



# 2018 UPDATE



UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL

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**Sana Iqbal** | Pakistan

PhD, Urban Planning | Coventry University, UK

**“I am passionate about bringing reforms to the existing public transport system in Pakistan to make it gender inclusive. This will help women enjoy equal opportunities as men, so that women can be independent and make their own decisions.”**



## OUR UNIQUENESS

Women are incredibly important proponents of change, especially in developing nations. Though we live in a relatively progressive society in North America, women here and in developing nations face discrimination and many are not granted adequate access to food, clean water, health care, education or basic human rights. By supporting and educating young women in the Global South, particularly in areas of conflict and remote areas, we can alleviate the plight of societies in these under-privileged areas.

We focus on helping brave and intelligent women leaders who can, in turn, lift their communities out of the cycle of discrimination and poverty. Our team provides strong on-ground assistance in the selection, screening, and support of all our students. To assist in creating strong, committed young women, our involvement begins before university and continues during and after the student's university education.

Our Foundation is also unique in that the financial support we receive from our on-ground partners and university affiliates allows us to leverage our donors' contributions at a ratio of 1:8. Our university partnerships and generous donors provide our scholars with access to scholarships at the Bachelor's, Master's, professional and Doctorate levels around the world.

Alaa Zidane | Syria

BSc | Ryerson University, Canada

**“I want to help reconstruct Syria after the massive destruction impacts from the war, by designing facilities that combine the community’s culture and needs with the latest and most modern architectural approaches.”**



## CHAIR REPORT



I have been honoured to Chair the Board of the Spark of Hope Foundation for the past three years. It is gratifying to see a start-up ramp up so quickly over the last four-plus years, as it fulfills a huge unmet need of providing university education to women from the developing world. This is helping create the next generation of female leaders and role models. What is also exciting is the incredible partnerships with universities and on-ground partners the Foundation has developed, providing the opportunity to create tremendous impact over the next decade.

At the end of 2018, we have supported 116 students, with 54 alumnae already using their education to begin making an outsized impact in their communities and countries of origin.

As we approach our fifth anniversary in 2019, our focus will be on growth and long-term, sustainable funding so that the Foundation can support increasing numbers of students over the next decade. Our track record to date has seen us handily surpass our goals each year, thanks to the excellent work of founder and CEO Narmin Ismail, our dedicated Board members and the support of all our benefactors, donors and volunteers. I look forward to continuing to support the growth of the Spark of Hope Foundation.

Doug Lawson, CPA  
Chair of the Board

**Hafiza Nabi** | Pakistan

MBBS | Aga Khan University Medical College, Pakistan

**“The power to heal and boost someone’s dwindling hope are what led me to pursue medicine. It is the best way to portray my love for humanity. I want to provide my community with the best medical care possible.”**



## CEO REPORT

I am very excited to share that we’ve supported 116 brilliant female students, from 18 countries studying at 44 universities around the world, at the Bachelor’s, Master’s, professional and PhD levels, including 54 alumnae. We are especially pleased to be able to support seven students from Syria in 2018, bringing the total number of Syrian students we have supported over the last four years to 22! Coincidentally, the first student we supported – May Al-Herek – was also from Syria, and she graduated in 2018 with excellent grades from the Asian University for Women.

We are proud of the many alumnae success stories we are witnessing. While Spark of Hope Foundation scholars study in 17 countries, three of them recently graduated in Canada at the master’s level. Jodi-Ann Smith from Jamaica graduated with an MBA from the University of British Columbia and is now in a rotational Graduate Leadership Program at Walmart Canada’s corporate office; Israa Issa from Lebanon graduated with a Master in Applied Sciences from Carleton University and is now an Associate Mechanical Engineer at Hydrostor in Toronto; and Aaliya Dad from Northern Areas of Pakistan received her Master in Environmental Sciences from York University and is working as a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at the Rural Support Programmes Network in Pakistan.

We are on the eve of our fifth anniversary and as I look back to our roots, I am grateful and humbled at the progress we have been able to make due to the incredible generosity of our donors, volunteers, university partners and supporters. They should all be very proud of the lives and families and communities they are continually changing.

