

Rahela Trust

# Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements

April 2021 - March 2022



# Table of Contents

Our Mission & Values	01
Key Messages	02
Legal & Administrative Details	05
Structure, Governance & Management	06
Origins, Objectives & Activities	08
At a Glance: Achievements & Performance	10
Scholarships	13
Mentoring	19
Engaging the Diaspora	23
Strengthening the Organisation	32
Financial Statements	36
References	43
Messages of Thanks	
How You Can Help	

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# Our Mission & Values

Rahela Trust's mission is to provide university and higher education scholarships, mentorship and access to local and global professional networks to disadvantaged and talented Afghan women from rural areas who are committed to building a future where women are full participants and leaders in society.

Growing a community of educated young women who are committed to improving the lives of women in Afghanistan, the Rahela Trust envisages a society where the rights of women are respected - and women are fully involved in the social, political and economic aspects of life.

# Key Messages

## Message from Samantha Rennie, Chairperson of Rahela Trust




***"I'm astounded by the strength, bravery and determination that so many demonstrate – both within Afghanistan and as refugees...Rahela Sidiqi...prominent among them"***

Samantha Rennie, Chairperson

The "disaster and betrayal"[1] of abandoning the Afghan people to the Taliban in August 2021 was - and still is - shameful. As I stand beside Afghan women, it's impossible to fully comprehend the fear, trauma and despair as they see their livelihoods, hopes and futures wrenched brutally away from them while the world looks elsewhere.

Yet I'm astounded by the strength, bravery and determination that so many demonstrate – both within Afghanistan and as refugees. Rahela Sidiqi, founder of the Rahela Trust is prominent among them, as are the Trust's scholars, the former ministers, business-women and academics who have featured in the Trust's on-line events this year.

They each and all deserve our admiration and thanks. The Rahela Trust paused new scholarships for the 2021 intake, yet doubled down on efforts to support our existing volunteers, scholars and alumni in-country, with much behind-the-scenes activity among the chaos. Financially, this was another year of growth for the Rahela Trust (formerly Farkhunda Trust) and I'm especially grateful for new grants from the National Lottery's Awards for All and from the Jalal Agha Foundation which enabled us to recruit Development Officer Mollie Tant into the core team.



We also welcomed a new trustee, Mel Bradley, whose financial skills and fundraising connections have brought real value to the Trust. Mel also coordinates a giving circle of generous allies to our cause, each of whom we thank enormously.

All my fellow trustees deserve extra thanks this year, for helping steward the trust through challenging times, which also earned us a commendation from the official regulator, the Charity Commission who said of their meeting with us: "While the trustees confirmed the situation is fluid and in a state of constant change, the trustees demonstrated a good working knowledge of how to manage and mitigate any potential risks that arise with working in an area deemed high risk by the Commission."

So while our local partners - private universities and NGOs - remain open in Afghanistan, the diaspora expands, and we ramp up our advocacy within the international community, the Trust will continue to pursue its mission. We need more generous people to join us in fighting this good fight and hope this annual report inspires you to do so.

# Message from Founding Director, Rahela Sidiqi



**"I'm pleased that we are observing *[our students]*...becoming true leaders - we need the next generation to become agents of change!"**

Rahela Sidiqi, Founding Director

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The situation in Afghanistan is dire, and the situation for women worsens day by day - but this does not mean that we lose our passion of fighting for women's rights and their right to an education! The high mark achievements and commitments of our scholars, even after the Taliban's regime was reinstated, did not stop them from supporting their community. Rather, they changed their approach, focusing on home-based education to girls and children of their community. Yamina from Kandahar said *"I do enjoy when I see my peer-coaching result in the improvement of marks"*.

At the Benawa University *Unama* meeting, the University Chancellor said he really enjoyed it when our Rahela Trust scholars spoke about their awareness-raising projects and the impact they had on women and the community. He added how he had observed huge differences between Rahela Trust scholars and the other students. I thought the Rahela Model should be replicated for all the other students of Benawa University! I am pleased to see that we are observing their practice of becoming true leaders - we need the next generation to become the agents of change! In fact, the recognition of our scholar's commitment to giving back to their society by the community and leaders is what I hope to see more.

