Helping women and children in Afghanistan

www.lindanorgrovefoundation.org
Our problem is we have several great long-term projects that rely on our regular funds where it’s impossible to stop funding without dire immediate consequences - the home in Kabul for children with disabilities, the Scawno school for poor children and widows, our university scholarship programmes.

And, now that we have established such good contacts in Afghanistan, we receive ever more applications and, in this newsletter, you can see the standard of the inspirational new projects we fund: the women’s beekeeping co-op in Bamyan, the Ascend mountaineering project for young women, a new football pitch for street children in Kabul.

We have sufficient reserves and regular donations to continue to fulfil our long-term commitments, albeit with funding cuts of 30% every year. But, unless something changes, that’s it – nothing fresh.

We believe we need an additional £50,000 to really make a difference to the scale of what we can achieve over the next few years. So Lorna and I have decided to donate another £20,000 to LNF which, with gift aid, gets us half way to our target. We’re hoping you, our most generous supporters, might help us with additional donations to make up the remainder. We will then be able to continue with our existing commitments, albeit on a reduced scale, plus a few of the most deserving of the new applications.

You could argue that, for us, the Foundation has served its purpose – a focus to occupy ourselves whilst we recovered from the initial trauma of our daughter Linda’s kidnapping and death. You may feel we should now bow out gracefully and enjoy a comfortable retirement.

But we have developed a commitment over the past six years and don’t feel ready to stop when so many people’s life chances depend on LNF’s support; especially now as other charities have scaled back their operations, leaving Afghans feeling abandoned.

There’s always the possibility that you find all this a bit sanctimonious and believe we should step back into the shadows. You may feel that in spite of funds having been poured into Afghanistan for years, it’s still no better and it’s up to the Afghans to sort themselves out.

If so, please do send us a letter or an email and we’ll remove you from our mailing list. It’ll stop you getting annoyed and allow us to reduce our overheads.

But we do hope that you choose to help keep us going. The lives of individual women and children in Afghanistan depend on your responses as well.
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**Calendar**
Our sixth calendar highlights the people and landscapes of the Wakhan Corridor, a remote and peaceful valley in the extreme northeast of Afghanistan, sandwiched between the Pamir, the Himalayan and the Hindu Kush mountain ranges.

The calendars are A4 size for ease of mailing, open up to A3 for hanging. £10 each.

**Christmas Cards**
Large A5 glossy cards. We have a new card this year, also cards from previous years and an option to order 12 card ‘variety packs’. See website for details. £10 per pack of 12 including envelopes.

**Blank Cards**
A6 cards in two designs, inside blank for your own message. £4 per pack of 5 including envelopes.

All products can be ordered through our website, or by post with a cheque.

UK postage is £4 per order. International postage at cost.
Climbing Mountains to Challenge Attitudes

“Each of these girls becomes an agent of change. You simply cannot tell a woman who has climbed these mountains to take off her pack, put on a burqa, and spend the rest of her life indoors, hidden from the world.”

Marina LeGree, the founder of Ascend

The charity Ascend is making a huge change to young women’s lives by teaching mountaineering skills and, by publicising their achievements, providing an outstanding example of women’s empowerment within Afghanistan.

When we received an approach for funding from Ascend, our initial reaction was that it was too expensive and we were concerned for the security of a group of young women climbing in remote locations. But as always ‘the devil is in the detail’ and as we investigated further we realised that this was a great opportunity for us to support a hugely successful and influential project which has immense potential to reach and motivate Afghan women.

The abilities, professional standards and, above all, the commitment of the founder and expatriate staff involved has been fantastic. All the non-Afghan staff are volunteers and are extremely well-qualified development specialists with oodles of overseas experience. The founder, who has spent years working in development in Afghanistan, injected £92,000 of her own money last year. It’s clear to us that the girls’ safety is important to them and they have reduced risks as far as is possible.
To qualify for inclusion in the mountaineering team, the young women must demonstrate the unqualified support of their families, commit to a full year’s rigorous training six days a week and undertake volunteering projects within their community.

Last year a team of 13 climbed 3 peaks over 16,000 feet, including one previously unclimbed summit which they named. For most of these young women this was the first night that they’d spent outside their family homes. They didn’t have enough boots for everyone so they climbed in two teams, one getting a shot of the boots first then swapping over after coming down, to allow the others to go up.