With the assistance from the Chairman and members of the Board, we are now focused on the next decade. Our challenge is to put in place longer-term funding, develop new partnerships, and significantly increase the number of students we support each year to achieve our dream of creating a growing pool of bright, highly educated women, each of whom is creating her own change in the world.

Narmin K. Ismail, MBA  
Founder and CEO

## KEY NUMBERS

**116**

Students supported (62 current students, 54 alumnae)

**44**

Universities attended  
(Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, Central America)

**32**

Students at the Master's level

**35**

Students in S.T.E.M. fields

**18**

Countries of origin:  
Argentina, Benin, Cameroon, India, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya,  
Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Nepal, Nicaragua,  
Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania and Uganda

**22**

Students pursuing medical studies

**8X**

Multiplier effect for every donor dollar contributed,  
thanks to the generosity of partners

**5**

PhD students, with studies in international public and  
monetary law, globalization and international economic law,  
agroforestry, mobility and transport, and forest sciences

**Aziza Bakirova** | Kyrgyz Republic

BA | American University of Central Asia, Kyrgyz Republic

**“My goal is to share my love and energy by opening a psychological salon like in the XVIII-XIX centuries. Peace begins with a smile, let us share it!”**



## STUDENT SELECTION

The Foundation follows a rigorous student selection process where the goal is to recommend merit-based scholarships for those students least able to afford a university education.

Most applications come to us from our growing number of formal and informal on-ground partners, who are closest to the students and their families.

Students are invited to complete a comprehensive online application package, including family financial information and an essay, transcripts, letters of reference, letter of admission (where applicable), and provide other details.

The package is then reviewed and every student with a completed application is interviewed to learn more about them, their plans during and after university, and assess their leadership qualities.

A shortlist is then submitted to the university, which makes the final admission decision independent of the Foundation.

In cases where the student already has admission but has approached the Foundation either through a university partner, or through a referral, we follow the initial steps, and depending on their funding needs, we confirm Spark of Hope Foundation funding, if eligible.

We are also often advocates for students in helping them access other funding sources beyond the Foundation, or increased funding through our university partners, who have been incredibly generous.

And then comes the life-changing moment: letting the student know that they have the funding they need to achieve their dream of a university education.

# INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED

## **BANGLADESH**

ASIAN UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN  
MAG OSMANIA MEDICAL COLLEGE SYLHET

## **BELGIUM**

UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP

## **CANADA**

CARLETON UNIVERSITY  
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY  
RYERSON UNIVERSITY  
TRAFALGAR CASTLE SCHOOL  
TRENT UNIVERSITY  
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL  
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
YORK UNIVERSITY

## **FRANCE**

SORBONNE UNIVERSITY

## **KAZAKHSTAN**

KIMEP UNIVERSITY

## **KYRGYZ REPUBLIC**

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA  
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA

## **LEBANON**

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT  
LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

## **LIBERIA**

CUTTINGTON UNIVERSITY  
MONROVIA BIBLE COLLEGE  
UNITED METHODIST UNIVERSITY

## **NEPAL**

NEPAL ENGINEERING COLLEGE

## **NETHERLANDS**

UNITED WORLD COLLEGE MAASTRICHT

## **NICARAGUA**

MANAGUA UNIVERSITY MEDICAL COLLEGE -  
UNAN MANAGUA

UCAN MANAGUA: UNIVERSIDAD CRISTIANA  
AUTONOMA DE NICARAGUA

## **PAKISTAN**

AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY - MEDICAL COLLEGE  
AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY - INSTITUTE OF  
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
ALLAMA IQBAL MEDICAL COLLEGE  
AYUB MEDICAL COLLEGE  
BENAZIR BHUTTO MEDICAL COLLEGE  
FATIMA JINNAH MEDICAL UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF SPACE TECHNOLOGY  
LAHORE UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT  
SCIENCES (LUMS)  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND  
TECHNOLOGY (NUST)  
RAWALPINDI MEDICAL COLLEGE

## **POLAND**

UITM - UNIVERSITY OF INFORMATION,  
TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

## **SWITZERLAND**

UNIVERSITY OF BERN  
UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA

## **TAJIKISTAN**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA

## **TURKEY**

UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA YILDIRIM BEYAZIT

## **UK**

COVENTRY UNIVERSITY  
LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

## **USA**

WARTBURG COLLEGE

# UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIONS

We could not have achieved the impact we have in such a short time without the incredible partnerships we have built with prestigious universities around the world. We are extremely gratified to know that our partners believe as strongly as we do in our passion and our work.

