Helping women and children in Afghanistan

www.lindanorgroovefoundation.org
Welcome to our seventh annual newsletter

This time last year, we appealed for extra donations as our reserves became uncomfortably low. If we had continued at the same level, grants to existing projects would have had to be cut and we would only have been able to fund very few new projects.

The response to our appeal was tremendous. The bar chart on page 13 shows how our financial position has changed over the past seven years. This shows clearly the increase in income and how our finances are now much healthier.

We can only thank you and all of our other supporters. On pages 8 to 12 you’ll see what we have been able to achieve with your additional donations.

As always, we struggle with turning down good funding applications. Rejecting poor ones is a lot easier but it’s a time-consuming and difficult process sorting ‘the wheat from the chaff’. Even after seven years, we still need to become more ruthless if we are to balance expenditure against income. Maybe as you read through the list of funded schemes, you might consider whether there are some which you wouldn’t have supported. If so, do let us know – it’s good for us to receive feedback, working as we are in a bit of a bubble.

Our main focus over the year has been the expansion of our programme providing scholarships that allow women to study medicine. There is a shortage of women doctors, but a huge number of girls wanting to study medicine, and the gap can be plugged fairly economically. This year twelve donors signed up to fund a girl until she graduates with a degree in medicine in five years’ time. We hope to build on this – see pages 4 to 7.

It is valuable for us to see projects first-hand: we had planned to visit Afghanistan in the summer but several incidents led to our cancelling. The Taliban overran an area next to where we were heading, and it took some time for the Afghan army to dislodge them; our friend in Afghanistan who was organising our visit was traumatised when old colleagues of hers were brutally murdered and kidnapped in a night raid on their hostel; the family of one of our party of four was at the concert in Manchester that was bombed and there was a huge lorry bomb blast in the centre of Kabul. This all happened within a month and we cancelled. Things appeared to ease off afterwards and we probably would have been okay. It didn’t feel that way at the time, and we were fortunate to have this option: Afghans have to live with this uncertainty all the time.

Doulat Bibi Aliyar, our capable programme manager for the past three years, left in the summer, having been awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study for a Masters in the US. Her place has been taken by her assistant Pariwash Gouhari and we are currently hiring another member of staff. This month we passed the milestone of having sent over £1,250,000 to Afghanistan but we continue to keep overheads to a minimum and seven years of Afghan staffing costs total less than £25,000.

We do trust that you are encouraged by what has been achieved over the past year.

None of this of it would have happened without your support – thank you.
Calendar - Our seventh calendar highlights Afghan children. The 2018 calendars are A4 size for ease of mailing, open up to A3 for hanging, and cost £10 each.

Christmas Cards - Large A5 glossy cards. £10 per pack of 12 including envelopes. Christmas cards from previous years and an option to order 12 card ‘variety packs’ are also available. See website for more details.

Postage - All products can be ordered through our website, or by post with a cheque. UK postage is £4 per order. International postage at cost.

Contact Us

The Linda Norgrove Foundation is an award-winning UK registered charity.
Charity Number: SC041843

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Medical Scholarships

This year we received over 140 scholarship applications, interviewed 20 and selected 12. These are a few of them.

Amina is from a small town in the northeast of Afghanistan. She did well at school but her shopkeeper father forcibly married her off at 16. It didn’t work out and she was back home within a year. Currently she lives at home in a household of 12 because her father also supports the family of her uncle who is addicted to drugs. As a very attractive girl, she was afraid that without this scholarship her father would sell her to somebody else. Your donations have changed that.
Bahina’s father was a doctor, but during the civil war he was brutally killed while she was still a young child. Since then her family has been supported by her uncle with 14 people getting by on £150 a month.

She attended one of the top high schools in rural Badakhshan province and has been an outstanding student, regularly coming top of her year. In her final year she obtained 100% in all 16 examinations and how she didn’t win a government scholarship is a mystery. Thanks to your donations she now has guaranteed LNF support until she completes her studies.

Tahira was studying medicine in provincial capital Mazar e Sharif in the north when her father, the breadwinner for a family of 12, became seriously ill. As Tahira said in her application ‘I want to be a doctor and help others because I know how hard it is to have someone you love become sick, see them dying but not have the money for treatment’.

Before the scholarship award Tahira’s father was in hospital in Kabul and there was no prospect of her completing her studies without ‘a food provider’ for the family.

Her father is so pleased.

Tabasum comes from a rural area of remote Takhar province in the north. Her father is ‘an ordinary employee of the government’ and supports a household of 14 on an income of £138 a month. He moved his family to the provincial capital so that the children could attend better schools.