Publicising these achievements provides inspiration for others - over 4 million Afghan women heard the news of this expedition through the media. Eventually a team might climb the highest mountain in Afghanistan which, at 24,580 feet, is higher than any peak in the world outside the Himalayas. Now there’s an objective which would significantly impact on the aspirations and attitudes of women in Afghanistan.

LNF’s part in all of this is to make a £6,600 grant which pays for the costs of the volunteering element of the programme. Each of the girls spends two days a week volunteering: some in a centre for street children, others at an animal shelter looking after stray dogs or teaching literacy in a women’s resource centre. One is helping a fellow member of the Ascend team to read and write. Transportation costs are a large element of the expenses because it’s just not safe for these young women to walk or take buses. It’s not the most glamorous budget line in Ascend’s accounts but a very necessary one that results in some real benefit to people and animals who need help.
A Year’s Funding

- **November 2015 - £11,910** for two Afghan IT professionals’ salaries for a year. Over the past year, our partners *Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan* have developed the Darakht-e Danesh [online library for teachers](#). Teachers across Afghanistan have always been hampered by a lack of good educational material, but now lesson plans, games, experiments and books are available online free of charge.

- **November - £10,000** towards a food security project managed by UK charity * Concern*, in the rural north-east of the country, helping farmers to better withstand droughts, pests and war.

- **November - £3,460** allowed the Bamiyan Bees Women’s Co-operative, who sold 1.2 tons of honey last year, to buy their own delivery van and train women drivers.

- **December - £6,815** towards heart, club foot and cleft-lip operations for kids. See page 9.

- **December - £10,000** for a continuing programme of birthing skills education in the remote north-east Wakhan Corridor region, run by the Swedish charity *Operation Mercy*. Our 2017 calendar uses photos from the Wakhan.

- **January 2016 - £4,500** to UK charity *Christian Aid* to teach rural women, mostly widows, the lost skills of keeping silkworms and turning the cocoons into cloth to generate an income.

- **January and August - £21,520** ongoing support for *Scawno*, the Afghan charity’s school for children, mothers and widows run on a shoestring in a poor area of Kabul. All in cramped conditions but providing a place of learning and safety for over 300 children and women. Next year our support will be reduced by 30% - they’ll have to find another funder to fill the gap.

- **February - £1,875**, this year’s contribution to charity *Womanity* for an ongoing four-year programme of libraries in girls’ schools.
February - £7,170 for a solar electricity supply for the inspirational Khadija Kubra girls’ college in the conservative city of Kandahar.

April and November – £9,230 towards our scholarship programme for women doctors. Six existing students and an additional four this autumn.

June - £6,430, the second and final payment to WarChild towards a kindergarten and horticulture project which provides income to allow future self-funding.

June – £6,600 towards the Ascend mountaineering project for girls – see page 4.

July - £1,707 for forty-three $50 cash gifts to our scholarship students to mark the end of the Ramadan fasting period. Funds donated by LNF trustees.

August - £10,000 for an all-weather football pitch at Aschiana – see page 10.

August - £5,476 to Women for Afghan Women for an emergency fund for abused women – see page 8

September - £11,344 provided 39 scholarships to enable women to study for degrees in law, economics and business at the Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education.

October - £1,560 paid for school fees for 7 girls from poor families at the Heela Model School in Jalalabad.

November - £7,000 ongoing support towards the cost of running Window of Hope, the home for children with disabilities in Kabul. This is the first annual grant to be subject to a 30% funding cut.
An Emergency Fund for Victims of Domestic Abuse

Family bonds in Afghanistan are generally stronger than in the west and most live within family compounds in larger family units surrounded by many caring relatives.

However, combinations of poverty, crowded homes, scarring from so many years of war and terrorism, drug abuse and some intense social pressures create tensions that sometimes result in extreme cases of domestic abuse. Women can find themselves isolated and the social services infrastructure that we take for granted just doesn’t exist.

The Afghan charity *Women for Afghan Women (W4AW)* have offices throughout the provinces and step in to help in the worst cases and this year we have reinstated an emergency fund to cover the medical expenses involved, initially with £5,500, which we propose to top up as required.

Here are four cases which illustrate what the fund is used for:
**Maghrifat** is an 8-year old girl from Faryab province, who was married off by her father to a 30-year-old man, Ghulam, in exchange for a wife for her father.

Ghulam brutally raped the young girl immediately after their wedding. Because she was so young, Maghrifat suffered from excessive bleeding and fistula from the rape, but that did not stop her husband from raping her repeatedly for another six months.

