Welcome to our ninth annual newsletter

Nine years ago when LNF was set up following Linda's death, we were early 60 year olds. Since then we've become the proud owners of reading glasses, a hearing aid, deteriorating memories and postures. Live long enough and it's a decline we all experience.

Nine years ago, Afghanistan's ‘reconstruction’ was progressing fast, probably too fast, but things appeared to be improving. Now, even though need has increased, we find it more difficult to find good new projects. Many NGOs have pulled out because of deteriorating security, and it's become more difficult to monitor projects on the ground. Or maybe, with nine years of experience, we're more discriminating.

Change is inevitable and the changes that we have to deal with both at home and in Afghanistan are huge. But we are totally committed to continuing our work and we've tried to detail below how we'll adapt to changing circumstances.

It's always been difficult for us to arrange fundraising events in the Outer Hebrides; we haven't the population and it's not a rich area. To appeal to donors we have always tried to keep our overheads to a minimum and this year we've taken that a step further with the completion of our self-catering cottage in Uig, (www.timsgarry.isleoflewis.co.uk). The rental income from the byre, together with donations from the Mangersta Bothy, pay all the Foundation's costs in the UK. That means every penny donated gets to Afghanistan, which we believe makes LNF attractive to many donors.

Our previous emphasis of funding many small projects, which has proved so successful in previous years, will have to be scaled back because we will find it increasingly difficult to maintain the level of administrative effort and oversight required.

The university scholarship programme has been expanded and we now sponsor 106 women studying for degrees. We deal directly with the universities so there is no middleman or other NGO to liaise with, which simplifies our administration. We continue to be energised by the transformation made in young Afghan women's lives, as well as the benefit they can bring to their communities and the changes they bring to their families.

Most poor Afghans don't live in cities but, as the government has lost control of many rural areas, it has become increasingly difficult to access those in need of our help. Regrettably, an increasing number of our projects have been delivered in the
capital, Kabul. To address this, we have made a conscious decision to start working in places where the Taliban are the ‘de facto’ government. We are not a government or a political organisation - we will help women and children irrespective of their government. This doesn’t mean we will not resist the attitudes to women the Taliban hold, but we will continue to help women from poor rural backgrounds however the situation develops.

Inevitably these changes won’t suit everyone but adapt we must and we have every reason to believe that the next nine years will be as successful as the last.

If you are no longer interested in what we do, please get in touch and we’ll take you off our mailing list. It’ll stop you being annoyed and will allow us to reduce our costs. As always we’re deeply grateful to all of you who have supported the Foundation and, more importantly, so are those whose lives have been transformed in Afghanistan. We’ve met plenty of them and can assure you they do appreciate the help which you have given.

Khatera, aged 20, is from Jawzjan province on the northern border with Turkmenistan, currently a battleground between the Taliban and government forces. Her mother became ill two years ago. Treatment was not available locally and so her father, a policeman, sold their house and took her to hospital in Pakistan. Her mother has recovered and now the family of eleven rent. Khatera was top of her school year with a 99.75% average but, despite outstanding grades, was not selected to go to the government university because of a quota system. Without this scholarship, Khatera had no chance of becoming a doctor. Now she will.

Hajar’s father is a cleaner earning £50 a month. House rental costs £25 a month and they get by on what’s left over. It may seem crass to say, but this family of seven spend less each week on heating, food, clothing, medical costs, transport, etc than we spend feeding our dog. Aged 19, Hajar was top of her class with a grade of 98%. An LNF scholarship is her only chance of achieving her ambition to become a doctor and now she might be able to afford new clothes more frequently than every two or three years.
Scholarships Update
2019 – A year of solid progress

- Lorna and John visited five university campuses in Kabul in March and subsequently made simple agreements with four universities to pay the scholarship fees to them direct.
- We received over 650 applications, interviewed 78 and selected 13 new students to study medicine in five universities in Kabul.
- We interviewed for and selected two medical students to study in Ghazni city.
- Two of our medical students finished academic studies and started practical training in hospitals.
- We interviewed for and selected three students to study midwifery in Ghazni city and a further nine students to study midwifery at the Higher Educational Institute in Jaghoori, in rural Ghazni province.
- We were involved with Gawharshad University in the selection of another twenty students to study, law, economics, business and computing.
- So we currently sponsor 47 students studying to become doctors, 12 studying midwifery, 17 law students, 11 studying business, 8 IT students, and 11 studying economics. 106 young women in total.

