

IMPACT



**Driving
Sustainable Economic Development** | page 4



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**THE SPARK
OF HOPE**
FOUNDATION

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Message from The Chair & CEO



We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Doug Lawson, who has been on the Board of Directors since soon after the Foundation's establishment in 2014. He has played a key guiding role through many successes and challenges, having been a Director and Chair for two three-year terms, Acting Chair in early 2023, and a long-term Benefactor. We look forward to his continued wise counsel and support as we begin our second decade in 2024.

Having grown at five times the pace we originally intended in 2014, we are delighted to have been able to provide 245 scholarships by the end of 2023. Our 170 alumnae make us proud, and we share some of their stories in this fifth issue of IMPACT. They are using their education, leadership skills, wisdom, and confidence to bring about transformation in some of the world's most vulnerable and isolated communities.

We are thrilled that 34 scholars graduated in 2023, many of whom overcame significant challenges to pursue higher education while coping with the impact of the pandemic. Our congratulations to all of them. And we have deep admiration for our 65 current scholars, 24 of whom we welcomed in 2023, and two who we are supporting for their second degree.

Our 10th anniversary in 2024 is a time to both celebrate with gratitude the Foundation's growth in the first decade, as well as to explore how the Foundation can secure longer-term funding and assist in the development of even more women leaders. Our dream is to double the number of students we can serve each year! We can only do so through the continued, generous support of our partners and donors. We look forward to your support in the decade ahead, and to enlisting the support of new partners and donors.

As always, we'd love to hear your feedback on this issue of IMPACT.

Cora Di Pietro
Chair, Board of Directors

Narmin K. Ismail, MBA, M.S.M.
Founder and CEO

KEY NUMBERS

➔ **245** Scholarships
(65 current students)

➔ **73** Scholarships
at the Master's level

➔ **64** Students in
S.T.E.M. fields
(Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)

➔ **49** Students pursuing
Medical studies

➔ **5X**

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

➔ **12** PhD Students:
International Public Law; International Monetary and Financial Law; Mobility
and Transport; Forestry Sciences; Social Forestry; Wood Sciences;
Educational Studies; Hepatology; and Electrical & Computer Engineering.

➔ **68** Institutions
attended globally

➔ **34** Countries of origin:
Afghanistan, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia,
Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo,
Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Mexico, Nepal,
Nicaragua, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, South Africa, Syria, Tajikistan,
Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

OUR ALUMNAE

Where are they now?



“ I want to use my expertise to help drive sustainable economic development while championing social responsibility. ”

Lola Mirmastova | Tajikistan

BACTA, Accounting and Audit
KIMEP University
Kazakhstan

I chose to attend KIMEP because it gave me the opportunity to study among the best students of Central Asia and from around the world and to learn things that are important for the development of my country and the Central Asian region in general. Upon graduation, I joined a social impact organization, where I was able to apply my financial knowledge to address local social challenges and foster entrepreneurial growth. This experience enhanced my ability to effect positive change.

One of my biggest dreams is to complete my formal education and find a good job so I can be a financially independent woman and start to help people in need. I have seen children in the villages in my country and all over Central Asia that don't have access to university education, and I would have been one of those people had I not received crucial scholarships.

I am currently undertaking an MBA in Finance at a business school in New York City. This academic endeavor serves as a strategic step towards further refining my skills and expanding my network within the financial sector.

Looking ahead a decade, I envision myself in a leadership capacity, leveraging my expertise to drive sustainable economic development while championing social responsibility. My aim is to bridge the gap between profit-driven enterprises and socially-conscious initiatives, fostering inclusive growth and opportunity.

My ultimate goal is to leave a profound and lasting impact on my community, country, and the world at large. By advocating for equitable policies, I aspire to contribute to a more just and prosperous society.



“ *I want to make the best of the tools and technologies we have while caring for human needs and the environment.* **”**

Ivanna Godoy Muñoz | Chile

MSc, Management and Technology
Technische Universität München
Germany

I have always had a deep connection with nature and my surroundings, accompanied by an endless impulse for exploring, participating, raising questions, and coming up with ideas to lead. Being a young woman in Latin America was not easy, but I can say that I have tackled gender-related issues successfully.

