our work.

- **Donate:** become a monthly donor or contribute to our Shamsia Scholarship Fund
- **Advocate:** organize an awareness event or write a letter to the government
- **Volunteer:** in our English-language program
- **Advise:** we need help from immigration and communications professionals
- **Subscribe:** sign up for our newsletter and announcements



THANK YOU