# Legal & Administrative Details

## Trustees

Samantha Rennie (**Chairperson**)

Kamini Paul

Liz Mermin

Marika Theros

Mel Bradley

Mel Whitney-Long

Sear Sadat (**Treasurer**)

## Founder & Director

Rahela Sidiqi

## Development Officer

Mollie Tant

## Further Details

### Charity Number

1165763

### Registered Address

28 Burns Close, Welling, DA16 3NJ

### Bankers

HSBC, 275 Greenwich High Road, Greenwich, SE10 8NF

### Independent Examiner

Sarah Walting, Monksilver GP Accounts, The Old Schoolhouse, Monksilver,  
Taunton, Somersrt, TA4 4HY

# Structure, Governance & Core Values

Rahela Trust is pleased to present its annual report and unaudited financial statements for the charity in the years 2021-22 - 1st April 2021 to 1st March 2022. Reference and administrative details are set out on page 5 from part of this report. The report and financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the charity's governing document and the Statement of Recommended Practice 0 Accounting and Reporting by Charities: SORP applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS102.

The Trust was established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and registered UK Charity on 25th February 2016.

## Structure & Management

Rahela Trust is governed by its constitution last amended on 3rd April 2021. The board of trustees are responsible for the governance of Rahela Trust and they perform duties with close adherence to the Charity Commission for England and Wales. The Board of Trustees seeks to appoint members who have a wide range of appropriate skills and knowledge of the sector that will allow them to govern and grow the charity successfully. With that, we are happy our trustees bring a range of skills to support Rahela Trust's mission through Afghan field experience, peacebuilding, media, charity policies and finance.

Trustees make all major decisions regarding strategy, policies and finance. Meetings of the Board are convened every three months to address strategic issues and review financial and operational activities. Trustees consider all other issues via email as and when they arrive.

The Trustees conducted a skills review to identify potential gaps in the Board that can be then suitably recruited for. The appointed individuals must fit within the requirements in the constitution, support the values of the organisation and be able to make necessary time commitments.

All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration.

Rahela Trust relies heavily on volunteers giving their time to the organisation. All our volunteers can claim back expenses from Rahela Trust in line with our volunteering policy. There are seven volunteers in Afghanistan, including two Kabul-based coordinators and one finance, one mentor and one coordinator in Helmand and one Coordinator and Mentor in Kandahar. The coordinators receive salaries paid for by the Trust's institutional partners or their affiliated partners.

The day-to-day activities are delegated to the Director. The Director is supported by the trustees, Development Officer and Executive Advisory Committee.