We have both formal and informal agreements with the 44 institutions that the Spark of Hope Foundation scholars attend. We would like to express our sincere appreciation for their continued support. Without these collaborative arrangements, we would not be able to multiply our donor impact at a ratio of 1:8. These agreements allow us to serve many more students collaboratively than we ever could alone.

We continue to pursue partnerships with other top universities in Canada and around the world. There is strength in numbers and working together allows us to achieve more than we ever thought possible.

**Sanam Gul** | Pakistan

BA | Asian University for Women, Bangladesh

**“I want to work towards a better education system in Pakistan and other developing countries. I believe that education is the key to development and that quality education should start from the grassroots level and focus on Early Childhood Development.”**



## ON THE GROUND

Our on-ground and collaborative partners play a critical role in identifying and short-listing the students we support. These partners also play a key role in assisting our students with the various arrangements required before departing for their university studies, which are generally outside the student's country of origin. On-ground partners also provide ongoing support while our students attend university, which is crucial to the successful completion of their studies.

**AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY (AKU) AND AKU-IED**  
PAKISTAN

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA**  
KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

**ASIAN UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN**  
BANGLADESH

**DOCTORS FOR DOCTORS**  
NICARAGUA/CANADA

**KIMEP UNIVERSITY**  
KAZAKHSTAN

**MILKY WAY FOUNDATION**  
PAKISTAN

**TRAFALGAR CASTLE SCHOOL**  
CANADA

**UNITED LEBANON YOUTH PROJECT**  
LEBANON

**UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL**  
CANADA

**UNIVERSITY OF BERN**  
SWITZERLAND

**Mufida Nazrieva** | Tajikistan

BA | University of Information, Technology and Management (UITM), Poland

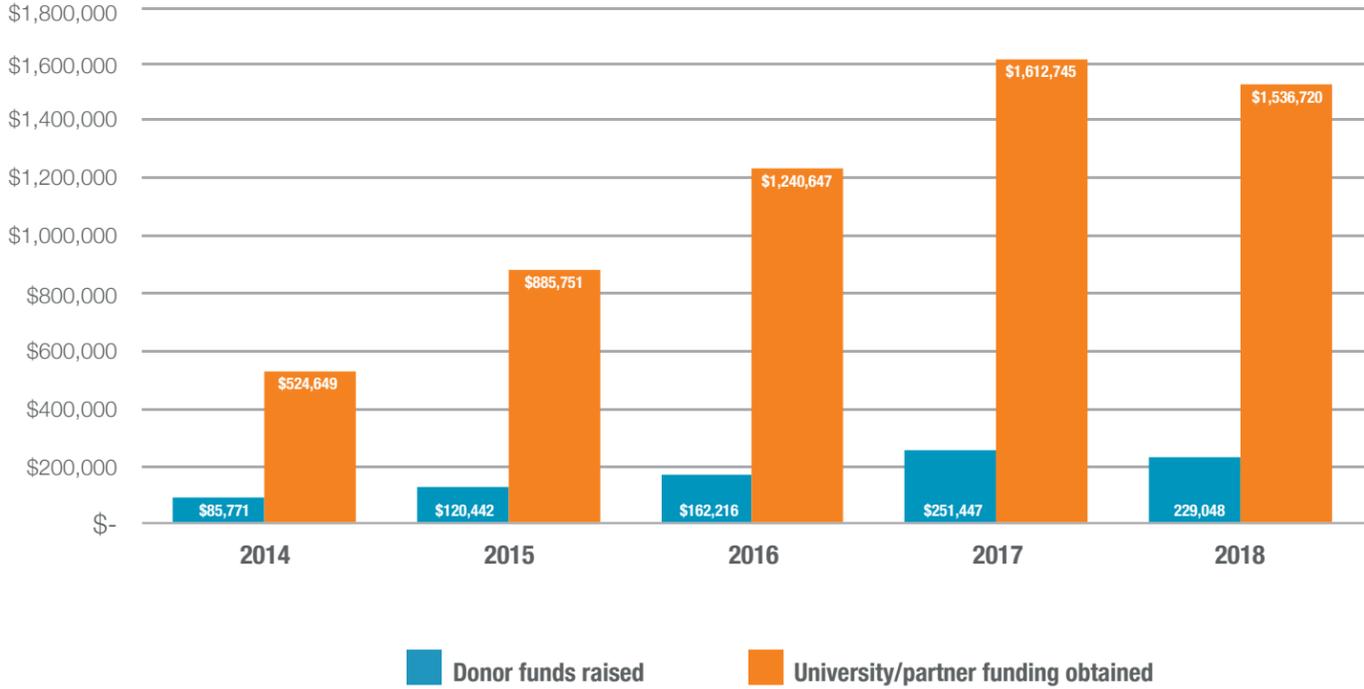
**“I see myself heading the first rehabilitation clinic in Tajikistan. The shortage of well-qualified physiotherapists led me to choose a career in this field and pursue my degree in Physiotherapy.”**



