



Afghans  
For Progressive  
Thinking (APT)

# Defying Barriers: Empowering Afghan Girls Through Education



[www.aptyouth.org](http://www.aptyouth.org)

# Impact Stories

In Afghanistan, millions of young women dream of pursuing higher education, yet systemic restrictions have made this dream nearly impossible. The ban on female education has denied girls the right to learn. Despite these challenges, they are hopeful and resilient, and APT stands to support them pursue education, providing Afghan women with crucial mentorship and scholarship opportunities to break through these barriers.

Through APT's initiative, 60 female students have been connected to mentors abroad, receiving tailored support to navigate university admissions and scholarship applications. Already, 20 students have secured scholarships to study online at renowned institutions in the US and UK, while 10 await visa approvals to begin their education in a third country. One of the young women already received her USA visa, waiting to start her master's degree in one of the prestigious universities there.

We have compiled impact stories of these young women into a document, the stories are testament to the success of our program, the strength of women and girls in Afghanistan, and the power of education to transform lives, even in the face of challenges.

## About APT.

Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT) is a youth-led nonprofit organization in Afghanistan that actively addresses human rights crises, with a specific focus on women's rights, while simultaneously promoting girls' access to education through creative and impactful initiatives.

Since its inception in 2010, APT activities have impacted and inspired over 60,000 youth and children to build a vision for a just and inclusive society.



“ As a girl from Afghanistan with the goal to pursue higher education, my journey has been completely changed through my participation in the APT program. Before joining, I faced many challenges in applying to universities and received rejections from several colleges. However, APT provided me with valuable support that changed my experience completely.

Through this program, I had the privilege of working with an excellent mentor who guided me in preparing the necessary application documents and applying stages. Moreover, the APT team offered me the opportunity to take an English proficiency test, along with a specialized preparation course, and they even covered the application fees for some universities.

Thanks to their comprehensive support, I received offer letters from universities in Germany, the United States, and Italy, and most of the other applications are still in progress. These opportunities would not have been possible without their guidance. I am incredibly grateful for the assistance I received from APT. This program had many profound impacts on my life, which have opened doors for my future academic success.

### **- Mursal's Journey to Higher Education through APT's Mentoring Program**

“ My name is Maryam, and I graduated in 2022 from the Computer Science faculty, Software Engineering Department at Kabul University. Before joining the APT Mentoring Program for Afghan girls, I felt overwhelmed by the scholarship application process and lacked clear guidance on how to submit my application effectively.

Through this mentorship program, I received invaluable support



in refining my personal statement and motivation letter, as well as guidance in selecting a university that aligns with my goals. The program has been incredibly valuable, boosting my confidence through constructive feedback and mentorship.

With the support of APT, I am now working toward securing a full scholarship for a master's program. This opportunity has not only given me hope but has also inspired other girls in my community who face similar barriers to pursuing higher education.

### **- Maryam's Journey to Higher Education through APT's Mentoring Program**

“ My name is Tahera, and I am from Afghanistan. After completing my first year of university, I faced an unimaginable setback when the Taliban banned girls from attending higher education.

Though denied the right to continue my education in my home country, I refused to give up on my dreams. I sought ways to enhance my skills and knowledge through online programs, determined to keep learning despite the barriers. Pursuing higher education abroad has always been my aspiration, but this journey requires more than personal determination—it demands external support, motivation, and access to the right resources.

APT has made this path more achievable. Through valuable guidance, encouragement, financial support, and mentorship, the program has helped me take meaningful steps toward my academic goals. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity and the support APT provides. Their commitment to empowering Afghan girls like me has not only



given me hope but has also strengthened my resolve to keep pushing forward, no matter the obstacles.