I decided to study business administration because I wanted to understand how economies work, so one day, I would be able to oversee change by creating disruptive but fair businesses. In the final year of my undergraduate studies, I discovered my passion for innovation, which I believe can be used as a significant tool that benefits our environment and societies.

My graduate degree opened up a whole new field that I had not explored before, which is computer science. I am passionate about technology and my degree has helped me understand technology in depth, while connecting with highly capable and excellent people. It gave me not only new professional skills but also allowed me to

network in the Munich ecosystem, connecting me with companies and startups that have great impact on the world.

I am currently living in Munich, writing my master's thesis, and finishing my studies. I am searching for a job as well as exploring a PhD position related to my master's thesis.

I aspire to make an impact by leveraging what I believe is my unique perspective, and I am confident the projects I take on in the future will help me contribute to a better and greener society overall. My purpose is to explore how we can make the best of the tools and technologies we have, without losing sight of caring for human needs and the environment. In ten years, I see myself in a leadership position working in technology and helping companies bring new products or experiences with a human-centric focus. I can also see myself having a venture of my own with the same focus: the interaction of people and technology. I dream of becoming a high-impact entrepreneur to one day revolutionize the food industry.

OUR ALUMNAE

Where are they now?

“ *My long-term goal is to make people’s lives better. I want to provide the younger generation with opportunities I didn’t have when I was growing up.* ”

Sanam Gul | Pakistan

BA, Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Asian University for Women
Bangladesh



After completing my undergraduate degree at AUW, I undertook an internship in Hong Kong and then returned to Pakistan. I have been working in a variety of sectors over the past few years, and until last year worked at a sustainability advisory firm.

Since June 2023 I’ve been a Program Coordinator in Communications with the Dallas Foundation’s Worldwide Education Fund, which works in developing countries in Central Asia, South Asia and West Africa. The organization provides online, real-time English training (high school ESL and English for academics) at 30 partner centres in 14 countries. I manage social media and website development, help operate the global virtual school, and manage teachers and operations. I enjoy working with people, especially when making a change in people’s lives.

I’m also currently working on a dream project: a music school in Yasin, Gilgit. I’m from Chitral, but my partner is from Gilgit, where we recently completed construction and launched the school in October 2023.

Last year I participated in the OneBeat Institute fellowship (funded by the U.S. State Department) as a fellow along with my partner for two weeks. We were representing our project, Meher-e-Khun School of Music, along with six other groups from around the globe. During the fellowship we received mentorship across sectors such as music, arts, culture, business, technology, and education. I got to understand how to build an institution and take it forward to help benefit the community.

Music is underappreciated as a career in Pakistan, and I want to provide younger generations, especially women, a safe space to practice their dreams, grow, be creative, and explore music as a career option, not just a hobby.

My long-term goal is to make people’s lives better. I want to provide the younger generation with opportunities I didn’t have when I was growing up. The world is changing, and I want to encourage youth to explore opportunities that can make their life better.



“ I’m the first person in my family to obtain a university degree, and they’re proud to have a doctor in the family. ”

Kimberly Lopez | Nicaragua

Doctor of Medicine
National Autonomous University of Nicaragua
Nicaragua

My education helped me to understand its own importance and how other people work hard for you to achieve it. And that’s where you realize how important you are for others, allowing you to get to know yourself and the abilities you have and what you can achieve. It allowed me to improve, to be more tactful with people, to see the difficulties of life and to value every penny, every moment, and every new bit of knowledge.

I’m the first person in my family to obtain a university degree, and they’re proud to have a doctor in the family. I’ve helped my family members to believe in their own abilities, especially the younger ones—they’re going to school and want to go on to university.

I’ve been able to help my community by taking part in various activities—I’m always active in NGO events with free medical consultations, and people contact me with any questions or symptoms. I graduated two years ago and I’m working independently, giving private home consultations, and I have a pharmacy in a rural community in the San Juan del Sur region. I am a mother and a doctor, and it is a chaotically beautiful experience.

I’m also working on a research project through Columbia University, on the incidence of rheumatic cardiomyopathy in the region of Rivas, Nicaragua. I take part as an echographer, doing echocardiograms on patients.

I want the research to have an impact and stay on as a permanent program with an establishment like an NGO so that the community continues to benefit and then the country, so that the world can learn about the incidence of this disease in Nicaragua and something can be done to help prevent it.

