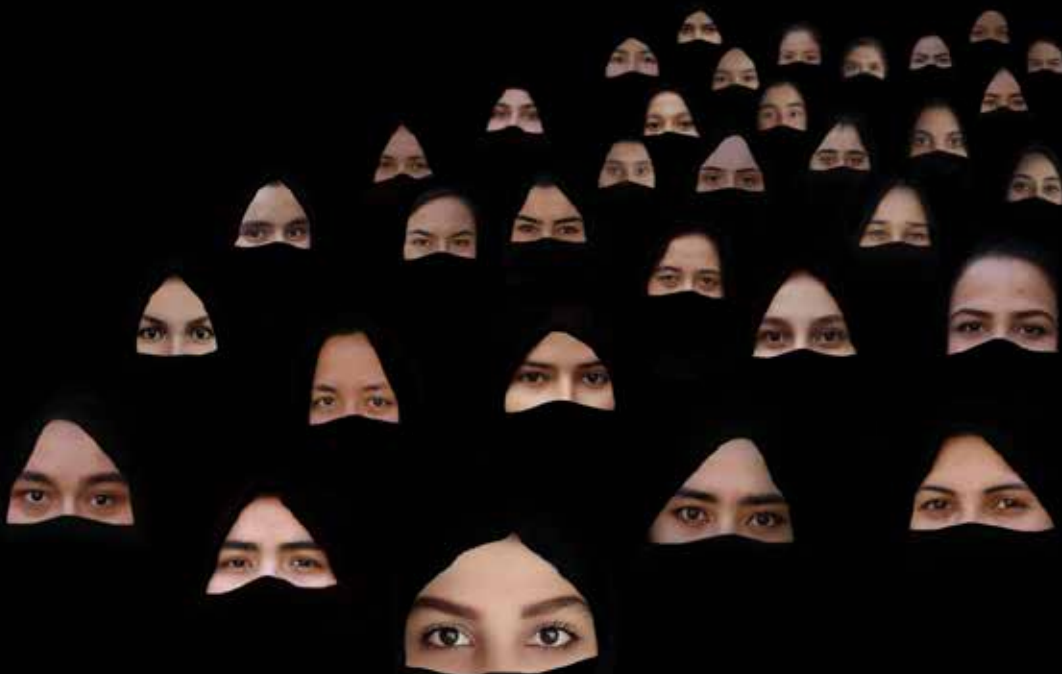




the linda norgrove foundation

2023 Newsletter



Helping women and children in Afghanistan
www.lindanorgrovefoundation.org

Welcome to our Thirteenth Annual Newsletter



Our hope this year was that, in addition to our projects in Afghanistan, we would be able to bring 20 students to continue their studies here in Scotland, eventually qualifying as doctors and hopefully working within our NHS. Our hopes have not been realised. You can read about this on page 4.

Despite the Taliban's ban on the education of teenage girls, we have found some chinks in the system's armour: funding graduate doctors to train for three years at the CURE hospital; paying for 20 young women to study midwifery in Badakhshan; providing small grants towards internet study. Many of our other projects include numeracy and literacy training.

Now we no longer fund university scholarships, we have more to spend on other projects, mostly towards helping those families headed by women who remain at the bottom of society, wondering where the next meal is coming from, shivering in a dark, damp room with little prospect of things improving.

It's less appealing than providing clever girls with an opportunity to become doctors - sustaining the desperate feels like shovelling money into a black hole. But it's not about us, is it? The important thing is that this gives some poor souls a respite from the daily grind of trying to get a few Afghans together to be able buy some bread and tea to see themselves through another night. This is no exaggeration.

If we have learned anything over the past 13 years, it is that we should be wary about predicting Afghanistan's future. The Taliban appear to have a strong control over the country, although there will always remain regionalism, local variations and a complex balance of power. There appears to be a significant split between the attitudes of those in control in Kabul and the Emir's faction in Kandahar.