# REVENUES AND COSTS

Our annual revenues, raised through donor contributions, are allocated primarily to scholarships to help support our students. We are pleased to report that we have been able to decrease our program management, evaluation, marketing, and reporting costs from 16% of funding received in 2014 to only 7% of funding received in 2018.

We are delighted with the efficiencies we have been able to achieve with the combined expertise of our Board and the partnerships we have developed. The support of our talented volunteers is of paramount importance in decreasing our costs.



**Sajida Raza** | Pakistan

MBBS | Aga Khan University Medical College, Pakistan

**“I want to improve healthcare in my region to positively impact the quality of people’s lives. I also want to promote awareness about mental health and the stigma attached to it.”**



## CREATING IMPACT

One of the most important keys to our success has been to make sure every dollar contributed to the Foundation goes a lot further. We are able to ensure that each dollar donated gets multiplied at least eight times through the funding and support of the universities we work with as well as other partners!

Though we are extremely proud of the efficiencies we have established, we still recognize that the BIGGEST impact of donations is the exponential transformation of the young women we support. These women will become leaders in their communities and around the world through their work as doctors, engineers, journalists, lawyers, managers, scientists, teachers and more. They will also have an important impact on generations to come as they become role models in their communities.

There are various ways you can get involved and help make a transformative impact in the lives of our students:

- a) **BECOME A BENEFACTOR TO SUPPORT ONE SCHOLAR** – [www.thesparkofhope.org/donate](http://www.thesparkofhope.org/donate)
- b) **VOLUNTEER** – [www.thesparkofhope.org/volunteer](http://www.thesparkofhope.org/volunteer)
- c) **SPREAD THE WORD ON SOCIAL MEDIA** – [@SparkofHopeFdn on Twitter and Facebook](https://twitter.com/SparkofHopeFdn)

Laylo Merali | Tajikistan

MA in International and European Security | University of Geneva, Switzerland

**“I believe that stability and development are intertwined. I want to help ensure that developing countries and international organizations have well-considered policies that promote stability.”**



# OUR VISION

Our goal over the next 10 years is to support 1,000 young women leaders through post-secondary and graduate education.

**We would like your support to help make their dreams come true**



# BOARD MEMBERS



**DOUG LAWSON (CHAIR)**

Doug’s 35 years of senior business and financial management experience across a diverse range of industries and size of businesses brings strong business and financial planning experience to the Foundation. In addition, Doug brings strong board management experience, coupled with an ICD.D certification from The Institute of Corporate Directors.



**DIAMOND LALANI**

Diamond’s consulting and training experience consists of a wide range of business operations both in Canada and around the world, which allows him to provide valuable direction for the organization’s operations. Diamond’s community leadership and youth mentorship in education and career planning guides his recommendations to the Board.