## Core Values

### Quality Scholarships

A commitment to deliver a quality scholarship programme

### Transparency

Guaranteed open, detailed and honest reporting on all activity

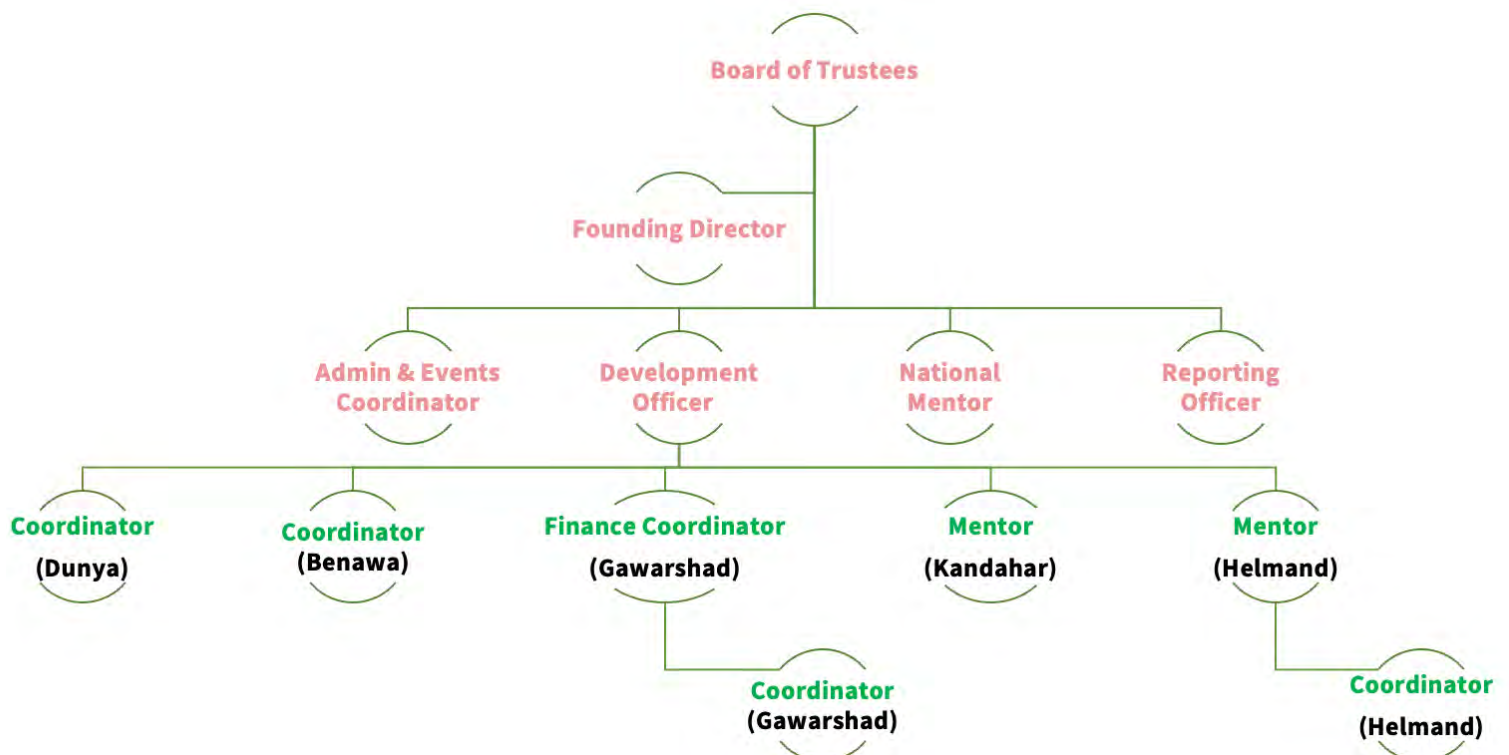
### Results-Based Achievement

Manage the scholarship programme and direction of Rahela Trust with results at the heart

### Effective & Efficient Mobilisation

Ensure resources are well managed and streamlined to reduce delays

## Governance & Management Structure March 2022



### Key

- UK-based
- Afghanistan-based

# Origins, Objectives & Strategic Goals

## Origins

Afghan women's rights activist Rahela Sidiqi founded Rahela Trust to improve the situation for women in Afghanistan due to the continued systematic discrimination of women at both the familial and societal levels. Originally, Rahela Trust was named Farkhunda Trust in honour of *Farkhunda Malikzada* who was murdered by a mob in Kabul after being falsely accused of burning a Quran in 2015. Rahela Trust underwent the name change in 2021 out of respect for the family's wishes who later reneged since the Trust was founded in 2016.

## Objectives

Our aim is to advance women's education in Afghanistan and to create safe, inspiring spaces for Afghan women to pursue their education. This has of course become even more of a challenge since the takeover by the Taliban in August 2021. Our selection criteria look to support academically-talented girls who have struggled with violence or have financial difficulties. Rahela Trust provides other forms of support as Trustees deem appropriate - this includes helping to safeguard their security in a nation suffering conflict.