Throughout our selection processes, we strive to select the brightest candidates from the poorest backgrounds who would not be able to continue their education without help. Three women have dropped out, one disappearing without trace, one moving abroad and one traumatised by her father's death. One attempted fraud. Considering the stressful lives these women have with significant family illnesses untreated due to poverty, family killed in fighting or bombings, poverty, overcrowding with no private space, hunger, and a steady deterioration in the political situation with more fighting and ever-increasing civilian deaths, we are surprised how consistently, on average, they keep studying.

They are a lot tougher than us and deserve your help.
Provincial Medical and Midwifery Scholarships

In Kabul, many of our students attend Khatam al-Nabieen University which has a sister campus in Ghazni city and a college campus in Jaghoori. We are determined to try and help women outside the capital, in places where armed conflict is a fact of life and where many parents are understandably reluctant to let their daughters travel, limiting their choice to local institutions.

This year we selected for sponsorship two medical and three midwifery students in Ghazni City University as well as nine studying midwifery and nursing at Jaghoori college.

Our programme managers felt it was just too dangerous for them to visit Ghazni city where sometimes ‘Taliban walk around with guns’, so interviews were conducted via skype. Jaghoori was safer for them and Farzana and Frishta travelled to interviews for 10 hours by car, using a circuitous route to avoid Taliban districts, dressed in Burqas and carrying no electronic devices. We were relieved when they were safely back in Kabul.

If you, or anyone you know, would consider sponsoring a young woman to become a doctor (£1,400pa) or a midwife (£200-£425pa), let us know and we will forward one of our factsheets detailing the process.

Nasiba is 22 and from a remote area of Ghazni province. She did well at school and was accepted to study accounting at university but her family wouldn’t allow her to go. Her father is paralyzed following a car crash, her uncle was killed in conflict and his family lives with them making a total of 12 in the household. They have a piece of land where the main crop is potatoes. This is her chance to make her own way in the world and she’s very grateful for it. Her scholarship is to study midwifery in Ghazni city.
A Year’s Funding

December - £1,620, doubled by ‘the Big Give’, ensured that Afghan Connection reached their target of £60,000 to build a school in remote Rustaq province for 500 girls.

December - £3,980 provided the last element of funding allowing the Afghan Children’s Songbook to go for printing, after which thousands of copies were delivered free to schools and kindergartens across the country. Written and beautifully illustrated by Afghans, it has been a wonderful introduction to the world of books for many Afghan youngsters.

January - £4,740 allowed Serve Afghanistan to employ a recorder to transcribe educational books into braille. The only organisation printing braille books in Afghanistan, Serve also give MP3 audio lessons to augment braille textbooks.

March - £7,460

6 months’ funding for SCAWNO, an Afghan educational charity providing classes for children and tailoring classes for mothers, operating on a shoestring in a poor area of Kabul. The school was refurbished this spring.

March to May - £17,182 to five universities to pay for the spring term fees of 33 medical students. See page 4.

April - £5,000 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 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 are given, the women have to contribute regularly to a group savings scheme, and this should lead to the projects becoming self-sustaining.
May - £10,270 to HealthProm’s programme to reduce infant and maternal deaths in the remote province of Ghor. Our funds paid for the provision of emergency transport for around 950 women in labour taking them to health centres and, if needs be, to hospitals.

May - £10,030 paid for life-changing surgeries for seven girls and six mums at La Chaine de l’Espoir. See page 10.

June - £3,170 for Eid gifts of $50 paid to each of our scholarship students. Covered entirely by donations from LNF trustees.

August - £5,790 to the Afghan Mobile Mini Circus for Children funding their programme of annual circus festivals and competitions right across Afghanistan.

