



# the linda norgrove foundation

Summer 2018

## Welcome to our newsletter which we send each summer to more committed supporters and regular donors.

It seems so unfair to be writing this sitting in our office on the Isle of Lewis, secure, well-fed, healthy, loved and with time later for a walk and maybe some gardening, whilst there is so much pain elsewhere.

In our developed world, a sea of bitterness, resentment and belligerence attacks the very system that has effectively delivered security and affluence, albeit unevenly. Turmoil has invaded the Middle East as political systems, traditional cultures and religion struggle to cope with the pace of technological change.

When we started LNF eight years ago, the situation in Afghanistan was improving. But now it's going the other way and we sense Afghans have resigned themselves to this and lost some of the hope they had. This shouldn't really come as a surprise when you consider that someone aged 40, born after the continuous civil war started, has never known stability and now things are going downhill again.

It's a society in turmoil: strong family bonds, the poor, the rich, the pompous, the traditional, the worthy, the criminal, all mixed up. Understanding the culture has been our biggest challenge, in a strange way it seems to have an affinity with the novels of Charles Dickens: a traditional society uprooted and mixed about during the industrial revolution.

It's not an easy country in which to operate and feelings of hopelessness arise when the situation continually worsens. But we were never going to significantly affect the course of Afghan history, although we most certainly can change individual Afghans' lives and as things deteriorate, the impact of what we are able to achieve with your donations increases.

Whilst writing this newsletter, we talked via Skype to an inspirational doctor in Kabul who has started and runs one of the best hospitals in Kabul and has recently set up an all-girls school and medical university - the first all-female university in the country. Two years ago he was kidnapped for ransom, chained in a basement for four months and sometimes tortured. The possibility of this experience being repeated is very real, yet he could easily leave and join his brothers who live in London. He doesn't, and his courage puts our difficulties into perspective.



*John and Linda*

**Thank you for your support, we do hope this newsletter shows what a difference your donations make to women's and children's lives in Afghanistan.**

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

# Getting Girls into school in Kandahar

Life is tough for young girls in conservative Kandahar. We have funded an initiative which encourages back into school young girls from impoverished families, some of whom were forced into working. £5,040 allowed 15 girls to start or restart their education.

Two of them tell their stories in their own words, as far as translation will allow.



*My name is Marwa and I lost my father in 2013 in a bomb blast when I was a kid just three years old.*

*Then there was just my Mother to find our expenses, she became forced to work hard.*

*When five years old, I was obligated to work outside collecting garbage - plastics, cartons, bottles and other things that I could sell.*

*When I had done this work for two years, I saw my friends that are going to school and I thought why I can't go to school? At that time I decided to go to school. I talked with my Mother that I have interest with school and I want to go but my Mom couldn't pay. It was hard for her. After some days I met with my uncle and I said can you help me? but my demand was rejected and he disagree with my idea.*

*I was trying to do something. It was Saturday; I went to school with my Mom and she shared our life story with teachers at that school. A teacher gave information about Khadija Kubra office and after a week I went there. When they saw that it is the time for me to start the school, they investigated about me and they knew that I lived in a very hard situation and my Mom cannot pay my school expenses, so Khadija Kubra office supported me to start school.*

*Now I am in 2nd grade and I am really thankful that they saved me from being deprived of education.*



*I am Alva. We had a very happy life until five years ago the gas exploded and I lost my family. In that accident I was injured and I was in hospital for three months. I didn't see the bodies of any of my family.*

*After three months I got better. When I got out from the hospital I was alone, and I fell down.*

*My elder sister was married; I was obligated to live with my sister. I started my life once again and after some months my sister wanted me married but I was just 15 years old and I wasn't ready for it.*

*I thought if I start my school it will be good, but who will pay my school costs? My sister wouldn't. After three days I went to school and I talked with school's director, she told me to go to Khadija Kubra office, they can help you. After I went there and I shared my life story and problems with them, they checked about me and finally they started their help for me.*

*Now I am very happy and thankful to Khadija Kubra office, they did me much good, they give me the chance for an education and deliver me from an obligatory wedding.*

Do read this article from the Guardian written by our project manager to understand the scale of the problem. <https://bit.ly/2M6ZTzb>

# Medical Emergency Assistance



**We provide funds to the Afghan charity *Women for Afghan Women (W4AW)* for medical treatment of abused women. Working closely with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, they help and shelter women who have suffered severe domestic abuse.**

Late last year, Shamila was referred to them for sheltering, protection and treatment. Her husband had thrown acid over her, and her mouth was so welded she could not talk or have food. Immediately after receiving her at their facility, W4AW provided first aid and dressed her wounds in order to keep her alive. Afterwards, she was admitted to Istiqlal hospital for initial emergency treatment, all paid for by W4AW. However, doctors indicated the specialist treatment required was not available in Afghanistan and advised that she should be sent to a hospital in Turkey.