When Maghrifat’s bleeding became severe, her husband informed her father and they took her to Faryab hospital. Doctors here couldn’t help her and contacted W4AW. She was in such a critical state that she was unable to walk without support and several hospitals in Kabul refused to treat her because they did not have the required expertise or facilities. Eventually the CURE Hospital in Kabul took on the case; she was hospitalized for 26 days after her surgery and total medical costs were £695.

Unfortunately, Maghrifat requires more surgery to fully recover but this will have to wait until she reaches adulthood before she can stand further treatment. She is currently in a W4AW shelter whilst their legal team takes care of her divorce.

**Nilofar**, from the northeast Takhar province, comes from a family with many problems and was a little over 3 years old when she was raped. After her case received intense media attention, she was referred to W4AW who took her to a European-based medical institute in Kabul. They stopped the bleeding but refused to do further treatment until W4AW had negotiated and paid the fees for taking care of her case, whereupon they agreed to conduct the surgery Nilofar required. She was hospitalized for 10 days and the costs amounted to £260.

**Gul Afroz** is a 30-year old woman who was the victim of extreme violence and abuse by her husband and her in-laws. She was 8 months pregnant when her husband, sisters-in-law, and mother-in-law beat her repeatedly to the point that she miscarried. Her in-laws delayed taking her to the hospital in Kunduz until she had lost over 60% of her blood. The local hospital felt her case required medical attention that they could not provide and contacted W4AW, who took Gul Afroz to a hospital in Kabul. They paid for her blood transfusions, but she still needed more blood to survive, so staff at the W4AW’s Family Guidance Center donated their own blood to make up for the shortfall. She soon recovered and was sent back to live with her parents. Her medical costs were £43.

**Shoalia** was a widow whose in-laws threw her out of their house when she refused to sell her infant daughter to pay for the medicine she needed as a cancer patient. The emergency fund paid for her treatment in Pakistan and for her to be cared for in a W4AW shelter until she passed away.
Surgeries for Children

For five years, the Foundation has paid for life-changing surgeries at the French Medical Institute for Children in Kabul. This year we paid for six heart surgeries, two club foot operations and repair of two cleft lips.

It is a cost-effective service for children whose families would not otherwise be able to access these treatments. When we visited two years back, it was great to see how the parents, living together in the Children's House whilst their children underwent treatment, put aside their ethnic differences as their children’s progress became their number one priority.

Monawara was born with congenital heart disease. There was no way that her dad, a driver supporting a family of five on around £4 a day, could pay for heart surgery. LNF offered to pay £757 for the operation and, as you can see, Monawara has made a good recovery. Thanks to your donations, she can now live a normal life.

Liaqat, a 7 month old boy after surgery to join together a cleft lip.
Medical Scholarships

Over the past year we've paid the fees of seven girls studying to become doctors. Six have done well, averaging third place in class sizes of around 42. The seventh has disappeared.

We can't afford to take on six new girls every year so this year we have interviewed and offered scholarships costing £1,200 a year to another four.

It's a difficult process – we received 27 applications, shortlisted ten and chose four, but we always have regrets about those girls who get turned down.

If there's anyone out there willing to sponsor a medical student, please do get in touch.

Healthprom

For each of the past three years we have paid for eight drinking water reservoirs to be dug by hand from solid rock, to serve over 5,000 extremely poor villagers in the central province of Ghor. The rate of under-five deaths in these villages has plunged by 67%, mostly due to the safer water and we're funding two more reservoirs this year.
Refugees are a big concern in Afghanistan just now: ‘temporary’ tented IDP (internal displaced person) camps have been permanent features of Afghan cityscapes for years, but things have significantly changed recently. Another 1.2 million people have quit their homes to escape fighting with the Taliban and the government of Pakistan are forcing even more longer-term refugees to return: 60,000 in August alone.

Children suffer most in this situation and there are estimated to be around 600,000 ‘street’ children eking out a miserable existence, with average winter temperatures in Kabul remaining well below freezing for months every winter. Children who work the street don’t attend schools and can be preyed upon by criminal elements and so are more likely to be abducted, sexually abused or suffer drug addiction.

Aschiana is a long established Afghan-based charity that has supported street and war-affected children, both in Kabul and in eight provinces. Every day around 3,500 attend an Aschiana centre to receive an education ranging from basic literacy to learning a trade, and all receive a nutritious hot lunch.
This year we have paid for most of the cost of upgrading their football pitch. Given the level of use, grass isn't an option and so the children currently play on a dustbowl in summer and a mudbath in winter. We've paid to upgrade this to an all-weather plastic grass surface costing £14,500.