August - £6,250 to the remotely located Chaharde Ghorband Women’s Beekeeping Cooperative. Contributing towards the cost of a vehicle to allow them to move their hives to facilitate siting within areas of floral abundance, and to transport produce to and collect materials from market. Also to train and qualify three female drivers in Kabul.

August - £9,670 to SCAWNO. Another six months’ funding for the small school in a poor area of Kabul. Additional money to pay for new judo clothing, a washing machine and a full-time cleaner.

October - £240 allowed an exceptionally bright girl, Reyhana, to continue her studies at the prestigious Afghan-Turk school.

October - £13,030 covered a full year’s scholarship fees for the 47 young women whom we sponsor at the Gawharshad University to study law, business, economics and IT.

November - £40,510 Paid for a full year’s fee for the 59 women we sponsor to study medicine, midwifery and nursing at seven universities. See article.
Earlier this year, Lorna spotted an article in the New York Times about an incredible rural school which was managing to get more than 90% of its students to college, even though most had parents who were illiterate.

Rustam School is in the Yakawlang district of Bamyan province, home to the Hazara ethnic minority. Linda worked there, helping to establish Afghanistan’s first National Park at Band-e Amir lakes and LNF has previously supported projects in Bamyan and a women’s beekeeping group in Yakawlang.

Habib, our Afghan volunteer, visited to find out the current situation at the school. 330 girls and 146 boys attend – and this is unusual in a country where, whilst one in two boys attend secondary school, only one in four girls do. Evidently, boys here stay home to help with the farming work.

Many children walk for more than an hour to school through a mountainous area with a harsh climate. Temperatures in summer can soar to over 35 degrees C whilst the average January temperature is -10. There are seven classrooms and six tents, all unheated, and most children sit directly on the concrete floors.
It appears that a UK charity Action Aid has a programme of supporting four schools in the area for four years, then moving on to support another four schools. They achieved amazing results at Rustam school but their four years of help has come to an end and the school is suffering.

**How can we help?**

By providing simple things like stationery, paper and pencils, whiteboards, rugs for the floors, by repairing the solar panel system and buying a simple printer. The local community have agreed to undertake the digging of trenches for a water supply pipe from a spring if we supply the pipe. All of this is estimated to cost around £6,000 – a small price to pay if it enables these teachers and pupils to continue to achieve and to be an outstanding example to others.
For the past eight years, we have funded life-changing surgeries for children, and for the last two years for mothers as well, at the French Medical Institute for Mothers and Children.

This year, thanks to your support, the Foundation has covered all medical expenses for seven young children and six mothers with gynaecological issues, treatment for which would be challenging in local hospitals.

The aim is to provide access to good surgical care to the most deprived and underprivileged from rural provinces of Afghanistan. Children and mothers are selected following consideration of their absolute need of treatment, the impossibility of treatment in their home province and their economic situation. Their transport to Kabul is covered and the kids, together with their mum or dad, stay free in the Children’s House next door.

Your donations of just over £10,000 paid for 13 operations and all associated costs - £770 for each life transformed.
Somia comes from Logar province where health services are almost non-existent and the situation is not secure due to ongoing armed conflict. They recently had to welcome their neighbour’s family whose husband was killed during fights, so now there are 15 people living together in the household. Somia’s father is currently jobless, working from time to time as a daily worker earning less than £30 a month. The family has accumulated a £500 debt and there wasn’t any possibility they could afford the £1,973 needed to correct Somia’s heart condition. Without the operation, she would most likely have died before the age of three so your donations saved her life.

‘I’m the mother of 6 children. My youngest is 2 years old. We live in Baghlan province where war is ongoing. My husband has been a teacher for 25 years but, although he has a job, we don’t have enough income to live decently. His salary (£60/month) is not always regular; indeed, due to war the schools are often closed. Everybody needs medical care in our province, people are very poor.

I was sick for a year. I couldn’t understand what was happening in my body. I visited many doctors, they gave me medicine but the pain was still unbearable. It was so painful that I couldn’t walk or stand up.

