



Make
Mothers
Matter

Press Release
27 November 2020

AFG Minister of Education raises her pen for Afghan girls at HL virtual event: “Without education I would not have been what I am today”

#RaiseAPen High-level Event of 25 November

Our virtual high-level panel discussion answering the call of Afghan mothers for the continued right to education for women and girls in Afghanistan was an inspirational event. There was transparency, courage and honesty not just in the panel discussion room but also in the audience chat room where animated comments and questions flew backwards and forwards - to the panelists - and to fellow attendees.



“If my mother and father had not allowed me to go to school I would not have been what I am today... education allows us to take bold steps”, said H.E Rangina Hamidi, the Minister of Education, I.R of Afghanistan. Her courageous and at times emotional comments elicited pure admiration and respect from fellow panelists and the attendees who voiced their thanks to the Minister for her role in promoting Afghanistan and the voices of Afghan women on the global arena.

“I do not want little girls to have no voice just by political decision, but I want them to be able to run a great nation like Afghanistan.”

Rahela Sidiqi, Founder and Director of the Farkhunda Trust for Afghan Women's Education, an MMM grass roots member and #RaiseApen campaign partner, endorsed the Minister's remarks and added her own impassioned plea:

"We need Afghan women's voices to be a part of the global conversation. Education is a key engine of development and prosperity, the cornerstone for freedom and democracy. Afghan women are a strong catalyst for driving sustainable development and change. There can be no going back for them. The only way is forward..."

Ambassador Melanne Verwee, Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security didn't mince her words when she asked:

"What is it about education that makes extremists SO afraid?"

Famed for her support of Afghan women's inclusion in peace talks, she was a firm favourite with both the panel and the virtual audience who applauded her comments:

"There is no better bulwark against conflict than education... raising a pen is critically important... I'm proud to come together with mothers of Afghanistan".

The moderator Mary Kaldor, Professor of Global Governance and CEO of the Conflict Research Program, IDEAS, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), echoed Ambassador Verwee's powerful words: **"Girls' education is critical for ending conflict"**.

The event, which benefitted from the patronage of UNESCO, heard from its Assistant Director General of education Stefania Giannini, who had this firm message for everyone: **"Girls' education is one of the most powerful investments we can make for a better society. It has an impact on other sectors beyond education itself...you invest in girls' education, you invest in the future"**.

Ambassador Mohammad Wali Naeemi, Deputy Permanent Representative of I.R of Afghanistan to the UN New York picked up on the discussion's main theme and added his voice of agreement:

"Investment in Afghan women's education is investment in Afghanistan...sustainable peace and development is not possible without the meaningful contribution and role of educated women".

The #RaiseApen campaign has had the unwavering support of Staffan de Mistura, former Under Secretary General, Special UN Envoy to Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Syria, who has championed the campaign from the very start. Staffan who spent many years in Afghanistan is hugely invested in the country's future and adamant that education of women and girls is placed at the centre of any peace deal. He hit a nerve with this timely warning:

"Violence against women should be stopped...Afghan women today suffer the potential danger of the possibility of education being taken away from them".

Time as ever was against everyone. The one-hour long event was extended by an extra 12 minutes and even then, it was not enough to cover the myriad points and views that this topic engenders.

It was an emotional wrap to the event. When asked by the Moderator Mary Kaldor to raise their pens in solidarity, all the panelists in unison did exactly that, pledging to support the campaign going forward.

It is clear that we all have a responsibility to spread the message far and wide, to raise the voices of Afghan women and girls loud and clear. To this effect, MMM President called on each of us, to commit to concrete actions to take the campaign forward by presenting a 'how you can get involved' pledge.

Because #RaiseAPen is a civil society movement, it will be heard by those who can take action.

For additional information on the #RaiseAPen campaign, please visit:

www.RaiseAPen.org

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About Make Mother Matter – www.makemothersmatter.org

Make Mothers Matter (MMM) is an international NGO created in 1947 to raise the awareness of policy makers and public opinion on the contribution of mothers to social, cultural and economic development. MMM has no political or religious affiliations, and thus transparently voices the concerns of mothers at international level with permanent representatives at the United Nations (General Consultative Status), UNESCO and the European Union.

MMM federates a network of about 40 grassroots organisations working in about 30 countries across the world to support and empower mothers and their families, and to advance the human rights of women and children.