Opium production is a likely source of future conflict. Afghanistan had become the largest supplier of heroin in the world and, to their credit, the Taliban have banned opium poppy cultivation. The resulting 85% reduction in one year has resulted in rural livelihoods taking a real battering and, as savings and opium stocks run out, as hunger becomes more acute, and as opium prices rise, there is likely to be pushback from the Taliban supporters in rural areas. It's a complex story but you can read more about it here: www.Alcis.org (blogs)

Here in UK, LNF continues to grow. We take no governmental funding and our success in attracting private donors appears to be down to two factors: that we are one of the few organisations continuing to work with locally-based charities in Afghanistan and that, despite our administrative charges rising, we are still mostly run by volunteers, all UK costs are paid, so we can continue to boast 'Every penny donated gets to Afghanistan'. For more details, see page 14.

Thank you again for your generous support.

John and Louisa

Christmas Cards and Calendars

2024 Calendar

Our 2024 calendar is a collection of photographs of Afghan life, landscapes and children taken by three professional Afghan photographers and Shakila, a student who was in her second year at university before education was banned for women. The calendars are wire-bound, with each month displaying two pictures, opening up to A3 for hanging. £10 each.

Christmas Cards

We have two new designs of A6 glossy cards, sold in packs of 10 with envelopes. £5 per pack.

Ordering and Postage

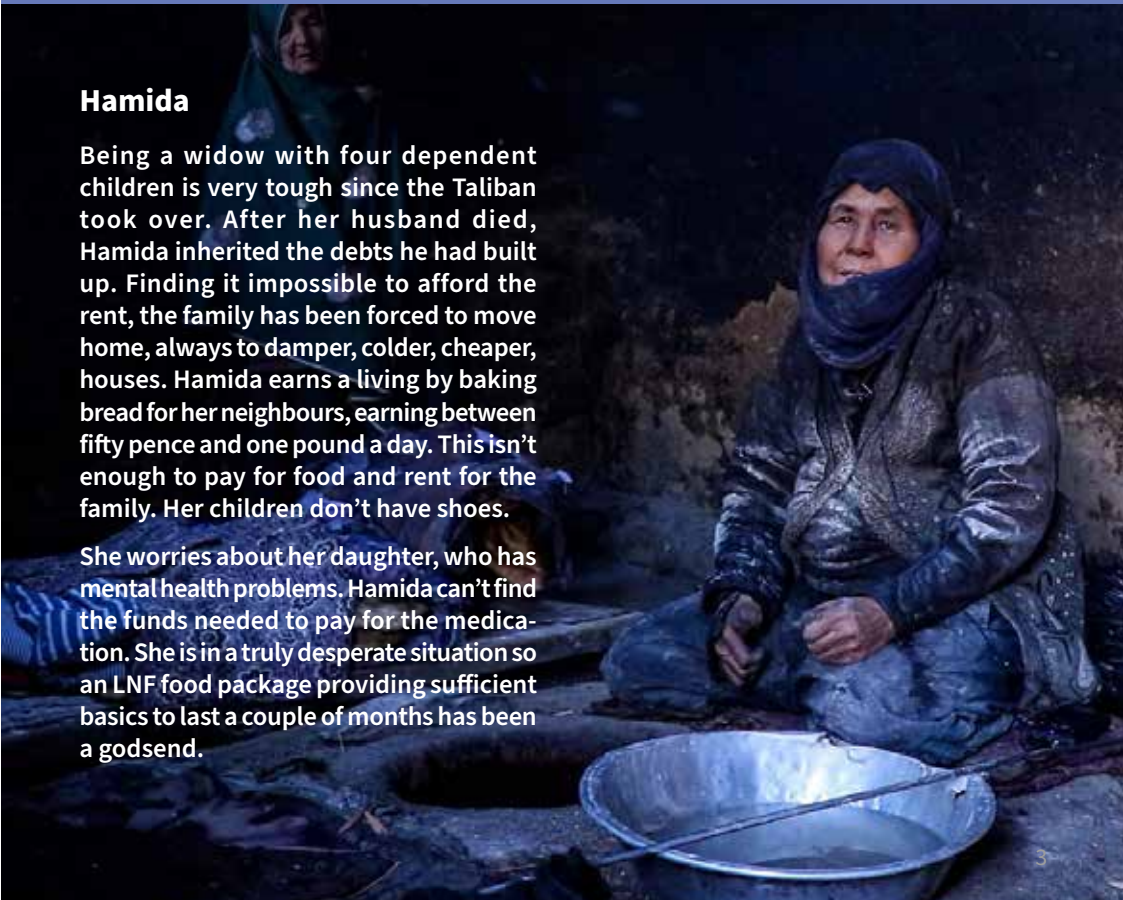
All products can be ordered through our website, or by post with a cheque. UK postage is £4 per order.