I learned of FMIC from neighbours and travelled to Kabul by bus. I was lucky that they would treat me. The surgery went very well, I stayed for 6 days at Children’s House with my husband.

We won’t have more children but I’m happy I’m in good health to take care of my 6 children from now on. I live for them and my oldest kids are so happy to see me healthy again.’

Masooda, aged 33 needed a cystectomy, removal of her bladder which cost £630. Here, she tells her own story:
Introducing Elspeth Murphy, our new Trustee

After informally attending our Trustee meetings this year, Elspeth Murphy has agreed to become a Trustee. Brought up in Uig, Elspeth was in the same year as Linda at secondary school and they were close friends. She studied archaeology at university, then moved to the Republic of Ireland where she worked her way round the country, eventually becoming Assistant Project Archaeologist for the National Roads Authority. After the economy collapsed and jobs ended, she returned to Uig, Lewis in 2010 with her husband, two young children and cat. She now lives in Stornoway and works with seaweed. Her passion is open water swimming. She likes to travel and has been to Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Morocco, India and Nepal as well as in Europe. She says, ‘I am honoured and humbled to have been asked to become a trustee. As a mother of two young girls, it will be my pleasure to support the trust to help women and children in Afghanistan, a place that had Linda’s heart. I have fundraised for the Foundation in the past but I’m excited now to be able to engage with families and hopefully make a difference.

Hamida’s father died leaving her mother, four sisters and a young brother. Her grades were good enough to gain entrance to university but they couldn’t afford it. They have a piece of land which her mother works but mostly the mosque helps them financially. Although her home is far from the college, her uncle works as a cook there so she can get a lift. In her application Hamida says ‘I’m certain that it will make a big change for women in Jaghoori to have a trained midwife close.’
If you’re from the ‘baby boomer’ generation, you’ve been lucky to live through a huge improvement in living standards and to have enjoyed relative stability and peace. You may have benefited from rising property values, might have inherited a house or be receiving one of the last good pensions. You may have worked hard, saved and possibly invested in ISAs so you no longer pay your fair share of tax.

The generations succeeding you have had a tougher time, you may have helped them financially as they settle down, and they are set to inherit your property and savings.

It seems right that, after working hard and foregoing spending to save, one can decide who to leave it to. But on the other hand, it’s also clear that it is anything but fair that some inherit fortunes without effort and others don’t. The gulf between rich and poor is increasing rapidly, life chances have become increasingly dependent on parental wealth, and a new class structure is developing, especially in the UK and the USA.

Then there is the question of how much is enough. Currently one can leave £325,000 (+£175,000 main residence allowance) without paying inheritance tax, doubled for married couples. Above these figures tax is paid at 40%. But how many of us really need this unearned income? How often is it frittered away on new cars and expensive holidays?

Yet, with very little cost to the person inheriting the wealth, those same funds would provide huge benefits to those who are desperately poor. Leaving money to a UK charity (any registered charity, not just LNF) can be arranged using a tax break so the reduction to your inheritance is only a quarter of your gift to the charity.

Here’s an illustrative example of how this tax break works:

A single person living in a house worth over £250,000 leaves £700,000 estate in total.

The inheritance tax free amount is £325k+£175k = £500k.
Tax to pay would be 40% of the remaining £200k (£700k-£500k) = £80k tax.

But, if 10% of the taxable amount (10% of £200k) was left to charity, the inheritance tax rate on the balance would be reduced from 40% to 36%.
So the inheritance tax to pay would then be 36% of (£200k - £20k) = £65k tax.

£20k would be received by the charity but the net inheritance tax bill has been reduced by £15k (£80k-£65k). This means the £20k donation has only cost the heirs £5k.

With £20,000, we could pay for four young women in Afghanistan to train and become doctors. Or other charities could benefit, should you so wish. All for the reduction of £5,000 from an inheritance of many hundreds of thousands of pounds.