## Partner Universities & Institution Networks

Gawharshad University, Kabul  
Dunya University, Kabul  
Benawa University, Kandahar  
Bost University, Helmand  
OESD [Organisation for Socio-Economic Development]



## Strategic Goals



1. Providing scholarships to disadvantaged and talented women, from and in rural Afghanistan



2. Supporting scholars through mentorship and networking



3. Raising awareness and engaging the Afghan diaspora in the development of Afghanistan



4. Strengthening and growing Rahela Trust to increase our impact

# At a Glance: Achievements & Performance

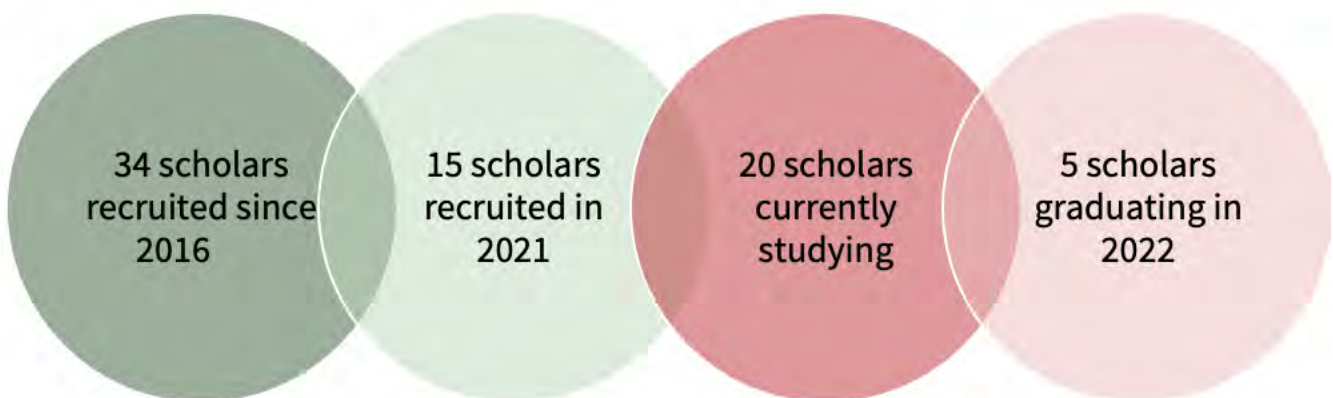


## Scholarships

Since the Taliban takeover in August 2021, no new scholars have been onboarded or recruited. Our primary concern has been to monitor and maintain the welfare of our current scholars during this traumatic period and do all we can to support the successful attainment of their academic qualifications.

Omid International organised a crowdfunding initiative on behalf of Rahela Trust to distribute \$250 to each scholar and volunteer to support them throughout the harsh winter - for example, emergency food.

We are proud to report that 99% of our scholars have managed to continue to perform despite the extremely challenging situation, achieving an average of 70 - 95% in their exams. It is with regret and sadness that one scholar has had to pause studying due to the security threat to her life. We continue to be in daily contact with this individual and are doing our upmost to safeguard her security.