Hamida

Being a widow with four dependent children is very tough since the Taliban took over. After her husband died, Hamida inherited the debts he had built up. Finding it impossible to afford the rent, the family has been forced to move home, always to damper, colder, cheaper, houses. Hamida earns a living by baking bread for her neighbours, earning between fifty pence and one pound a day. This isn't enough to pay for food and rent for the family. Her children don't have shoes.

She worries about her daughter, who has mental health problems. Hamida can't find the funds needed to pay for the medication. She is in a truly desperate situation so an LNF food package providing sufficient basics to last a couple of months has been a godsend.



Bringing 20 Female Afghan Medical students to Scotland – Update

Immediately after the Taliban takeover two years ago, the British government pledged to bring 20,000 refugees to the UK. They introduced a dedicated Afghan immigration scheme (ACRS) a few months later. The first year was taken up processing those airlifted out, between 8,000 and 10,000. Since then, only around 250 more have been granted visas. Now it appears that the government have no intention of keeping their promise, instead bolstering their arguments with some very dodgy, misleading statistics about the numbers brought out of Afghanistan.

LNF was supporting over 90 female medical students who were desperate to leave the country after the Taliban takeover and who are now prevented from completing their studies, some just a few months from graduating. With a 20,000 promise ringing in our ears, we decided to try and bring over what we thought was an achievable number - 20 students. We implemented a rigorous and transparent process to select the most able.

In August, given the lack of progress, we started a campaign to raise awareness and pressurise politicians to try to find a route through for the students. Many supporters subsequently lobbied their MPs. Our own MP brought the issue to the attention of the Prime Minister; several times it has been brought up in Westminster in both the Commons and the Lords, and also in the Scottish Parliament. Many articles have appeared in the press including the Sunday Times. We have been interviewed numerous times for tv and radio. What else can we do?

The five Scottish medical schools have agreed to take them; the Scottish Government would charge them only home student fees if they had the ACRS visa. Everyone we speak to is supportive but, so far, there has been no movement from the Home Office who control visas and immigration.

Our students have gone from being trainee doctors to facing a closed existence, consigned to cooking, cleaning and looking after children. Many aren't allowed to leave the house without a male chaperone, some fear for their lives and others are likely to be married off against their will. They are in utter despair and desperately need our help.

Yet here we are in Scotland with a real shortage of doctors. It's only common sense we bring over these 20 women, who are already partway through their medical degrees, to complete their studies and then contribute to our national health service.

We feel terrible their hopes have been lifted but, as time passes – and it's two years now - it begins to look less likely we will succeed. Maybe things will change after the general election. Then again, given it was a Conservative government promise and with the refugee situation worldwide, maybe they won't.

But we're going to keep trying. Hopefully something will give somewhere and a route will become possible. Meanwhile, some of these women are suicidal. We hope they can cope.

2023 Funding

January 2023

£58,367 paid for the distribution of 1,081 food parcels to desperately poor families headed by women. Most were delivered by staff of the **Gawharshad High School**, working as volunteers. The other charities involved were **Glasgow Afghan United**, **AGFO**, and **Aseel**.



