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

Afghanistan Visit

Earlier this year, Lorna and I travelled to Afghanistan for a week. It may seem a long way to go for such a brief visit but our family remains concerned about our Afghan trips so we keep them short.

With limited time, we were determined to make use of every minute. Accompanied by Frishta and Najia, our two project managers, we met 22 of our students at Gawharshad, held a separate meeting with 15 of our medical students, met the acting British Ambassador at the Embassy and staff at the DFID office. We visited six universities as well as the three teaching hospitals associated with them, and met the government minister responsible for private universities. We touched base with some existing projects, Children's Circus and Scawno, and also discussed possible future projects at the offices of two local charities. We agreed simple contracts and funding requirements for our medical students during our visits to the universities and inspected their teaching facilities.

One of the most important aspects of our visit was the opportunity to get to know our Afghan staff, whom we had only met via email before. We also enjoyed lunches and dinners with five of Linda's friends and colleagues.

Frishta, an LNF programme manager who accompanied us posted on Facebook that she was expecting two dodderly pensioners but was so tired every day we were there, that she ended up falling asleep straight after dinner.

www.lindanorgrovefoundation.org
Security is an issue. There were probably more guards and security checks than on our last visit three years ago. During the day, large helicopters continually circled the city, a bit sinister but probably good sense as crack troops can get to any incident very quickly.

Kidnapping for ransom was probably the biggest risk for us. We travelled, hopefully incognito most of the time, in a battered Toyota Corolla, hired for the week with a very good, very aware driver. Most of the time it felt safe although neither of us liked being stuck in traffic jams.

Our air fares were paid for in exchange for some work we did whilst there, CW4WA let us stay in their guest flat free of charge, and we paid our other expenses ourselves.

For us, it was a delight to meet the people whom the Foundation has been able to help. The experience of witnessing tears of gratitude for the changes LNF has brought to young lives is both humbling and energising. It’s certainly not going to be plain sailing for these women after they graduate, but it’s definitely going to be a lot better than if they hadn’t received an education, started a career and attained a level of self-sufficiency.

Whatever concerns you may harbour about the challenges in the region, the training we provide for women who in turn can help other women in the future is a valuable and worthwhile end in itself, as it allows them to earn a living to support their families and be more self-sufficient.

We do hope this is something you’d wish to continue to support but, if not, please do let us know so we can remove you from our mailing list.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to all of you who have supported us over past years.

John and Hong
Six Month’s Funding

- **December - £1,616**
  Afghan Connection were within two days of their deadline and short of this relatively small sum to reach their target of £60,000. Our donation, doubled by ‘the Big Give’, will be used to build a school in remote Rustaq province for 500 girls.

- **December - £3,980**
  Afghan Children’s Songbook project – see article.

- **January - £4,740**
  Paid to Serve Afghanistan allowing them to employ a recorder to transcribe educational books into braille. Serve Afghanistan is the only organisation printing braille books in Afghanistan. Blind children receive MP3 audio lessons and use braille textbooks for reference.

- **March - £7,462**
  We are the main funder of SCAWNO, an Afghan educational charity operating on a shoestring in a poor area of Kabul. The school has been refurbished this spring.

- **April - £5,000**
  Given towards Christian Aid’s appeal to help families displaced by the under-reported drought and famine in the east of the country which resulted in a further 150,000 people migrating to the city of Herat. The project provided temporary shelters, food, sanitation and rudimentary healthcare.

- **April - £9,290**
  To Hand in Hand’s village uplift programme in Balkh province whereby women are encouraged and enabled to start small businesses. Before training and support is given, the women have to contribute regularly to a group savings scheme, and this should lead to the projects becoming self-sustaining.

- **May - £10,273**
  To HeathProm – see article.
We have progressed from giving one medical student a scholarship five years ago to thirty-three today.

As the programme grows, our systems have to grow with it – to avoid surprises, we have to engage with our students more and monitor maternity leave, breaks following bereavements, exam failures, long term illnesses. We have appointed student reps at each university to help us with this process.

We were impressed with the quality of the medical students and it was so encouraging to find how much they appreciate their scholarships. They send their deepest thanks to you all for the opportunity you have provided.

We also found possibilities to support women studying nursing and midwifery. If this appeals, get in touch for information about supporting a young woman through her studies in these fields at a cost of around £450 a year for 4 years.
48% of Afghans are under 15 years old, only 56% attend primary school and 55% of families live in a situation of grinding poverty so there are many children whose imaginations have been starved.

We jumped at the opportunity to provide gap funding which allowed an illustrated children’s book of traditional stories to be printed and distributed free to schools and orphanages across the provinces of Afghanistan.

The project founder and director, Louise Pascale, a US professor of arts-based education, has considerable experience with this kind of project, having previously collected and published two Children’s Afghan Songbooks.