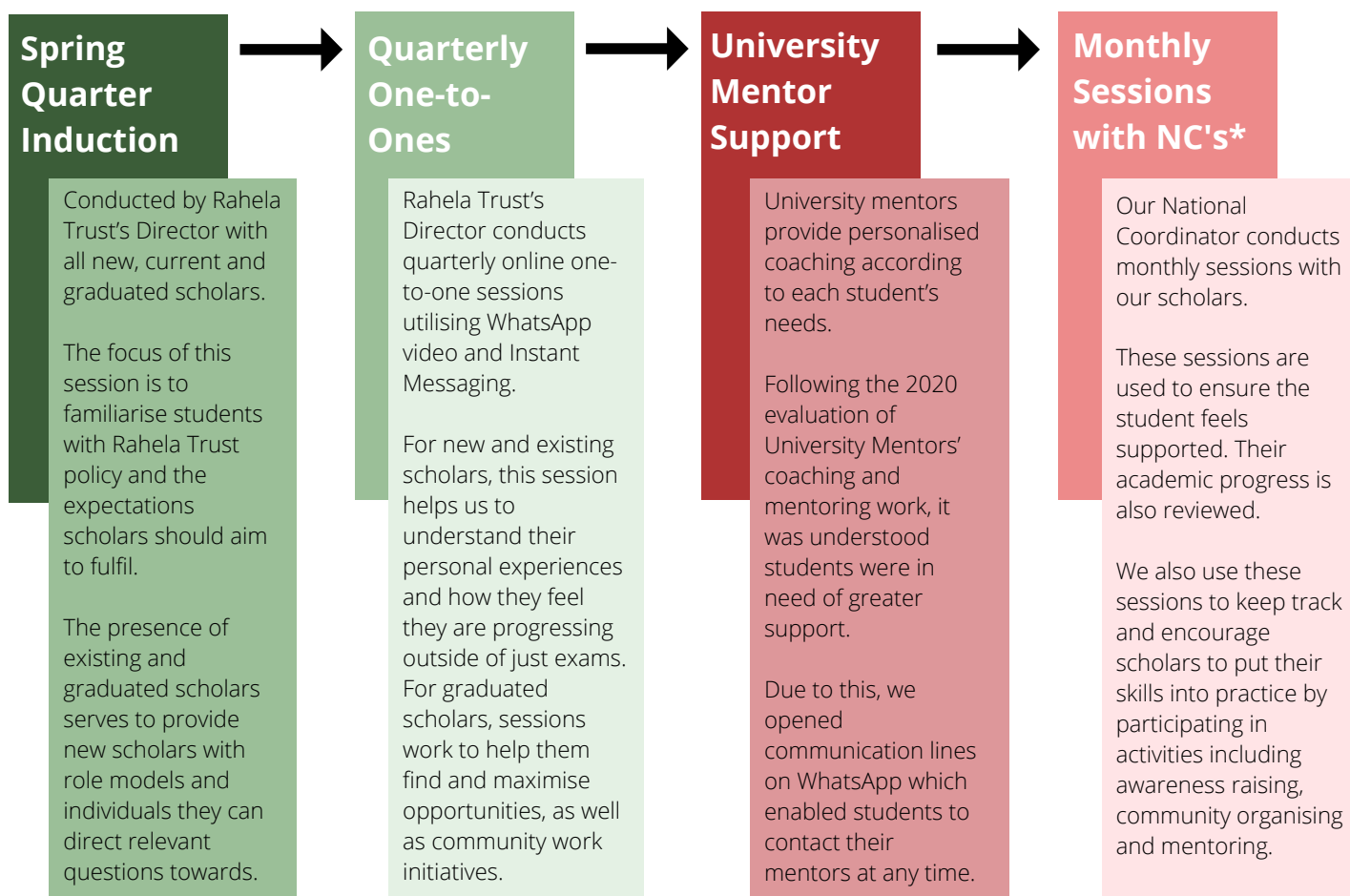




## Mentoring

In the Autumn Term of 2020, all of Afghanistan's university campuses were closed due to Covid-19. This caused, similar to universities all over the world, teaching and learning to operate remotely. Therefore, many of our scholars were already familiar with maximising the use of instant messaging apps such as WhatsApp, as well as video communication platforms, such as Zoom. This was useful to maintain mentoring activities with scholars during the uncertainty of August 2021 and beyond, and helped them to adapt to new circumstances.

Our mentoring structure is mapped out below. It is important to note that Afghan university terms operate on a two-term basis - the year runs from 1st April to 31st January the following year.



**\*NC's are our National Coordinators**

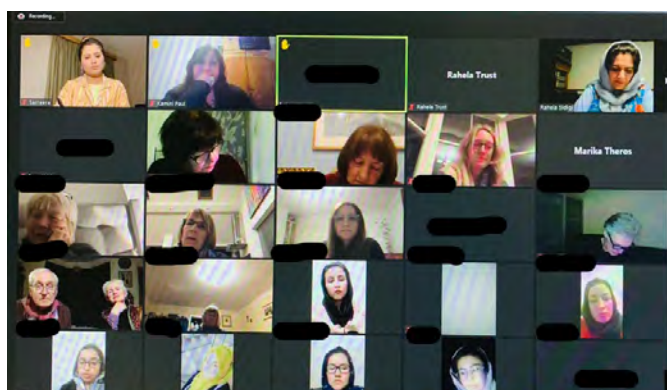


## Engaging the Diaspora and Allies

We believe supporting women's education does not stop at teaching. Building relationships with the Afghan diaspora, networking with different individuals, groups and organisations, and mobilising volunteers from the diaspora and ally community are also vital.