£1,010 enabled **Orphans Friends Charity Foundation** to buy and distribute 150 pairs of shoes to orphans and poor children in Parwan province.



February

£27,560 enabled local charity **LEFAO** to distribute 200 stoves and wood fuel to families headed by women both in Kabul and in the rural Salang province. Some were keeping warm by burning discarded plastic bottles in an open fire. All were given the means to better withstand the freezing Afghan winter.

£8,334 to continue the inspiring work of the **CHEERING** Health Clinic in Herat, run by three female volunteers medical professionals from the local hospital. The clinic supports prenatal and postnatal mothers as well as providing supplements to semi-starved infants. See page 8.

£8,500 provided livelihood training in Kabul to 40 young women in sewing, embroidery, and the making and selling of confectionery. **LEFAO** gave the necessary equipment to successful students at the end of the course.

March

£4,957 continued our support to **Serve Afghanistan** who help blind students, allowing them to access mainstream education by producing Braille textbooks for students and giving teacher training as required.

£6,675 provided **50 student scholarships at Gawharshad High School** in Kabul, covering the cost of tuition fees, uniforms, textbooks, and stationery packs for primary girls from poor backgrounds.

£33,804 for the **LNF Scholarship Students' Living Allowances**, paid digitally through a mobile phone app, with 136 students each receiving \$300 (£240). This will be their final payment now it is clear universities will not reopen for women anytime soon. We are investigating several alternatives so we can continue to help them now that their Afghan education has been halted.



April

£10,720 to **HealthProm** to provide emergency transport for women in labour in the remote Kaldar region of Balkh province. This has been proved to have reduced maternal and infant deaths since LNF first funded the project in 2020, with only one maternal death last year as opposed to an average of 16 previously.

May

£17,623 allowed our long-standing supporter, **Habibulla Noori**, to improve two schools in a remote district of Bamyan province. Solar panels, computers, printers, and stationery have been provided for both. Drinking water has been piped over 6km from the nearest spring to the Sare Bolaq school.

£12,000 to **La Chaine de l'Espoir** to provide life-changing surgeries for eight mothers and 17 girls at the French Medical Institute in Kabul. Funding also covers the cost of transportation, accommodation during recovery, healthcare advice, and follow-up appointments. See page 10.



June

£10,356 allowed Italian charity **Nove Onlus** to refurbish two bakeries, staff them with women bakers and then supply 50 families with their daily bread for four months, 30,000 loaves in total, before continuing as a going concern.

£10,932 paid for the first round of our **Direct Giving** trial project. 25 female-led families will receive \$90/month for six months. For many it will be a welcome respite from crushing poverty. We hope some will use this opportunity to improve their circumstances in the longer term.

August

£24,818 to **CHEERing** to enable the Mother and Baby Clinic in Herat to operate for a further 12 months with a wider remit.

£8,560 supported **LEAFO** to run a further six months of vocational training in sewing, tailoring and confectionery in Kabul. 40 women from the Internally Displaced People camps were selected to undertake the training.





£8,585 paid for volunteers from **Gawharshad High School** to purchase and install solar panels, batteries, and lights for 40 households, headed by women living off-grid in the outskirts of Kabul.

September

£13,002 to **La Chaine de l'Espoir** paid for an additional nine mothers and ten girls to travel to Kabul to receive life-changing surgeries and the necessary aftercare at the French Medical Institute in Kabul.



£8,532 enabled **LEAFO** to expand their vocational training programme to Kandahar, where 50 young women from Internally Displaced People camps will access sewing and tailoring classes.

£8,428 funds longstanding partner the **Mobile Mini Circus for Children** to run a four-day circus festival in Herat for 172 girls, a four-day festival in Kabul for 101 boys, and ten one-day festivals in the provinces.

£5,737 covers the tuition fees and lodging for 20 female midwifery students studying at the **Shefa Institute** in Faizabad.