**SADIA ZAMAN**

Sadia’s career has been dedicated to media, cultural industries, and not-for-profits with a particular focus on women in film and television. Her unique perspective on diversity, gender, and leadership issues allows her to help our Board focus on the issues facing the inspiring women we support on a daily basis.



**HASSAN SHAIKH**

Hassan has broad experience in the financial sector and first-hand experience supporting women in the developing world. His experience providing micro credit and his firm belief in the power of education allows him to bring an important perspective to our Board.



**VINA NADJIBULLA**

Vina’s experience as an international security and peace-building specialist involved with women’s rights, conflict prevention, social inclusion, corporate accountability, and education fits well with the Foundation’s mission. Her specialization in strategic advice and services for cross-sector partnerships, resource mobilization, strategic planning, talent management and organizational restructuring provide a valuable contribution to the Board.

**Gulzada Ali** | Pakistan

MEd | Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development, Pakistan

**“Education is a lifelong learning process. As an educational leader, I will bring sustainable change in children by implementing learning theories and teaching pedagogies that support lifelong learning.”**



## DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

Our growing team of dedicated volunteers provide support to all areas of our operations, from social media promotion, photography, event management and grant writing to marketing, accounting and mentorship. We are fortunate to have volunteers in Canada and around the world. This international perspective is very important as our students come from all walks of life and from various developing countries and many of them will study abroad.

We are always looking to add talented and enthusiastic volunteers to our team. Please review and apply for open positions on our website: [www.thesparkofhope.org/volunteer/](http://www.thesparkofhope.org/volunteer/) or let us know how you can help.

# IN THE FIELD



JUNE 2018

Aaliya Dad (MSc, Env. Sciences) with her host parents at York University's convocation in Toronto



OCT 2018

Zuhali Suhrob (BA) from Tajikistan, presenting for York University's International Development Student Association



JUNE 2018

Israa Issa (MSc, Applied Sciences) from Lebanon, graduates from Carleton University in Ottawa



OCT 2018

Zena (Syria) and Lala (Tajikistan), 2nd and 3rd from left, visit Toronto with boarding colleagues from Trafalgar Castle School



JULY 2017

Sanam Gul from Pakistan during her internship with Aga Khan Education Services Pakistan



MAY 2018

May Al-Herek, BSc (right) from Syria, with fellow Syrian graduates of the Asian University for Women



MAR 2017

Sheetal Rimal from Nepal during her PhD research in Forestry at Université Laval



MAR 2018

Narmin Ismail, CEO, accepting an award on International Women's Day in Markham, Ontario

**Bekaiym Egemkulova** | Kyrgyz Republic

BA, Economics | American University of Central Asia, Kyrgyz Republic

**“I aim to use my skills in economics to help women in Central Asia believe that they all have the right to study, to a fulfilling career and to a brighter future.”**



## FROM OUR BENEFACTORS

I am impressed with the results that the Spark of Hope Foundation has been able to achieve - one girl, one placement at a time - in such a short period. The impact these girls are making in the world is not measured in dollars but in generations to come. They will be mothers to the world. We need to nurture them so that they in turn nurture the world we are leaving behind. Well done!

**Yasmin Virani,**  
Mississauga ON

We're honoured to participate in realizing the vision of the Spark of Hope Foundation. We've been blessed to have several strong female role models in our family. As such, empowering the next generation of female leaders through education is a goal with which we're fully aligned. We're very impressed with the impact and effectiveness of the Foundation. The organization takes a direct and practical approach to break through historic barriers, creating immediate opportunities for individual young women from the Global South. The positive benefits will continue for generations.

**Salim Manji, on behalf of the Manji Family Charitable Foundation,**  
Markham ON

Education is the foundation upon which societies are able to progress. Empowering young women to become leaders of tomorrow by providing scholarships uplifts communities and makes the impossible, possible. I am proud to support this organization and help young women achieve their dreams.

**Zahra Nurmohamed,**  
Toronto ON

# CREDITS

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