In ten years, I see myself having my own practice as well as being part of an NGO project or research. I would also like to pursue a medical specialty. I also dream that after getting the results of the research I’m working on, the initiative will be able to establish an NGO and continue supporting the community, since many people have benefited and have had anomalies detected; some of these patients are in treatment, and others have had surgeries. We have saved many lives and made an impact.

From the moment I finished my formal education, I had an impact on my community because there are very few doctors and in my hometown, people are proud of others’ achievements. I want to do things that help others or benefit the good of their health, whether small or large.



Current scholars with **BIG** ambitions

“ My dream is to open my own software company focused on producing tools and technologies that will enhance the quality of life of disabled individuals and the elderly. I want to bring about a positive impact in the world, ultimately making it a more accessible and comfortable place for those in need. ”

Ramina Ergeshova | Kyrgyz Republic

BA, Business Administration, American University of Central Asia
Kyrgyz Republic



“ I want to contribute to the economic development of mountainous societies and regions, and help improve the quality of life in Central Asia. ”

Yasmina Alibekova | Tajikistan

BA, Global Economics, University of Central Asia
Tajikistan

“ I dream of being a scientist who creates breakthroughs in the intersection of oncology medicine and physics. I want to motivate other girls to take unique STEM routes that align with their persona and to venture outside the “safe” comfort zones set around us. ”

Sabah El Bilani | Palestine

BSc, Biology, Lebanese American University
Lebanon



“ I hope to apply my passions for early childhood education and developmental psychology to challenge current education frameworks and create a system that is equitable and beneficial for all. ”

Ria Devani | Kenya

BA, English and Psychology, Mount Holyoke College
United States

“ I aim to create and advocate for policies and reforms that advance women’s participation in the workforce. I want to promote financial literacy and entrepreneurship among women, especially in rural and remote areas. ”

Sidrah | Pakistan

Master in International Economic Policy, Sciences Po
France



LETTER FROM A SCHOLAR

Systemic change to ensure quality healthcare

Masauda Shahzad | Pakistan

MPH, Aga Khan University Medical College

Pakistan



Dear Spark of Hope Foundation,

I was born and grew up in a remote district of Gilgit-Baltistan, Northern Pakistan. This cold, mountainous area does not have basic educational and health facilities, making me value the importance of education and health in an individual's life.

I have seen friends who dreamt of becoming empowered, educated and independent women having to sacrifice their dreams due to poverty and social challenges. Inadequate infrastructure, poor educational and health quality, and lack of awareness are a few of the most common hindrances to achieving quality education and availing healthcare services. I have also witnessed maternal and child health crises in the valley that are preventable at very low cost.

My curiosity to understand health disparities and find solutions to preventable health problems motivated me to become a health professional. I completed my undergraduate degree at the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh. My passion to become a positive change-maker for my community and similar communities around the world is growing as I learn more about health challenges and struggle to find solutions. My undergraduate degree was not enough to bring

about a bigger positive change, so I decided to pursue a graduate degree and I hope to complete a PhD.

As it is my dream to serve my community's healthcare needs, I will be going back to my valley after completing my studies. I have multiple interests based on the need and necessities in my valley. For instance, I want to become an epidemiologist, and at the same time, I also want to become a policy-maker and researcher. I am curious about mortality and morbidity from various infectious and non-communicable diseases. As a policy-maker, I will focus on health systems to ensure quality healthcare. I also want to become a researcher because a lack of literature hinders the region in terms of health-related data and surveillance.

All of these fields of public health are crucially needed in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan. Unlike boys, girls in my region are not given equal opportunities to achieve education. Once I complete my education, I can be a role model for all the young girls who dream of achieving their goals. My vision to serve my community and my passion to empower women always motivates me to work hard and dream big.

A PASSION FOR HELPING OTHERS

Marwa Chehadeh | Palestine

BS, Nursing, Lebanese American University
Lebanon



How have this scholarship and your education helped you?

First, I would like to thank you for your scholarship and support. I am the first woman to obtain a university education in my family. Getting a scholarship to study at LAU was a dream that came true.

Why did you choose to study nursing?