£33,821 to the **CURE Hospital** in Kabul for the costs associated with five medical residencies to train female graduate doctors to a non-specialised hospital doctor standard, two undergraduate practical training scholarships, and a successful mobile clinic staffed by volunteer doctors from the hospital.



October

£13,435 paid for emergency aid packages to 100 families in Herat following three devastating earthquakes in the area. Staff from **Gawharshad High School** work with local organisations to deliver blankets, pressure cookers, gas cylinders, crockery, cutlery, and food packages.

£858 enabled **Orphan Friends Charity Foundation** to pay for 200 pairs of shoes and distribute these to orphans and children from poor families living in Parwan Province.



CHEERing Mother and Baby Clinic in Herat



In September 2022 we were approached by the CHEERing Charity, an NGO working in the refugee camps in Greece, whose Afghan staff were keen to support their contacts to set up a mother and baby clinic in Herat. Most Afghan mothers only have contact with healthcare professionals whilst in labour and receive no prenatal or postnatal care. There is little paediatric care for babies and infants. Often families do not have enough food or clothing.

With an initial grant of £4,638, the CHEERing Grow Clinic was established by three remarkable Afghan women: Samana, a university-trained midwife, Dr Somaye, a fully qualified medic, and Basira, an anaesthesiology student. These three women, all employed at the Herat Public Hospital, work at the clinic two days a week. Once established, the clinic initially provided healthcare for 20 families at a time, giving advice, vaccinations, medicine, and nutritional supplements.

The CHEERing Clinic's reputation quickly grew and there was an immediate waiting list of families looking for support, the staff reporting that a worrying number of babies and very young children attending the clinic were suffering from severe malnutrition. In February 2023 we agreed to fund the clinic for six months and increase the grant size so that more families could be supported. Prenatal and postnatal care was offered to 30 families on a rolling basis. In addition, the clinic also treated 30 severely malnourished children and provided food aid packages to 15 female-headed households.

In August the founder and director of the CHEERing programmes, Dr Anne Merewood, a Yorkshire woman now an Associate Professor of Paediatrics at the Boston University

School of Medicine, travelled to the Isle of Lewis to discuss the clinic. A 12- month grant of £24,818 was agreed.

The recent earthquakes in and around Herat have only further highlighted the need for quality medical care, support, and emergency food aid. It is thought the death toll could be more than 3,000 and thousands of families have lost their homes. We received this message from Dr Merewood following the third earthquake on 18th October,

Yes, there was a 3rd big quake this time inside Herat. Because all the team is outside in tents etc we are not sure this time about the condition of the building. It is still there but whether it will need maintenance work, we are not sure. We have not been able to use the building since the quakes started, as nobody will go inside and all our staff themselves are living from hour to hour and not in their houses. I think they are going to need a lot of support to recover and return to the building, it seems to me that until the aftershocks finish, we won't be able to do very much, but once we do go back, the need will escalate out of control...

Roshan

Roshan lives in an old house in the 13th district of Kabul and pays £3 per month for her rent. There are six people in her family. She says that her husband used to be a cleaner and security guard but lost his job after the Taliban takeover in 2021. He has since left – no one knows where he has gone.

Roshan spins wool and makes handicrafts to try to provide for her children and grandchildren but struggles to make ends meet each month. The emergency food rations help the family get through the coldest months, providing some much-needed respite.



Bibi Gol

Bibi Gol is a widow who sells onions and potatoes from her cart on the streets of Kabul. She has six young daughters. Her only son was killed whilst fighting. She says he was 'martyred'.



A seven kilogram bag of onions sells for five pence. A seven kilogram bag of potatoes for two pence. Each day Bibi Gol struggles to make enough money to feed her family. Life is increasingly difficult for women living alone, forced to go out to earn money without a male chaperone.

La Chaîne de l'Espoir

Life-Changing surgeries for Women and Children

Since 2012 the Foundation has paid for a programme of surgeries arranged by La Chaîne de l'Espoir at the French Medical Institute for Mothers and Children (FMIC) in Kabul.