Each year we hold an Annual Lecture which focuses on a particular topic. It serves as a space where individuals from across the globe can share, listen and learn about Afghanistan and the work of Rahela Trust. This year's lecture focused on how the resurgence of the Taliban will shape Afghanistan's future and what needs to be achieved to help Afghanistan move toward a more positive, functioning society where all genders are respected and included. Our key speaker this year was one of Afghanistan's most eminent politicians, Mrs. Fawzia Koofi. We had over 90 attendees.

In March 2022, we also had the pleasure of being involved and invited to the wedding of one of our community members and Ambassadors, Farid Wahimi. It was hugely successful and a great example of marrying community engagement, fundraising and integration initiatives.



## Strengthening the Organisation

Following the decision to pause the recruiting of new scholars in light of the Taliban, we channelled efforts to our fourth Strategic Goal - ensuring Rahela Trust is a strong organisation. Due to this, we decided to recruit a part-time Development Officer in early 2022. We had over 100 applicants. After conducting a full round of panel interviews and much deliberation, we offered the role to Mollie Tant who excitedly accepted and was onboarded in March 2022.

The organisation also migrated to Microsoft 365 which has streamlined our communications allowing for better resource sharing between country teams, and improved our filing systems and overall security.

We are in the process of improving our website, developing our social media and expanding our fundraising initiatives.



# 1. Scholarships

## Partner Universities

The Trust operates scholarships in partnership with selected private (non-state) universities and third-level colleges, accredited by the Afghan Ministry for Education. We have focused on developing relationships with institutions outside of the capital so to ensure we are accessible to women who are from the most underprivileged and rural areas of Afghanistan.

We have established Memoranda of Agreements with each institution to ensure our respective partners are in written agreement with their roles, expected services and payment method for named scholars. They support the work of several of our programme co-ordinators and mentors and provide general administrative support.



## Scholarship Cost Breakdown

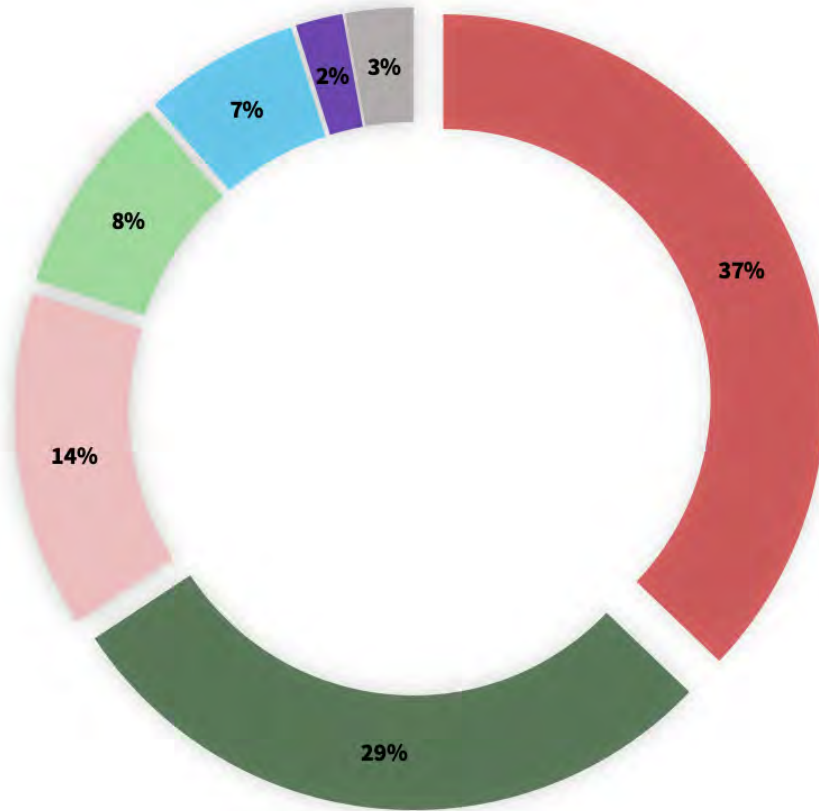
Each scholarship covers tuition fees and living and travel expenses, as well as the cost of books and studying utensils [including a laptop]. It was also decided in 2021 that Rahela Trust would supply smartphones due to the unreliable internet connection through powerlines.