I've had an affinity for the medical field since I was young, and originally wanted to pursue a medical degree because I like helping people. As that was cost-prohibitive, I decided to study nursing instead. I chose to study nursing at the Lebanese American University because it has one of the best schools of nursing in the Middle East. After overcoming many challenges, I succeeded and graduated with distinction.

What are you doing right now?

I am currently working at Hammoud Hospital University Medical Center in Sidon, Lebanon and exploring my next career steps.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

I'd like to pursue a Master's degree. I am planning to pursue pediatric care or community nursing so I can be more focused and knowledgeable in my field. Once I finish my studies, I hope to be an independent woman, financially and emotionally. Being Palestinian, my work and travel opportunities are limited.

What impact do you hope to make on your community, country and the world?

I want to impact the people around me with my experience and knowledge, and help people wherever I am. Nursing is not just for me: it's for my family, community, and for everyone around me. So, I want to try my hardest to have the best knowledge in nursing.

INSTITUTIONS attended

BANGLADESH

Asian University for Women
MAG Osmania Medical College
Sylhet

BELGIUM

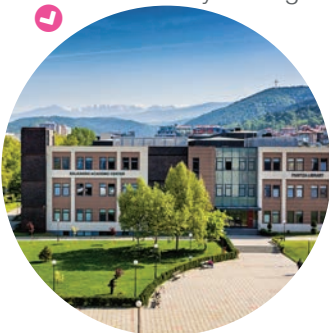
University of Antwerp

BENIN

African School of Economics

BULGARIA

American University in Bulgaria



CANADA

Algoma University
Brock University
Carleton University
Dalhousie University
McGill University
Ontario Tech University
Queen's University
Toronto Metropolitan University
Trafalgar Castle School
Trent University
University of Alberta
University of British Columbia
University of Calgary
University of Toronto
University of Waterloo
Université Laval
York University

FRANCE

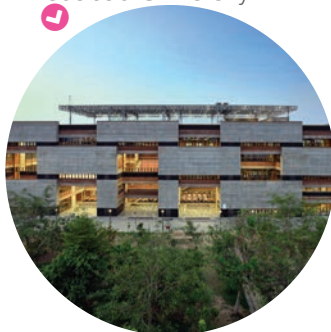
Sciences Po
Sorbonne University

HUNGARY

Central European University

INDIA

Ahmedabad University



Alliance University

KAZAKHSTAN

KIMEP University

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

American University of
Central Asia
University of Central Asia
(Naryn campus)

LEBANON

American University
of Beirut
Lebanese American University
University of Balamand

LIBERIA

Cuttington University
Monrovia Bible College
United Methodist University

NEPAL

Nepal Engineering College

NETHERLANDS

UWC Maastricht

NICARAGUA

Managua University Medical
College - UNAN Managua
UCAN Managua: Universidad
Cristiana Autonom
de Nicaragua

PAKISTAN

Aga Khan University



Allama Iqbal Medical College
Ayub Medical College
Benazir Bhutto Medical
College
Fatima Jinnah Medical
University
Government College
University Lahore
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
WSB University

SWITZERLAND

University of Bern
University of Geneva
University of Lausanne/EPFL

TAJIKISTAN

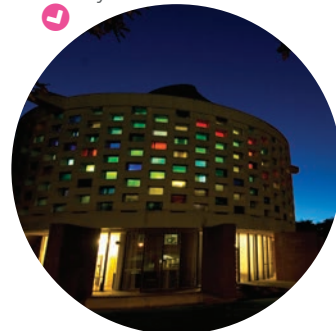
University of Central Asia
(Khorog campus)

TURKEY

University of Ankara Yildirim
Beyazit

UK

Coventry University
London School of Economics
and Political Science
University of Birmingham
University of Sussex



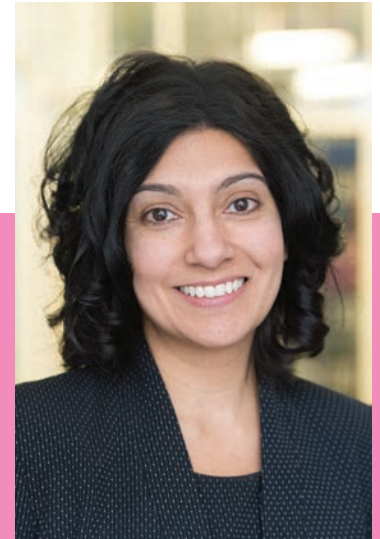
USA

Mount Holyoke College
University of California
Los Angeles
University of California
Santa Barbara
Wartburg College
Yale University

Photo credits (from left): AUBG; Amit Pasricha; Aga Khan University; Stuart Robinson, University of Sussex

Dr. Shaheeza Lalani

Executive Director, L.L.M. Programme
University of Lausanne
Switzerland



COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITY OF LAUSANNE

Tell us a bit about the University of Lausanne.