In 2023, £25,000 has paid for surgeries and all associated costs for 27 girls and 17 women.



Bibi Zahra's Story

Bibi Zahra, 60 years old and from Baghlan province to the north of Kabul, was referred to FMIC last April and had an abnormal ovarian mass removed in September.

Bibi was married aged 12 to a man 30 years her senior. As her six children grew, the family was continually displaced due to the wars, moving from village to village. She says that *"we faced a lot of hard times, but it got better, the children grew up and got married, only one boy still lives with us now"*. Sadly, Bibi now has to live with her husband's obsessive gambling habit and her son, a 30 year old heroin addict, has now returned home. Having looked after her own children she now looks after his four sons and three daughters.

Six years ago Bibi Zahra started to have severe uterine pain. She kept going, looking after her family, until finally the pain became too much to bear. The Afghan public hospital system is broken and her only chance of treatment was at FMIC so she was so happy when she was admitted. She was discharged three days after her surgery and a recent ultrasound scan confirmed that the operation had been successful. Bibi Zahra told the staff at the FMIC that *"even though I didn't have a really good life and I am old, life is sweet and I don't want to die. I am happy that my treatment and operation was done here, and I was cured."*



Husna's Story

Five-year-old Husna is from the Kapisa province in north-east Afghanistan. She is one of four children and has had two surgeries to correct a deformity in her left foot, the first in May and the second in July 2023. When Husna started to walk it became apparent she was struggling and her mother was distraught, fearing her daughter would be permanently disabled

and socially excluded. The only option for treatment, in a country of 35 million, was the FMIC and her mother was so happy when she was admitted. As well as two surgeries Husna has had three follow-up appointments with a specialist consultant. In May 2023 she was told by the doctor her treatment was successful and she did not need any further surgery. When Husna heard this she said, *"Mum, I won, I am cured"*.



Noria

Noria and her four children live in a rented house in Kabul and regularly struggle to get enough to eat. She is a widow; her husband was a drug addict and died leaving her with no means of supporting the family. She begs on the street. The day the photo was taken she managed to get four naan breads. She can't afford to buy fuel to stay warm so the family burns waste, usually plastics. It is difficult to know how they will continue to cope. The emergency aid is a way to help in the immediate term but there are so many women and children now facing these desperate levels of hunger and poverty.



Shaima

Shaima's story is one of many that we received whilst distributing emergency aid packages. It is depressingly similar to so many others. She is the head of a family of nine who live in a rented house in an underprivileged area of Kabul. Her husband died three years ago, leaving her as the sole breadwinner. Shaima and her daughters earn a meagre living cleaning and washing for other households. They have no other skills or resources. The family struggles to earn enough to buy food and keep themselves warm. The food and hygiene parcel helps them over the most difficult winter months.



Frishta and Farzana



Sisters, Frishta and Farzana Matin, who were working for the Linda Norgrove Foundation in Kabul, left Afghanistan when the Taliban took over in 2021, and settled with their family in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis.

It is not easy leaving friends, family, and careers behind and starting out again in a strange, windy, and rainy country. Frishta and Farzana have more than risen to the challenge, working hard to identify opportunities and establish a new life here.

Frishta, her husband Murtaza, and their three-year-old son Kia, have recently moved into their own home in Stornoway. Frishta now works full time for the local authority, Murtaza is employed by Third Sector Hebrides, and Kia is settled at the local primary school. Now trilingual in Dari, English, and Gaelic – surely a winning combination!

Farzana works for the Scottish Refugee Council, combining knowledge from her business degree in Kabul with lessons from her own experience to help others settling in Scotland. Younger brother, Zaker, is a chef in a local hotel.

On top of all of this, Frishta and Farzana volunteer their time as Trustees of the Foundation, contributing invaluable insights into our work in Afghanistan, liaising with our Afghan staff, and helping to shape the way forward for the charity. We are thrilled they continue to work us and have no doubt they will continue to go from strength to strength.