W4AW obtained a Tazkira (National Identity Card) and passport for Shamila, and held several advocacy meetings with the Ministry of Women Affairs requesting funding for her treatment from the special charity fund they hold for such vulnerable women who have suffered extreme forms of violence.

With regret, after a lot of arbitration, the ministry was unable to help and W4AW were forced to pay for her to travel to Turkey for treatment themselves. Our fund, and ultimately your donations, helped to pay for this.

## Medical Scholarships

**We're now starting the selection process for next year's intake of female medical students. Last year we received over 140 applications and took on 12 and this year we plan another 15 new scholarships.**

Our target of 50, with an average of 10 doctors a year qualifying, looked an unattainable dream last year. Now, it seems within sight.



Next year will be a milestone because two of 'our' students will graduate. They have to somehow arrange practical training for a couple of years before they can apply to become registered to practise as doctors. Little is straightforward in Afghanistan – an adequately funded GP system doesn't exist, hospitals have a shortage of experienced surgeons to lead, equipment is outdated and it can be difficult for women to work alongside men.

But our challenge is that there's little point in our funding women to spend five years studying if they are then unable to obtain practical training, so we are investigating what options are available and whether we might be able to set up a training programme for our graduates to follow. We have been fortunate in finding volunteer academics and medics from The University of Dundee with experience in this field willing to help and are investigating funding options to establish such a course.

Twenty very generous donors have now signed up to sponsor a female medical student for the duration of their studies. If you're able and willing to take on this level of commitment, £1,200 a year for five years, please do get in touch and we'll send you a factsheet detailing the process.



## Chaharde Ghorband Beekeeping Association

**A couple of years ago we gave two grants to a women's beekeeping co-operative in Bamyan Province in the mountains of central Afghanistan. They are now doing so well that, as well as selling lots of honey, they have been able to split bee swarms to sell. A real cottage industry is evolving.**

Earlier this year we were approached by Dr Habib Noori, the vet and bee enthusiast who advised the Bamyan group, to fund the expansion of a beekeeping group in the Chaharde Ghorband district, 50km north of Kabul in the foothills of the Hindu Kush mountains.

The beekeeping group has not previously received any outside help and our grant of £5,300 will finance a significant expansion by providing training for another 23 women beekeepers and equipping each with two new hives and colonies. The women initially contribute 20% of the costs but, if all goes well, could gain a profit of \$300 a year each - a significant income in rural Afghanistan.

These projects are popular with us – an Afghan organisation with low overheads, run by expert enthusiasts in a rural area, good for the environment, empowering women and providing them with a modest sustainable income.

## Project Update - £38,344 given to projects over the last six months

● **December - £5,041 to Khadija Kubra**, an Afghan charity based in the insecure city of Kandahar in southern Afghanistan to get **15 street children to start school**. In most cases, these children have not started school because their parents, if they have any, can't provide the bare minimum of clothing and essentials needed for them to attend. See article.

● **December - £4,000 to Afghan Connection**, a UK-based charity, towards the cost of **building a school** in rural Takhar province. Our contribution was doubled by the National Geographic Society.



● **March - £6,865 to SCAWNO**, an Afghan educational charity, operating on a shoestring in a run-down area of Kabul, running **classes for children** not attending school, after-school classes for those who do, and also providing training in **tailoring for widows and single mothers** enabling them to make a small income.

● **March - £8,493 towards our medical scholarship programme**. See article.

● **April - £6,450 to Global Partners** running a health education project in the Wakhan Corridor aimed at getting people to **use their toilet** rather than the ground around their villages.



● **April - £1,950 to Womanity**. The final payment of a four-year programme providing books for **rural school libraries**, encouraging leisure reading for children and the retention of literacy skills recently acquired by older women.

● **April - £232 to Nahida**, an exceptionally bright girl who received a partial scholarship to attend a prestigious Afghan-Turk school in the north but whose family were struggling to provide their contribution. We are committed to this twice-yearly payment as long as she needs it.



● **May - £5,313 to the Chaharde Ghorband Bee Cooperative**. See article.



## Gawharshad Institute Scholarships

Each year we fund around 40 fee scholarships costing an average of £275 a year to allow young women to study economics, law and business studies at Gawharshad. This year we funded 15 new scholarships after a rigorous selection process involving the interview of 33 shortlisted candidates by a panel of 11 interviewers.

The stories below contrast the progress achieved by two LNF financed graduates with two hopefuls who we weren't able to support with an LNF scholarship. We hope that this graphically demonstrates how lives can be changed with our support.