Tabasum was the top student of her year and hoped to gain a government scholarship to study medicine by means of the nationwide competitive ‘Kankoor’ examination. The six hour exam was held outside in burning sun with temperatures exceeding 38 degrees and she developed a splitting headache. Her mark was good but not good enough for medicine.

She wasn’t prepared to compromise and study another subject, so started sewing bags and teaching neighbours’ children in a vain attempt to save enough to allow her to attend a private university. Now ‘your scholarship to me will help me to achieve my goals and dreams. Undebatable, you will have great contribution in my future success, and I am sure I will make you proud’.
The life of a Medical Student in Kabul

LNF sponsorships pay only for university tuition fees and students support themselves, often with help from family.

Bibi, 20, lives in a rented two room apartment with five other women. The water is undrinkable and is mostly only ‘on’ in the evenings so dishes get washed then. And as she puts it: ‘the sanitation system is not good because the water is not good’. The electricity is more often ‘off’ than ‘on’ in the evenings. It’s a rough area, the streets too dangerous to be out after dark and, after Bibi’s paid her rent, she is left with £4 a week for food, bills, bus fares and clothes.

Fouzia is lucky to have a place in a private girls’ dormitory that is supported by an Afghan benefactor. There are 500 girls in the dormitory, six in her room and one bathroom to every 30 girls. Meals are included.

Her father, a small shopkeeper, pays for the dormitory and a little extra for her other expenses – a little is £5.50 a month. She can’t afford books so copies them out by hand.

Street harassment is something which we constantly hear about from all young women in Afghanistan.

There’s a cultural gulf to cross here. To us it’s serious annoyance but these girls have been brought up as pure and devout Muslims and are horrified by the associated public humiliation and shame.

‘She also talks about how sometimes it hurts her mentally, to get to and from university because men take every chance to harass women. They catcall her and says thing like “where are you going bitch” or private cars pull up for her or if they get the chance they touch her body and run away. She can’t even protest because people would gather and say you are a girl, take your way and go. Such situations get very hard for her especially when she is very away from her family’

Tuition Only then?
Maybe you feel, after reading the above, that we should be contributing something extra towards maintenance rather than just paying tuition fees. It’s a tough call, but their situations are typical in their country and by limiting ourselves to tuition grants we can sponsor more women.

It’s also possible that, if their parents knew that they were receiving extra towards living costs, they would reduce their contributions accordingly.
Medical Scholarships (contd)

And always there are those who aren't selected.

Sayara comes from the northern city of Mazar e Sharif. Her older brothers and sisters are all married, her father recently retired and her mother is a teacher. She was top of her class when she graduated from high school and would have been the first in her family to attend college, but, as the family can't afford to send her to study medicine, she applied to LNF for a scholarship. Her disappointment was the more intense being one of the 20 hopeful short-listed for interview from over 140 applicants.

Sponsoring a Student

In our last autumn newsletter we wrote ‘if there’s anyone out there willing to sponsor a medical student, please do get in touch’. We were delighted when twelve people signed up to sponsor a student to the end of their studies.

Mary picked up an LNF newsletter whilst on holiday in Lewis. She explains why she decided to sponsor a medical student.

Reading the story of Linda I felt moved to do my ‘little bit’ to ensure that something positive is bearing fruit from Linda’s death.

As I look back over my 70 years, I feel heartened that I might be making a difference, not just to the chosen student’s life, but many other people in that country which has been ravaged by so many conflicts. It’s even more heart-warming knowing that it is a female who will benefit from your charity.

University tuition fees cost around £1,150 a year and it’s a five-year course. Every penny you give goes to the girl. If you’re interested, we can send you a fact sheet which details the process.
A year’s funding

**November 2016 - £4,059** provided business training and helped to buy more beehives for the women from the Bamyan Beekeeping Co-operative.

**November - £7,070** allowed Serve Afghanistan to improve the commercial skills of 260 women running tiny businesses in three regions.

**January 2017 - £5,600** donated by you has enabled another 80 women to generate a good income from silkworm rearing and spinning and silk weaving in Herat province.

**January - £11,303** paid villagers from Balkh province to excavate two more drinking water tanks during the winter months when they have more time. Our programme of ten tanks, all dug by hand from solid rock, to provide safe drinking water to remote villages, has now been completed. Combined with the other health elements of the project, infant deaths in the area have reduced from an average of 50 in the two pre-project years to three a year in the last two years.

**January - £8,437** - For six years now we have funded surgeries for children from all over Afghanistan at the French Children’s Hospital in Kabul together with aftercare, travel and accommodation for them and their parents at the nearby Children’s Pavilion.

Most operations fix problems existing since birth: open heart surgeries and hip dislocations, for example.