LNF Organisation and Finances

LNF Trustees, all volunteers, paying their own expenses, are:

- John Norgrove – overall manager and spokesman
- Lorna Norgrove – donations, fundraising, donor liaison
- Carola Bell – accounting, financial management
- Jane Cumming – public relations
- Frishta Matin – liaison with Afghanistan
- Farzana Matin – liaison with Afghanistan, student records

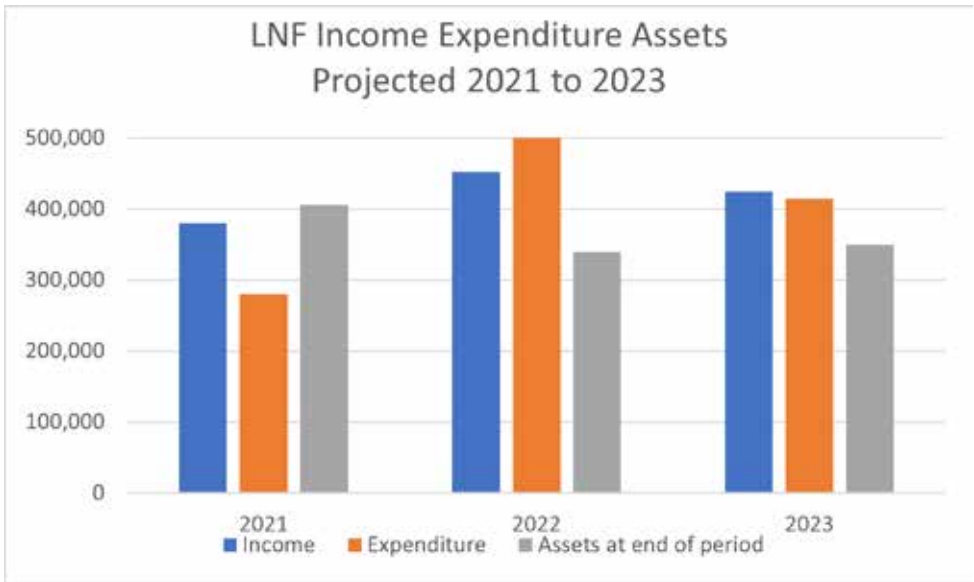
Elsbeth Murphy resigned in spring. Professor Irwin Maclean resigned later in the year due to ill health.

We are all grateful for their valuable advice and contributions over the years.

Our gratitude is also due to John Conway and Annelise Jespersen for IT help and for the management and updating of our website and social media.

In Afghanistan, we rely on Negina who has a law degree. Living with her ageing mother and four sisters, she is the main breadwinner for her family. She works for us on an hourly-paid basis, is scrupulously honest, very reliable and appears to be utterly indefatigable!

We are currently looking for another woman to help in Kabul because we prefer to have two people for long-term resilience.



* Excludes balancing income and expenditure in 2022 for Children's Circus project. 2022 expenditure includes £100k student living allowances

We tried to maintain higher reserves when funding university scholarships to ensure we could fund students to the end of their studies.

Spending on university scholarships has, in 2023, been redirected towards other projects.

Our income can vary from year to year when we receive a legacy or a large donation. Regular donations give us a base income that we can rely on.

Every Penny gets to Afghanistan

This year three trustees and two donors contributed £19,900 towards the UK running costs and we brought forward designated donations from last year of £13,700. We include a 10% administration charge within funding applications to charitable trusts: we estimate this to be £8,600.

This total covers our UK running costs of £42,200, so we can continue to boast that

‘Every penny gets to Afghanistan’ but, as we grow and our running costs rise, this claim may prove difficult to maintain in future.



Sophie Brown, who basically runs the organisation from our office in Uig, lives locally with

her husband and three noisy boys aged 8, 11 and 13. Committed to improving women’s lot in Afghanistan, her three days a week contribution ensures that records are efficiently kept, funds get transferred to Afghanistan, reports are chased up, our donor database is managed, projects are efficiently managed, meetings are organised and minuted. Simultaneously, apart from running her home and hens and gardening in her polycrub, she has graduated this year after studying in her spare time for a Masters degree in Sustainable Rural Development.