Situated near the beautiful Lake Geneva, the University of Lausanne (UNIL) has an exceptionally green and spacious lakeside setting. UNIL is at the forefront of advances in medical knowledge with its close collaboration with the University Hospital of the Canton of Vaud (CHUV); its University and Cantonal Library contains two million documents; one fifth of the student population, as well as one third of the teaching staff come from abroad to study and teach in UNIL's state-of-the-art laboratories and lecture halls.

How did the collaboration start and what does it entail?

The collaboration started just before the pandemic when two law graduates from Bosnia and Peru needed financial support to pursue their postgraduate studies in Law at the University of Lausanne. Since then, The Spark of Hope Foundation has supported female students from Ecuador, Iran, India, Indonesia, Turkey and Ukraine.

What is the focus in terms of students and programmes?

UNIL is home to three unique faculties: the Faculty of Law, Criminal Justice and Public Administration; the Faculty of Biology and Medicine (FBM); and the Faculty of Geosciences and Environment (GSE). These faculties offer a wide range of programmes, including interdisciplinary courses and continuing education programmes. For example, one of the continuing education programmes offered by the Faculty of Law, Criminal Justice and Public Administration is the LL.M. Programme in International Business Law.

How are students selected for the SoHF scholarship?

Women applying to the LL.M. Programme from the Global South that meet the scholar criteria go through The Spark of Hope Foundation's selection process, which evaluates, among other things, their leadership potential and their passion to make the world a better place.

How does this partnership help students at the University of Lausanne?

Scholarships from the Spark of Hope Foundation made all the difference to our students who were beneficiaries, as the funding provided not only partially covered tuition fees, but also motivated beneficiaries to seek other funding and employment opportunities.

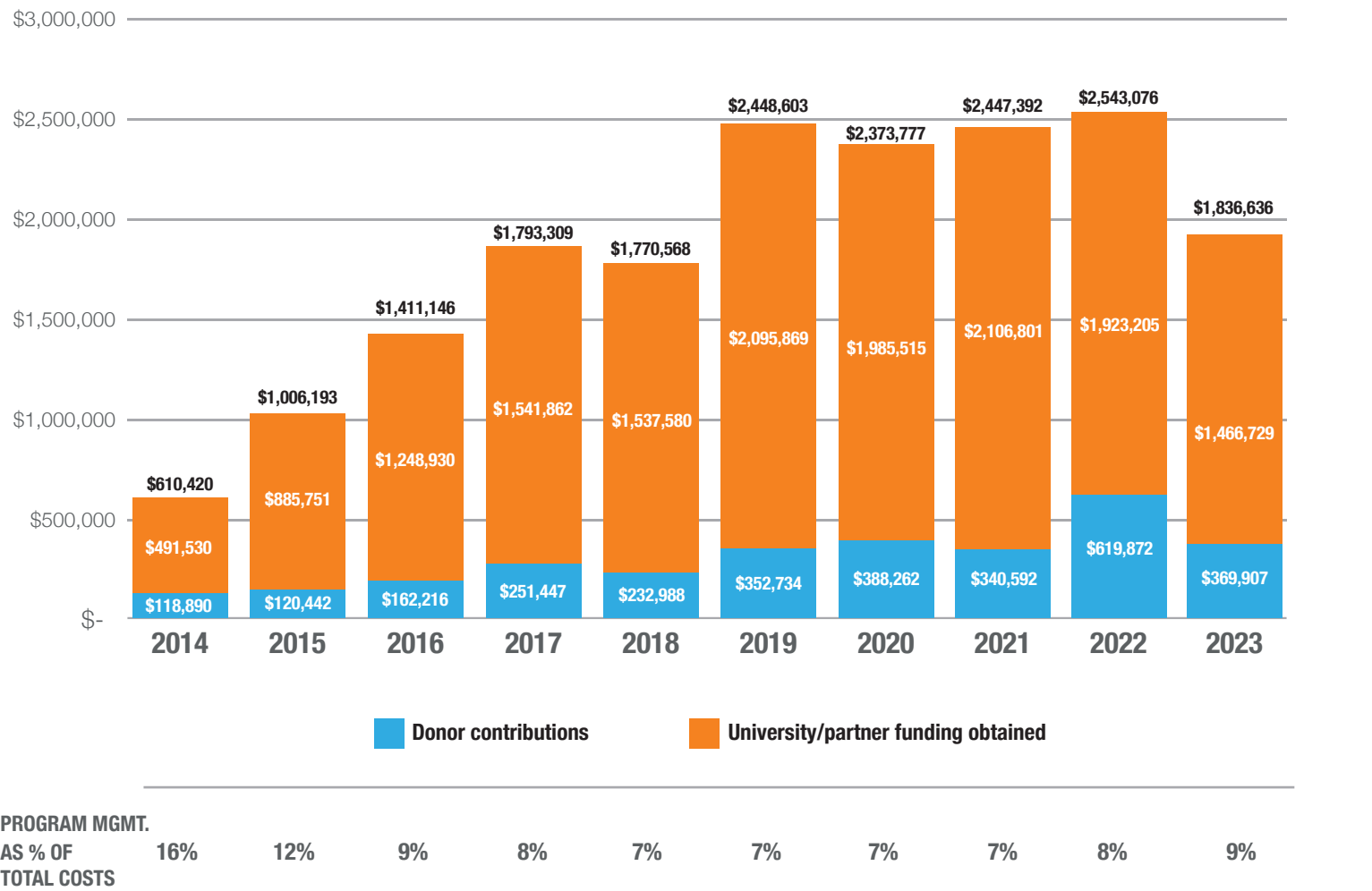
What are your post-graduation expectations of students?