### **- Tahera's Journey to Higher Education through APT's Mentoring Program**

“ My name is Humaira, and I live in Kabul, Afghanistan, a place where girls have faced many challenges and setbacks. For nearly three years, girls couldn't go to school or work, which made it hard for them to follow their dreams. However, they're still hopeful and are trying to find ways to make their dreams come true. I want to thank the APT organization for their work in helping young girls in our country. Their Mentorship program has been a big help to me as I look to study abroad. Lindsey Mayer, who guided me through the program, has been amazing. Her advice has helped me a lot, especially with things like applying to universities and planning for my future aspirations. Our mentoring sessions have had an incredible impact on my personal and educational growth. I am forever grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from her experience. I have faith that the obstacles confronting young girls will soon be overcome.

### **- Humaira's Journey to Higher Education through APT's Mentoring Program**



“ My name is Arezo. When I first joined the program and was paired with my mentor, I had no idea how much it would shape my personal and academic journey. Through our mentoring sessions, she provided me with invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement. Together, we worked on my strengths and weaknesses, set goals, and developed new skills. Her mentorship not only improved my academic performance but also boosted my self-esteem and belief in my abilities. It was truly a transformative experience. As a result of participating in the program, I have seen a significant improvement in my grades, a newfound sense of motivation and purpose, and a deep appreciation for the power of mentorship. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be part of this program and for the positive impact it has had on my life. Thank you, APT, for creating such a transformative program that has helped me grow and succeed in ways I never thought possible.

### **- Arezo's Journey to Higher Education through APT's Mentoring Program**

“ My journey, once filled with doubt and uncertainty, has now transformed into a journey of hope and achievement. thanks to the invaluable support of the APT program. Initially hesitant, a simple link to an application form provided by my teacher led me to embrace new experiences and opportunities. Through the help of my mentor and the support of APT, I found myself studying in an international program and connecting with people of my age from all around the world, and achieving milestones I never thought possible, such as passing the Duolingo English Test and preparing for university. APT's unwavering belief in my potential gave me the courage to face challenges and seize opportunities. I am grateful for their support and the lessons I've



learned along the way. Looking back, I am filled with gratitude and optimism for the future. I encourage others to take the first step, just as my mentor always encouraged me, Trust in yourself, believe in the power of hope, and watch as your dreams become reality.

### **- Shukria's Journey to Higher Education through APT's Mentoring Program**

“ My name is Sultani, and I was a senior student at Kabul University, studying finance and banking before further restrictions were placed on women. While many Afghan women faced confinement, APT introduced an innovative mentorship program to explore educational opportunities abroad. Luckily, I learned about this program through LinkedIn and began my mentorship journey. Throughout the program, I gained insights into group work and university admissions through regular meetings with our mentor. I am grateful to APT for providing us with this opportunity.

### **- Sultani's Journey to Higher Education through APT's Mentoring Program**

“ The mentorship program gave me hope, guidance, and the tools to pursue my dreams. Every session opens new doors for me, and I am truly grateful to APT for helping Afghan girls believe in their future again.

### **Zakia's Journey to Higher Education through APT's Mentoring Program**



“ My name is Parwin. I graduated from Gawharshad Girls High School with a 98.89% GPA and studied medicine at Herat University before my education was interrupted.

Before joining the APT Mentoring Program, I lacked the motivation to apply for scholarships, even though I had my English proficiency score and basic requirements. I wasn't sure where or how to start.

Through APT, I gained valuable skills in writing essays, CVs, and personal statements. With the guidance of my mentor and the support of fellow mentees, I became more confident in navigating applications. The program also supported me with application fees, TOEFL preparation, and tutoring.

Thanks to APT, I received admission offers from the University of New Haven, Marywood University, and Western Washington University. I'm deeply grateful to Mr. Ramyar, the APT team, and my mentor for their unwavering support.

### **- Parwin's Journey to Higher Education through APT's Mentoring Program**

*To conclude, the stories shared in this document reflect more than just success stories, they show hope, resilience, and determination of Afghan girls to claim their right to education. Despite the challenges they face, these young women have shown that with mentorship, support, and access to opportunities, their dreams can become reality. APT's initiative to guiding and empowering them through higher education is also standing against barriers and restrictions. As these students pursue education abroad, they are also inspiring countless others to believe that change is possible. Education is the key that unlocks doors, and APT will continue to stand by Afghan girls!*