Keeping kids cosy in Parwan

It's a desperate situation for our scholarship university students forced to stay home and also for the widows struggling to keep their families clothed and fed. So it's good for us to be able to share a story in which everyone is smiling.

For the past couple of winters, a volunteer from Kabul has been arranging to buy and distribute a bundle of new, warm, winter coats and decent shoes for the children in the district of Surkh Parsa in Parwan province. The ground is frozen from December to March so the cotton dresses and sandals they have aren't ideal when the temperature drops. Parents, who are mostly subsistence farmers, aren't generally able to afford better quality warm clothing and shoes for their children. So for children in an average family, receiving a brand-new garment is something of a novelty.

\$10 (£8.10) buys and distributes a coat, \$5 a pair of shoes. We distribute two hundred of each, in two distributions, to different kids and so spread the benefit around.

You can see from the photos how much they are appreciated.



FUNDRAISING

Over the last six months, a wide variety of fundraisers have boosted LNF funds by more than £9,200 thanks to the imagination and energy of our supporters.

Our annual 10k run in early October raised more than £5,000. The main event was held on the Bhaltois Peninsula, Isle of Lewis, with over 70 participants. Dinah Adair ran 10k in Lisburn, N. Ireland, raising £1,400, and Sharon Pearson and friends collected £1,260 walking from Biggar to Broughton, Scotland. Runners and walkers took part in N. Vancouver, USA, Australia, Kuala Lumpur, India, Kathmandu, Sweden, Germany, Spain, France, and across the UK. John and Lorna joined Yumiko Yasuda and friends in Stockholm for a second 10k the following week.

Lady Jane Rice and Raymond Nelson opened their gardens at Dundonnell House, Ross-shire, and Leap Cottage in Dumfries, respectively. This was supported by Scotland's Gardens Scheme and raised a total of £1,061.

The Downright Gabbler in Beaulieu hosted an International Women's Day dinner celebrating amazing Scottish women through the ages. All proceeds, just over £1000, went to the Foundation.

Susan Arnot walked 20 miles in the Dundee Kiltwalk; Jayne Macleod sold a boat in Bhaltois; the congregation of All Saint's Church, Gosforth collected donations in September; Frishta Martin donated birthday money; Jacquie Mahoney did a 'Dook a Day', swimming in the north sea at Findhorn throughout September; Cat Moore sold her artwork 'Springtime Thrift'; Dale Street Brownies walked 3.6km in the dark in Leamington Spa; and, last but not least, the intensive care unit at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh Bake Off raised £650 with perhaps a few pounds weight added to those lucky enough to enjoy the goodies.

This year we have received generous funding from several trusts, most of whom wish to remain anonymous, but we would like to acknowledge The Angus Lawson Memorial Trust. We have also been supported by The Mercers' Company.

Our thanks to Lorna Macaulay and staff at the Harris Tweed Authority office in Stornoway for hosting our Trustee meetings.

If you would like to organise your own fundraiser, please let us know. You can even help from your armchair if you shop online by registering for Easyfundraising: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk>. 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.

Planning a holiday next year? Like to explore a beautiful corner of the Western Isles and spend a few days in comfort? Look no further than our holiday cottage, Timsgarry Byre in Uig, Isle of Lewis: <https://www.timsgarry-isleoflewis.co.uk>. Rentals received contribute to the UK running costs of the Foundation so 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 women and children whose stories feature in this newsletter.





Thanks for all your support

If you would like to help, you could send a cheque to:

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

or make a Bank Transfer to
Account name - **Linda Norgrove Foundation**
Bank of Scotland Account No: 06095170
Sort Code: 80:11:00

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:

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.

Full Name:
Address:
..... Postcode:
E-mail:
I enclose a donation of: £
to The Linda Norgrove Foundation