We expect graduates of the LL.M. Programme to be change-makers in one of the following specialized fields: International Business Law and Innovation, International Business Law and Sports, International Business Disputes, International Business Transactions, or International Business Regulation. For example, one of our students who benefited from funding from The Spark of Hope Foundation and was recently accepted to a PhD Programme focused on Sports Law has set up a partnership among a UNIL Sports Law association, an NGO and two law firms in order to protect the rights of minor athletes. Likewise, another student currently supported by The Spark of Hope Foundation is proposing banking law reforms in her thesis, which she hopes will benefit her home country, Ecuador.

REVENUES and COSTS

Our annual revenues, raised through donor contributions and grants, are allocated primarily to scholarships to help support our students. This generous donor support helps secure five-fold funding from university and partner collaborations.

Our program management, evaluation, marketing, and reporting costs amounted to only 9% of total funding in 2023. The Foundation's Board of Directors, partnerships and volunteers help us maintain this efficiency.



BECOME A BENEFACTOR

EMPOWER THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN LEADERS

GOLD BENEFACTOR

\$500/month or \$6,000/year for four years
provides a full scholarship

SILVER BENEFACTOR

\$250/month or \$3,000/year for four years
provides a half scholarship

Your contribution will help young women from remote areas and conflict zones to become tomorrow's leaders

- Take advantage of convenient, affordable, and tax-smart ways to make a strategic donation, including gifts of stocks and securities, annuities, and bequests.
- Donations are multiplied 5x by participating universities and other partners.
- All donations are tax deductible.

Visit our website (thesparkofhope.org) today and help these bright women break the cycle of poverty through education

From our Benefactors

Our Foundation strives to improve the lives of others through education and women's initiatives. The Spark of Hope is the perfect intersection of our objectives, and the work they have done to help women of all backgrounds over the last decade has been inspiring. Through the funding we provide, we aspire to help these women positively impact their regions and drive societal change.

Shiraz H. Jiwani Charitable Foundation
Sherwood Park, AB

Women in the developing world face innumerable barriers, including poverty, cultural norms and violence. We support The Spark of Hope Foundation's mission to help uplift young women by providing educational and personal growth opportunities for a more equitable and inclusive future.

Nimet & Riaz Ahmed & Family
Oakville, ON

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan



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Photo: Henry Myerberg