



**Combined Task Force Spartan**  
**3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division**  
**Forward Operating Base Pasab, Afghanistan**



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**NEWS RELEASE**

**Maiwand women's center creates learning, business opportunities for Afghan women throughout Kandahar province**

**MAIWAND DISTRICT, KANDAHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan** – Soldiers with Combined Task Force Spartan's 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment (Task Force Dreadnaught) will refurbish a building to establish the Malalai Anaa Center for Women and School for Girls in the Maiwand district of Kandahar province, Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan World Foundation established a partnership with the Dreadnaughts to support an effort central to its mission of establishing education centers for women and children. AWF will raise \$17,000 to underwrite the costs of establishing the Center for Women and Girls.

Opening schools and women's centers in a previous Taliban stronghold signifies the will and commitment of Maiwand residents to secure their district, and afford opportunities to women and girls, said leaders with the Afghanistan World Foundation.

"The Taliban regime destroyed over seventy percent of the schools, and health care facilities throughout Afghanistan, and levied heavy restrictions on women," said Sonia Nassery Cole, founder of AWF. "The local support to establish a center and school for women and girls proves the resilience and determination of the people of Maiwand."

Kandahar province, the birthplace of the Taliban and former home of Mullah Omar, is a conservative Pashtun rural community where the female literacy rate is below seven percent. Political and social progress in Kandahar is a predictor of national success.

A common misconception about Afghan women is that they worry about speaking their minds for fear of retribution. For a female social scientist working with the 2-34 Armor Battalion, the Afghan women were excited about a school opening specifically for girls.

"Contrary to common expectations, the women of Maiwand are not afraid to ask for what they want," said Cynthia Hogle, a U.S. Army civilian supporting the Dreadnaughts by conducting field interviews and research. "During one of my first meetings with the women, they requested a meeting place for women and a school for their girls to attend."

The women stated where they would like the building located, so they could easily gather, socialize and attend training programs. They also said their boys attend the local school, but since boys and girls must attend schools in separate buildings, they needed a girls' school.

Lt. Col. Christopher Kidd, Commander of the Dreadnaught Battalion, commended the women for coming forward and standing up against the insurgents operating throughout the region.

“The women of Maiwand are courageous and outspoken, and steadfastly anti-Taliban. By supporting them via education and economic opportunities, we are engaging forty-eight percent of the population that has been largely ignored in counterinsurgency measures,” said Lt. Col. Kidd.

A building slated to be razed, was preserved and will soon be refurbished. It is one of the original buildings constructed by the British near their fort during the famous 1880 Battle of Maiwand. During this conflict, the Afghans were inspired by a heroine, Malalai Anaa, and against all odds, they dramatically defeated the British. Hence, the women decided to name the building in her honor.

Lt. Col. Kidd outlined plans to transform the building, add a garden, and also determined a six-foot wall should be built to provide the privacy and security necessary for the women and girls to feel comfortable. The wall will be funded by U.S. Army Commanders' Emergency Response Program funds, a program that pays for civil projects and refurbishments in a specific area.

The center will provide training programs in sewing, rug making, and contract negotiation, so the women can sell their items in the local bazaar. Handmade goods are sold for commission or based on negotiated contracts with male shop owners.

The Maiwand District Governor says the insurgents lose their grip on a community when the community is educated and use security gains to advance themselves.

“The Taliban loses its potential for influence when families have education and increased economic opportunities. Establishing a women's center and offering programs for women will create a huge impact in this community,” said District Governor Obaidullah Bawari.

Afghanistan World Foundation was founded by Sonia Nassery Cole, who fled Afghanistan at the age of 17, during the Russian invasion. AWF engages in collaborative efforts to enhance social opportunities for Afghan women and children, and prioritizes projects that address critical needs such as education, economic development, and health services.

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Combined Task Force Spartan Public Affairs Office

E-Mail: [Kevin.sandell@afghan.swa.army.mil](mailto:Kevin.sandell@afghan.swa.army.mil)

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