Scholarships are only available for the full duration of the degree course, subject to satisfactory academic results each year [distinction and above]. Rahela Trust scholarships are uniquely designed to provide one-to-one mentoring, leadership-skill development and access to a global professional network. This works to empower individuals to become future leaders and agents of change.

All degree courses are four years, except medicine which is five.

A breakdown of the scholarship costs per year are as below:

### Breakdown By Percentage



- Fees
- Mentoring & Leadership Development
- Food & Transport
- Studying Materials
- Laptop & Phone
- Healthcare
- Administrative Costs

Approximately, scholarships cost £1750 per year, per scholar, including administrative charges.



## Recruiting New Scholars

Since the Taliban takeover in August 2021, Rahela Trust took the executive decision to pause all recruitment for new scholars. We wanted to prioritise our existing scholars and ensure their financial and programmatic security to successfully complete their degrees. It was also a good opportunity to cement the Trust's systems and processes and bolster fundraising activity whilst the Taliban's presence caused disruptions to female education.

So far we have established Microsoft Office for Trustees and our members of staff including our National Coordinators. We recently hired Development Officer (March 2022). in accordance with our 2020 Strategic Goals.

When we resume recruiting for our scholarship programme in September 2022, we will continue to follow the Open Competition model. The process is described in greater detail below.

### Stage One

Scholarships are advertised on the websites of Rahela Trust, our partner universities and the Afghan Women NGOs Network. We also maximise awareness through events and our community network.

Candidates then apply with evidence of their academic achievements.

### Stage Two

When the application window closes, a long list of applicants is generated by university and academic committee members and Rahela Trust's National Coordinators.

The long list is produced using a scoring system and is then fully screened by the Mixed Committee of Independent Academic and Civil Society in Afghansitan.

### Stage Three

The highest scoring candidates are visited at home by a Rahela Trust Coordinator. Applicants who live in distant provinces have their applications checked by Rahela Trust in cooperation with civil society organisations.

Based on these findings, the shortlist is then produced.

#### Stage Four

Rahela Trust's Board of Trustees and the Director assess the shortlist against the criteria and host remote interviews with prospective scholars [detailed below]. A final selection is announced and letters of commitment are dispersed to scholar parents and associated community members to sign.

## Rahela Trust Scholar Selection Criteria

Our eligibility criteria comprise questions which reflect the philosophy underpinning Rahela Trust, which is listed below. We aim to recruit scholars who will not only thrive within an academic environment and do not have the economic means to do so without help but are also committed to positively developing the future of women and civil society in Afghanistan.

Does the applicant wish to apply for senior level government jobs and develop their capacity in management through leadership training?

Has the applicant already attended higher education, is registered, but had to drop out or has been in a period of limbo at home due to economic reasons or other pressures?

Is the applicant financially disadvantaged, or lacking financial resources to continue education?

Does the applicant come from a deprived family background with evidence of violence and/or abuse?

Does the applicant have a passion for education, an exceptional academic ambition or promise, with evidence of a high school degree (70 - 100 score)?

Does the applicant have solidarity with other women, a desire to combat discrimination, and is prepared to support other female students?

Does the applicant have a future plan to work in a leadership role?

Does the applicant have a commitment to women empowerment and solidarity building?

# Scholarships and The Taliban

## Current Situation

The current situation in Afghanistan is devastating. The Taliban are back in power and continue to reintroduce laws which are highly reminiscent of those in 1996. Although there is debate over whether reductions in civil liberties will continue long-term and without international interference, as it stands, the official status of girls' education in Afghanistan is at a standstill.

Following the announcement on Tuesday 22nd March 2022 by the Taliban that the six-month-long closure of girls' secondary schools will not end, the problem of girls' education in Afghanistan blazes on.

Reports detail that primary-school girls are continuing to attend school in some provinces, however concerns over their safety from violence grow. Girls of high-school age and up are rule-bound to their homes, and so half of Afghanistan's population are yet again disempowered (*The Guardian, 2022*) and fundamental human rights flouted (*The Print, 2022*).