We gave £10,000 towards the new pitch, routed through Friends of Aschiana UK. They topped this up with £3,500 of their funds and we were able to arrange an anonymous donation of £1,000. On completion, Aschiana will be able to generate income by renting the pitch out to other clubs, which fits with our determination to encourage Afghan organisations to stand on their own two feet without ongoing support.

Organised sport is one of the most important areas where these children can reclaim their childhood and discover what it means to play, support each other in a team and become fitter and healthier. This, together with the regular meals provided by Aschiana, improves their academic school work but perhaps most important of all is the spirit of fun it brings to children who have had so little opportunity for joy in their short lives.
Choosing which organisations to support is difficult. Small Afghan charities can be very cost-effective and well-meaning, but can be inexperienced and we haven't the resources to micromanage them. Sometimes experienced Afghans apply for continuation of projects closing as funding is withdrawn – how to tell if people aren't just seeking to remain in employment? Often the overheads of western-based charities are frightening.

We tend to favour new starts because of their enthusiasm, but it can be a high risk strategy – so much depends on their being able to demonstrate commitment.

Without donations our charity wouldn't survive, so a significant issue for us is judging what donors might be happy for their money to support.

Safe choices include women's literacy classes, children's surgeries, student scholarships, disabled children's homes........ but it's not so certain that all would support the Afghan Children's Circus School, Plain Ink's story telling courses or mountaineering for women.

There are some projects that we couldn't reasonably expect donors to support so we fund these ourselves. After learning of the financial struggles of our scholarship students, three trustees club together each year to give $50 (£40) gifts in cash to all 46 at the end of the Ramadan fasting period.

Value for money is very important to us, but we also have to consider a wide range of factors, amongst which are ease of monitoring - which rules out great swathes of the country which are too dangerous to visit, corruption risk, track record and the security risk to those we help.

The only thing we can be certain of is that we are better at it now than we were in the beginning. Our experience, our local contacts and knowledge of the country have all improved.

So far, we have sometimes been disappointed but generally we are more than pleased with the impact our donations have on the lives of individual Afghans. And no-one has ever run off with our money – if only the larger aid agencies could say that!
Our Supporters

Thank you to all of our fundraisers who by giving their time and energy have raised over £12,578 to make a difference.

Gillian Davies and Elly Green ran 13 hilly miles in the Barrathon
Elspeth Logan went out of her comfort zone and completed a triathlon
Farid Alimi ran in the London Marathon
Beeslack High School, Penicuik held various fundraising events
The ladies of Uig, Isle of Lewis enjoyed a pamper night
Harris Tweed-clad men and women cycled through the streets of Glasgow
Staff at Linda’s employer DAI organised five fundraising events in Bethesda, Maryland raising over £5,500.
Charges and donations in exchange for quirky alternative accommodation in our boat wheelhouse and clifftop bothy sheltered many a camper from the rigours of Hebridean weather

Our annual 10K event was supported across the world by DAI in the USA, by CW4WA in Canada, by friends, many of whom knew Linda, in Arkansas, Vancouver, Stockholm, Germany, Sri Lanka, Australia (Linda’s cousin, Jamie), London (our trustee Jane, and webmasters John and Annelise), in Venice (another trustee Jane), and across the UK. Even on a boat on the waters of Equatorial Guinea.

The main event was held on the Isle of Lewis, home of the Foundation, when over 70 runners and walkers came out to run or walk the beautiful scenic circuit round the Valtos Peninsula.
Thanks for all your support

If you would like to make a donation to help transform the lives of women and children in Afghanistan, please complete the form below together with your donation and send it to:

**The Linda Norgrove Foundation, 3 Mangersta, Uig, Isle of Lewis, UK, HS2 9EY.**

Your help is greatly appreciated, however you choose to help the Foundation.

Full Name: ..........................................................................................................................

Address: ................................................................................................................................

......................................................................................... Postcode: .....................................

E-mail: ...................................................................................................................................

I enclose a donation of: £ ...................................  to the Linda Norgrove Foundation.

If you wish your donation to be treated as Gift Aid and boost your donation by 25p on every £1 you give, please tick the box and sign the declaration below:

☐ I want to Gift Aid this donation, future donations and any other donation over the past 4 years to The Linda Norgrove Foundation.

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Please notify us if you change your name or home address, want to cancel this declaration, no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

Signed:.............................................   Date: ...........................

If you would like to know more about setting up a monthly donation please tick this box: ☐

Please leave us a message, we’d love to hear from you!