This year we paid for the full cost of ten surgeries – four heart operations, three dislocated hips, two cases of repairing limbs after severe burns, and the removal of a set of tonsils. Without your funding these children had no chance of receiving treatment as they all come from large families with monthly incomes of around £55.

*Left to right: Madina’s arm showing severe burns, before treatment; Fatima, aged 2 and just as camera-shy after her heart operation as before it; Hasina, aged 3, before her heart operation*
March and August - £15,851 from us as main funders kept SCAWNO operating for another year. This Afghan educational charity, operating on a shoestring budget in a rundown area of Kabul, runs classes in literacy, calligraphy, computing, Koranic studies and judo for over 300 kids, and tailoring classes for 45 women.

March - £2,213 continued our partnership with ‘Womanity’ to provide small libraries in two rural girls’ schools.

March - £9,864 allowed 40 women to establish small orchards and 120 women to start modest vegetable plots. Saplings and seeds were provided and all were given horticultural instruction together with basic health and sanitation training over eight full-day and 16 half-day sessions. The project was organized by small local charity SALEH in the remote Wakhan Corridor.

March and September - £18,137, the amount our donors gave in fee scholarships to our 20 girls training to become doctors. Find out more on pages 4-7.
April - **£5,678** helped to raise awareness of the importance of clean water, **hygiene and sanitation in ten villages** in the Wakhan Corridor in an initiative organised by a dedicated, experienced German nurse with whom we have worked previously in the Wakhan. Monika has a huge love of the people and area and dedicates her life to help them in their struggle against the elements in such a harsh climate and landscape.

June - **£2,508** in emergency funding provided bedding and basic supplies for three **kindergartens** in Kunduz city whose supplies were destroyed when Taliban over-ran the city last year. We have also facilitated the restocking of their libraries with local language children's books donated by US charity Hoopoe Books.

July - **£7,577** of your donations allowed us to continue to safely transport the Ascend mountaineering teams around Kabul, **enabling them to help out with their various local charities** – an animal refuge, teaching and even helping a team-mate learn to read and write. The present team continue to train hard with expeditions every second week and this year two climbed to a record-breaking 18,000 feet, breaking the altitude record for Afghan women. Quite an achievement!
August - £7,000 towards the cost of running Window of Hope, the home for children with disabilities in Kabul. This will be our last grant after 7 years of support. Over this time, we have seen them transform from an institution where the kids were sleeping on thin foam mattresses on concrete floors to a stable comfortable home where they are well looked after. Their parent organisation has recently obtained charity status in the US and we believe can manage without our help. We will monitor how they cope without us.

September - £4,898 enabled a women’s medical centre in a poor district of Kabul run by French charity Afghanistan Libre to stay operational.

September - £7,000 improved standards in rural schools in the Takhar region in a project run by UK charity Concern. By concentrating on several ‘hub’ schools, by providing training to massively improve teaching standards and reduce corporal punishment, and by engaging with parents, associated satellite schools will also be improved.

September - £2,279 allowed seven girls from poor families to attend the Heela Model School in Jalalabad.

October - £9,263 that you continued to donate paid for our ongoing scholarship programme, enabling 37 women to study for degrees in law, economics and business at the Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education.
**October - £380** grant to Razia, one of last year’s Gawharshad graduates whom we supported. Razia, who was unemployed, lived with her elderly and partially paralysed father, her mother who is seriously ill and her elder brother who was the family’s breadwinner. This summer Razia heard what turned out to be huge lorry bomb explosion in central Kabul and, as normal, she phoned her brother to check he was OK. This time he didn’t answer. In desperation, she visited the bomb site, looking for him amid the mayhem. Then for several hours in the ensuing confusion Razia searched the many different hospitals that received the wounded, eventually finding her brother, who had just died from lack of blood after the hospital’s supplies ran out. We gave £380 to keep the family afloat until they can work out a way forward.

**October - £3,113** paid for the ‘last brick in the wall’ required to finance the 2017 Afghanistan National Juggling Championship, with Festival events and shows in five Regions, all organised by the Afghan Educational Children's Circus.

**October - £4,580** has allowed five female graduates to receive further industry-standard IT training. Noveonlus, an Italian charity, have undertaken research which confirms the employability of these girls upon completion of this post-graduate course.

