Razia's Ray of Hope improves the lives of Afghan girls through community-based education at the Zabuli Education Center and the Razia Jan Institute in Deh'Subz, Afghanistan. Our nonprofit organization and schools were founded in the knowledge that education is key to positive, peaceful change for current and future generations—and that we must empower girls and young women through education and resources to work toward brighter futures, in their own villages and well beyond.

An Educational Oasis
The rural Afghan village of Deh'Subz is located 30 miles northeast of Kabul in a larger district of the same name. Deh'Subz translates to “Green City,” a fitting name for a mountainous area vibrant with grape vineyards and apricot, peach, and almond orchards. The district of Deh'Subz is comprised of a total of 46 villages, with approximately 100,000 residents including a large number of nomadic families.

Completed in spring 2008, the community-based Zabuli Education Center provides exceptional, tuition-free education to more than 625 girls in kindergarten through grade 12. While tackling a rich curriculum that includes math, English, and computer literacy, students receive nutritious meals and are mentored by positive female role models within the safe, clean walls of the newly refurbished and expanded school building. Our commitment to academic standards, qualified teachers, and quality educational materials and technology led the Afghan Ministry of Education to declare our school “perfect”—and inspired village elders to hail Razia Jan, our founder, as the “Mother of Deh'Subz.”

In March 2017, we opened the doors of the brand-new Razia Jan Institute, a post-secondary midwifery training school for women—the first of its kind in rural Afghanistan. Sited adjacent to the Zabuli Education Center, the institute provides a clear pathway to sustainable employment while addressing the needs of a severely medically underserved community. Together, our schools are a beacon of empowerment, change, and hope.

Our History: A Collaboration of Change
In the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the ensuing war, Afghan native Razia Jan sought a relevant project for the Rotary Club in her adopted hometown of Duxbury, Massachusetts. When Razia learned of a historic former boys’ school in the Afghan district of Deh'Subz that had been nearly destroyed, she began planning to rebuild the school with a mission to provide Afghan girls a more promising future. Importantly, rather than foist a school onto a random town as a form of social engineering, the project would restore an institution that had been the gift of a revered Afghan king, Amir Amanullah Khan, in the 1930s and was once a center of the community. The school’s restoration was important and culturally appropriate on many levels. But Razia needed steadfast logistical support in Afghanistan before she could turn her plans into reality.

While Razia dreamed of the school’s restoration, Aziza Mohamad Dauod, who runs the Niazi Road and Building construction company in Kabul, was looking for a project that would aid Afghanistan’s recovery. Aziza needed the right project, and Razia needed funding.

The two women joined forces when Zinat Karzai, wife of former Afghan president Hamid Karzai, introduced them. The
Razia's Ray of Hope Foundation would not exist without the inspiration and tireless efforts of founder Razia Jan. Since the foundation's inception, Razia has come to rely on the expertise and guidance of many others, including executive director Patti Quigley and an active board of directors.

Razia has worked for many years to forge connections between Afghans and Americans. Her humanitarian efforts are honored in First Lady Laura Bush's 2016 book *We Are Afghan Women*.

Born in Afghanistan, Razia moved to the United States in 1970. The proprietor of a small tailoring business in Duxbury, Massachusetts, for 20 years she served as president of the town's Rotary Club. In the aftermath of September 11, Razia rallied her adopted New England community to send over 400 homemade blankets to rescue workers at Ground Zero after September 11. Her efforts expanded to include sending care packages to US troops in Afghanistan. Through her involvement in the military's Operation Shoe Fly, she coordinated the delivery of over 30,000 pairs of shoes to needy Afghan children. Her handmade quilts commemorating September 11 have been exhibited at Madison Square Garden, the chapel at the Pentagon, and at fire stations in New York and Massachusetts.

Razia has received many awards for her humanitarian work, including CNN's 2012 Top 10 Hero award, the 2007 Woman of Excellence award from Germaine Lawrence Inc., multiple Rotary Club International Peace Awards, and certificates of appreciation from the Army Corps of Engineers and the American Legion. She has spoken on women and children's issues across the United States as well as in Europe and Afghanistan. In 2014, Razia was named Social Innovator by the Lewis Institute at Babson College and in 2015 she was awarded a Woman of Action award from Rotary International at the United Nations in New York City. In 2016, she was honored with Rotary International’s Service Above Self Award. Razia has served on the Interfaith Council, the No Place for Hate Committee, and Jordan Hospital’s board of directors.

With help from families in her small coastal town in Massachusetts, Razia began to raise funds to rebuild the school. She received a major financial boost from bestselling Afghan author Khaled Hosseini, who visited Duxbury twice to rally the community. Less than two years after the project was conceived, construction began. The Zabuli Education Center opened its doors in March 2008. The village of Deh’Subz has embraced the trim cement building with the bold red door, and its new adjacent sister school, the post-secondary Razia Jan Institute—as signs that their daughters deserve—and will in fact have—a better future.

“This opened a school for girls in Afghanistan to help break the cycle of poverty through access to an education in a very poor area. By providing these girls with an education, we are giving them a ray of hope to protect them from the vicious cycle of poverty, malnutrition, and hunger.”

— RA Z I A J A N