When she was awarded her LNF scholarship, **Adiba Fazil** was working in the library and archive department of the Afghan Parliament and the only breadwinner for her family; elderly infirm parents, a sister, and a brother disabled from an injury sustained when he was a government soldier. She couldn't support them with a salary of only 6,000 Afs (£62) a month and they relied on her uncle to help pay the rent. As Adiba says *"If LNF had not supported me, I would not have been able to continue my studies and I am so thankful that the scholarship programme gave me the chance to prove myself."*

One of the most intelligent and active girls during her Bachelor degree studies, she was one of the top law students at GIHE graduating in 2016.

Last year, she applied for and obtained the post of Executive Director General of the Department of Policy and Professional Affairs of the House of Representatives and, as she says: *"After graduation, my new salary increased from 6,000 Afs to 15,000 Afs (£156) so now I can better support my family financially."*



**Hajar Sadaat Hussaini** is 33, married with two children and lives with her husband, a casual building labourer who earns around £5 a day.

Her parents still live in Iran where she was born after the family became refugees following the Russian invasion in 1979. There is a strong possibility that they will become refugees again now that the authorities there are forcing Afghans to leave.

Hajar is currently more than half-way through her course at Gawharshad. She has had to take leave a couple of times because of financial problems: problems she tried to resolve by starting a kindergarten, but her business failed and she is still paying off the debts.

She is distraught at not being given a scholarship, fearing she will have to give up altogether and that her hopes for a more secure and less stressful future for her family will be dashed.



When **Zainab Farahmand** first came to Gawharshad in 2013 she didn't even have 1000 Afs (£10) to register for the entrance exam. The registrar told her about the Women's Empowerment Centre at Gawharshad; she applied for an LNF scholarship and was successful.

*"I cannot describe my feeling when I was accepted as one of Linda Norgrove Foundation Scholarship Students," says Zainab, "suddenly my dreams seemed possible."*

LNF scholarships only cover fees, so she worked part-time as a teacher in a private school to pay for her living expenses. She was also an extremely active student, participating in many different programmes.

In 2016 she graduated from the Political Science department with high marks and started as a reporter at the Hasht-e-Subh daily newspaper with a salary of £104 a month. Last year she got a new job at AJSC (Afghan Journalists Safety Committee) as Female Coordinator Assistant earning £149 a month. The same year, Zainab became involved with the newly-founded UK charity Sahar Speaks which aims to train female reporters and to raise the profile of women in Afghanistan. Her first article published abroad was for the Huffington Post about Afghanistan's First Female-Run Travel Agency <https://bit.ly/2lid7he>. She says that now she has a good job and good prospects, she can financially help her family and her ambition is that she might, one day, be able to study for a Masters degree.



**Seema Raha**, 25 and a Hazara, originally comes from the Bamyán province but now lives with her family in a rented home in Kabul. Her mum and dad are both old and sick and cannot work; her older sister is the only person with a job and supports all nine of them.

As her siblings become older, they need more financial support and her sister's salary is stretched to breaking point. Although Seema is more than half way through her course, she is certain that she cannot continue without outside financial help.

She is desperate to graduate with a degree in economics, to get a good job with a stable salary and to be able to support her family, so she was so disappointed not to be chosen to receive a scholarship.

**It is hard for us to find ourselves unable to fund these young women but our income is limited and tough decisions have to be made so that we remain financially viable for future years.**

# Fundraising 2018



The 'Big Picture' is that we continue to receive around £2,000 a week, mostly from regular and 'one off' donations, and to send to Afghanistan nearly all of what we receive whilst making sure that we retain sufficient reserves to fulfil all of the obligations we have entered into. But we are so grateful for those who undertake fundraising for us not only because it comes as a real welcome bonus to our finances but also because it emphasises the support we have out there. It's our life blood: without it, LNF would die.

Rosie Wiscombe ('by Rosie' shop in Stornoway) gave £500 raised from the proceeds of her 2017 Christmas 'Hoodie' raffle.

Tobias Wellensiek and the Hilfswerk Lions-Club Heidelberg-Altstadt organised a night of jazz with Thomas Siffling and his band in Heidelberg in Germany in May. The £1,721 raised will pay the fees for five girls from poor families to attend the Heela Model School in Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan.

This year's Linda Norgrove Foundation **10K run/walk** will be held on **Saturday 29th September**. The main event will be on the Valtos Peninsula on the Isle of Lewis with other groups and individuals running or walking in different parts of the world on the same day. Do check our website and facebook page nearer the time for details and let us know if and where you plan to take part. This is our main fundraising event of the year so do join us and run, walk, climb a hill or whatever takes your fancy on 29th September to help disadvantaged families in Afghanistan.



**Look out for information about our calendars and Christmas cards on our website**

## 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 this form 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.

I would like to know more about setting up a monthly donation:

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 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.

*giftaid it*

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

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