This new book, Bood Nabood (Once Upon a Time) is a compilation of six short stories, three in Dari and three in Pashto, collected by Noorjahan Akbar from local storytellers, with marvellous illustrations drawn by Maryam Moravejade.

There is an accompanying Teacher’s Guide with an emphasis on eliminating rote learning and replacing it with a more active approach bringing deeper understanding and prioritising problem-solving, critical thinking and communication over simple recall of facts.

Our funding allowed the printing to go ahead and the books have now been distributed. For so many children, this will be their first sight of an imaginative children's book and it's difficult, given the weight of toys and books our own children have, to imagine the magic of that simple experience. Your funding has made that happen.
Healthprom

For six years, we have supported UK charity HealthProm by funding the construction of 10 underground drinking water storage tanks: part of a programme to improve the health of 23,000 people in 44 villages in Charkent, a remote insecure mountainous rural district in northern Ghor province.

This year we've contributed towards the emergency transport of women in labour to health centres and, if required, to hospital.

The area benefited from a DFID grant but, when this ran out three years ago, maternal deaths rose as women were once again forced to give birth in their cramped unhygienic homes. HealthProm has now introduced a voucher system to pay local jeep owners to transport mothers in labour.

Increased income from newly established fruit orchards, irrigation and improved agriculture allows the villagers to pay more towards the cost of transport, and the proportion of funding for transport has been steadily reduced with the aim that it will be self-sustaining.

This year, LNF’s contribution of £10,273 pays for the cost of three village co-ordinators to administer the scheme and 25% towards the cost of transport for around 950 mothers.

The project's effectiveness can be measured by the fact that, last year, two mothers died in childbirth in this very poor remote area, compared with the national average which would have meant nine women would have died.
Timsgarry Byre – Holiday Cottage
Rental Income to pay all LNF costs

John's hobby, when he's not writing newsletters and chasing payments to Afghanistan, is woodwork and building. For the past four years he's been engaged in the refurbishment of a byre (barn) in Timsgarry, close to the sandy expanse of Uig Bay.

It's a very calming house, finished and equipped to a high standard with beautiful views across Uig Bay and mountains. Located on a quiet loop road, it's within a few minutes' walk from the beach, shop and two restaurants. Two electric bikes are included.

For a holiday in one of the most beautiful unspoiled wildernesses in the UK, where deer and eagles are commonplace, go to www.timsgarry-isleoflewis.co.uk.

The rental income will be used to pay all our UK costs. LNF has always been run by volunteers, paying their own expenses, but now all costs including printing and mailing of newsletters, accountancy fees, etc are covered.

So every penny you raise or donate gets to Afghanistan.

New Website
Our new website went live in April. Most people now view websites on tablets and mobiles so the layout needed to change to adapt to the size of screen being used. Our old site couldn't cope, hence the move to a totally new platform.

We hope you agree the effort has been worth it, although it's somewhat dispiriting to hear that browsers on phones are much less likely to become engaged with a site and so donate significantly less than computer users.

Afghan Staff News
We normally employ two programme managers in Kabul. They receive a stipend of $100 a month and are paid an hourly rate and expenses.

Najia Nabizada has now graduated from the American University in Kabul. She is improving her English and hopes to study abroad for a Masters next year.

Frishta Matin left in April to study at the University of Freiburg in Germany for 6 months. Her sister Farzana Matin has stepped in. She is in her final year studying business at the American University and she is proving to be super-efficient.

And we have also been joined by Habibullah Noori who has offered to volunteer at weekends and brings with him valuable experience and expertise. Habib is a vet, currently working for DAI, who was Linda's employer, and he is a bee fanatic. He set up the Chaharde Ghorband women's beekeeping cooperative we funded last year.
Fundraising

Once again, our main fundraising event this year will be the Linda Norgrove Foundation 10k RUN/WALK which will be held on Saturday 5th October. As in previous years the main event will take place on the Valtos Peninsula on the Isle of Lewis but we encourage individuals and groups to run or walk, climb a mountain, swim or cycle wherever they are in the world on the same day. Last year we had supporters taking part all over the UK, in Canada, the USA, Sweden, France, Germany, Kazakhstan, Myanmar, and New Zealand. Can we add any ‘new’ countries this year? Do let us know.

Our thanks go to Luca Vanzano and Friends of Tasmania who have boosted our finances with donations amounting to £818.

Good luck to the boys and girls of 1st Laxdale Scouts who are doing a sponsored climb up the Clisham, the highest hill on the Isle of Harris, to fundraise for the Foundation.

Adventurous holidaymakers have given donations following a night in the Mangersta bothy or the boat wheelhouse (sleeps 2, £40/night) over the last six months amounting to £1,732.

If you would like to organise your own fundraiser, do get in touch.

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.

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

Our privacy policy, which details how we keep and protect your data, is available on our website.

If you no longer wish to receive communications from us, just tell us, and you won’t hear from us again.