£5,476, given in August 2016 to Women for Afghan Women for an emergency fund for abused women was mostly spent this year. A typical case is Naheed, a university-educated social activist, forced by her family into marrying an uneducated man who refused to provide for his family, instead living off Naheed’s wages as a civil servant. Recently, he beat her up so badly she was hospitalised for three days. She contacted W4AW for support but as her lungs had been damaged, her condition deteriorated so W4AW transferred her to Kabul for emergency treatment which included being put in a ventilator. The fund has paid for all her medical costs, and W4AW managing her separation from her husband and ensuring that her children are well looked after.
LNF finances

We believe in total openness about our finances and have put all of our annual reports and accounts onto our website. However, most people are unlikely to wade through our annual reports, so below is a bar chart which summarises our finances from the beginning.

We started with a healthy bank balance following family, Scottish Government and many private donations in 2011.

We received funding from USAID in 2013/14, reflected in higher income and expenditure but without affecting our assets, which shrank year by year from 2011 to 2015.

Last year’s appeal resulted in much higher donations, some of which was banked in 2016, some in 2017.

Now, all we have to do is fund projects within our means, but it’s not so easy!

We are proud of our low overheads, believing that those who work in the charity sector should, if they are able, lead by example by giving without expecting a return.

Effectively, the trustees, who manage the charity, receive no payment and mostly receive no expenses... but it doesn’t look exactly like that in the accounts because we charge expenses and then make a matching personal donation.

Gift aid of 25% is then claimed on the donation. This is perfectly legal and just means that the charity is able to claim back the tax which trustees have paid on this element of our personal income and so the charity makes a modest profit on the transaction.

Our outgoings comprise printing and design costs for our newsletters, accountancy fees at 50% reduced rate, consumables and postage etc. Well over 95% of your donations gets to Afghanistan.

But from this we also pay the wages of two young women who work part time for us in Kabul, checking on the projects and making sure that the money is spent properly.

To date, over seven years, our Afghan operation has cost less than £25,000 and we have transferred over £1.25 million to fund projects.
30 years ago Lorna and John built a stone bothy part-way down a spectacular cliff, ten minutes' walk from their croft house. It was a great place to work and was done for the pleasure of doing it rather than with a plan in mind. A fireplace and sleeping platform allowed them and their friends to stay overnight – the most memorable occasions in winter during gales.

It’s hidden away and they were very happy for others to stay if they could find it. Over the years it has become more popular and internet publicity, which they could not control, resulted in many more visitors. This year a ‘Bothy Bible’ was published in which it featured as one of the top five romantic hideaways in Scotland and was full most nights over the summer months.

The bothy is reserved through the LNF website and, whilst there’s no charge to stay, we suggest that donations can be made. Some do, some don’t and this year over £1,000 was given to the Foundation.

Probably the biggest pay-off, though, is the number of young people who call at the house afterwards, enthusing ‘that was the best night of our holiday, we’ll never forget last night’. It more than balances having to clean up after the messy ones!
Every year we are touched and surprised by the number of supporters who fundraise for the Foundation. This year over £16,050 has been raised by fundraising activities.

2017 started off with the Occupational Therapy Department at Western Isles Hospital holding a raffle. Sisters Rhoda Bamsey and Rachel Warfield ran in the Bath Half Marathon in March, a first for Rachel. To mark her 40th birthday, Rhoda Macdonald organised a fundraising brunch. Rosie Wiscombe (byRosie) designed a unique collection of bags for Mother's Day with the profits going to LNF. Bill Halliday ran in the London Marathon in April and has continued to fundraise, taking part in various races, including the Ben Nevis Race in September. Christine Schofield and Lorna Eller swam 22 miles in the pool, the equivalent of swimming the English Channel. Rather than wedding gifts, Michelle Martin and Philip Butcher asked for donations to LNF. In July Therese and Peter Muskus opened their organic garden near Nairn to the public. Musicians Hannah Martin and Phil Hendry collected donations from gigs while on tour. Last but not least, LNF was supported by The Harris Tweed Ride in Glasgow in September.

£8,892 was raised by the efforts of all those mentioned above.

Ur biggest fundraiser of the year and seventh annual Linda Norgrove Foundation 10k run/walk held on the Isle of Lewis with individuals and groups ‘joining in’ in the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, Sweden, Italy, and across the UK, raised £2,011. Roddy Gillies ran 10K on a treadmill on an oil rig west of Shetland and persuaded or coerced?! work colleagues to follow suit. Transocean and BP together more than matched the amount raised on the rig bringing the total to £3,677. In the lead-up to their annual 5K run/walk in South Kensington, Maryland, USA, DAI, Linda's employer, held a Cocktail Hour, Very Casual Friday, Penny Wars Competition, and Brown Bag lunch raising £5,148.

Change collected by individuals, and through donation boxes in the Uig Community Shop, Uig Community Café and other venues have soon mounted up as have donations made for staying in the Mangersta Bothy and Boat Wheelhouse.

Thank you to all of you for giving your time and energy to make a difference.
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!