It could be one of the most effective charitable decisions you make. But we’re not tax lawyers and you should seek professional advice if you do decide to consider this.
Calendar
This year we have a selection of photographs for our calendar from both Afghanistan and Uig, where we live. Our physical days are spent working in our loft office in our home on the Isle of Lewis, but mentally we’re dealing with issues in Afghanistan. The countries are thus intertwined, and we hope that you can enjoy the images of Afghan children and landscapes from both. The calendars are A4 size, open up to A3 for hanging and display two images for each month. £10 each.

Christmas Cards
Smaller A6 size glossy cards this year. £4.50 for a pack of 10 cards with envelopes. See website for choice of images.

Postage
All products can be ordered through our website, or by post with a cheque. UK postage is £2.50 per order.

Fatima comes from Daykundi province west of Kabul. Her mother died during childbirth when she was two. Her father, who is a small farmer cultivating wheat and some fruit and walnut trees, raised their four children alone. Six years ago she took up an offer for free English classes offered by a foreign NGO. The Afghan in charge locally realised how talented she was and Fatima became the programme coordinator and office administrator. He found out that her dream was to become a doctor and offered to sponsor her studies. She came to university in Kabul but after two years he asked her to marry him. She was shocked and refused so he then told her to return all of the fees that had been paid. This was impossible because the family is poor so he threatened to kidnap her or send her to prison. She ignored him. Her father sold a cow earlier this year so she could continue studying for another term but, although she has his backing, he cannot afford more. She was distraught but now LNF has taken over, her worries are past and she can finish.
Fundraising

As detailed below, supporters have raised £19,070, every penny of which will be sent to Afghanistan to help vulnerable women and children.

A huge amount of time and effort has been put into organising the various events and these would not have been so successful without your participation and support. Our sincere thanks to you all. Elspeth Murphy trained throughout the summer to take part in the Chillswim Coniston, swimming 5.25 miles end-to-end in 3 hours 10 minutes.

The boys and girls of Laxdale Scouts did a sponsored climb of the Clisham, the highest mountain on the Isle of Harris.

The Scottish Council for Development and Industry raised funds at their Highlands and Islands Annual Dinner.

Our funds have been boosted by donations collected by Luca Vanzano and Friends of Tasmania; Rob and Jan Scott who displayed a donation bowl at the Morven Gallery; Uig Community Café and Uig Shop.

Donations have been given in recognition of Sir Stuart Etherington and of Peter Nowell on their retirement, and in lieu of other celebratory presents.

Dr John Hay contributed a year’s collection of loose change.

Rental was donated from the Norgrove’s boat wheelhouse throughout the summer and donations were given by visitors spending a night in Mangersta Bothy.

The year ended with the ninth annual LNF 10km. More than 80 participated here on the Isle of Lewis either running or walking around the Bhaltos Peninsula. Ages ranged from pre-school to octogenarians and Roddy Read completed the circuit on a uni-cycle.

Elsewhere around the world, friends and supporters joined in on the same day in Australia, New Zealand, North Korea, Myanmar, Kazakhstan, Canada, the USA, Germany, Lanzarote and across the UK. An unlikely coincidence this year was two groups of runners independently supporting the LNF 10k in Pyongyang, North Korea’s capital – two doctors from Harris and a supporter who was previously in Siberia.

DAI in Maryland, USA, Linda’s former employer, organised a series of events throughout September - a Penny Wars, Tone Up Tuesday and Executive Happy Hour – culminating in a 5km on the 5th October, raising over £4,000.

Thank you all for your generosity and help.

If you would like to organise your own fundraiser, please let us know. You could even help from your armchair if you shop online by registering for “Easyfundraising”. It doesn’t cost you anything, you only need to set it up once and a small percentage of your purchases go towards LNF funds. To do this visit: https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk

And if you are thinking of a holiday in the Outer Hebrides, look no further than Timsgarry Byre. Profits from the weekly rent of this newly-renovated holiday cottage pay for all the administration costs, travel and other expenses for the Foundation. You will be able to enjoy a week of luxury in the knowledge that you are helping to make a real difference to the lives of the women and children whose stories feature in this newsletter. For further information see the website: www.timsgarry-isleoflewis.co.uk
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than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my
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If you would like to know more about setting up a monthly donation please tick this box: ☐