## Rahela Trust Reponse

Our number one priority is to safeguard Rahela Trust's scholars. Not only do we want to safeguard their security, but also their future. It is a tough line to balance as we and the students are collectively passionate about their learning. Only one scholar has gone into hiding due to the risk of violence against them. The student's families are frightened.

Due to the private status of our university partners, all but one of our scholars are continuing to attend their classes in person. We have taken several actions since the fall of the Taliban listed below:

For very high risk students, meaning they are currently in hiding, we have done our best to maximise our network of high-powered individuals who have the knowledge and ability to protect them best - by removing them from the country. Though we have come to no resolutions yet, we continue to press with this.

Provided instant messaging communication with Director Rahela Sidiqi to help maintain their sense of direction and provide appropriate support where possible.

Engaged members of the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) who meet on a weekly basis to share and receive information about Taliban activity and current activity.

## Response Analysis

Rahela Trust is a very small organisation with one part-time employee, Mollie Tant a Director, Rahela Sidiqi and seven Trustees. We rely heavily on grants, donations and individuals volunteering their time to keep Rahela Trust's programmes and activities going and so our response to the current situation has its limitations. We strive to be a transparent and open organisation and so these are summarised below.

With greater resources, we would be able to spend greater time formalising cases and contacting individuals outside of our networks who may be able to help.

Our Director undertakes the majority of scholar communication responsibilities which is a heavy mental burden. We would recruit more individuals who would be able to support her in this.

## Adapting for the Future

We would like to provide scholarships to Afghan refugees wherever they are, however, we are severely limited by resources and other legal parameters. We are focusing on expanding the Rahela Trust community by restarting our regular events [affected by Covid] and spending more time on our social media accounts.

The use of the Hawala system to transfer money to Afghanistan will continue to be assessed and monitored carefully.

We will remain agile in responding to the changing situation in Afghanistan.

## 2. Mentoring

### The Rahela Model

The Founding Director's model for creating a ripple effect in a community of women and young girls revolves around equipping individual scholars with the capacity, knowledge and tenacity to share their learning and instigate community-based initiatives.

Rahela Trust has four In-Country Coordinators who are required to stay in contact with the scholars on a daily basis. Scholars also have additional support on a fortnightly basis from their external mentors who serve as role models - they are specialists in their fields of study and are able to offer tailored advice. Our Founding Director Rahela hosts mentoring and coaching sessions for all scholars on a quarterly basis remotely.

### Mentoring in Action

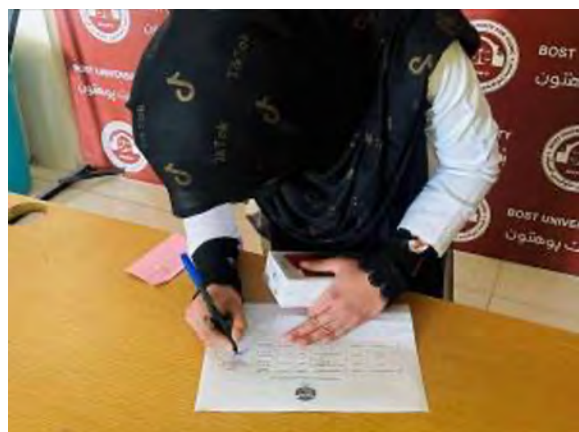
#### Bost University, Helmand

One of our In-Country Mentors worked closely with the five Rahela Trust students based in Helmand. She was instrumental in two key mentoring activities which are detailed below.

#### Overcoming Taliban-Related Obstacles

After the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021, the banking system was badly affected which meant Rahela Trust was unable to send money needed for tuition fees, pocket money and transportation in the formal way. After an emergency Trustee meeting on the 6th December 2021, it was decided the Hawala system would be used to transfer the necessary funds.

Our In-Country Mentor was key to this process and worked with the Coordinator based in Helmand to distribute the money to the relevant individuals. She was also vital to helping us overcome the security issues which were blocking our ability to issue the student's laptops and mobile phones. These technologies are of course essential to the scholars whilst participating in the scholarship programme.



## NGO Training & Cooperation

Our In-Country Mentor linked each student with various international NGOs such as the **International Rescue Committee (IRC)**, **Action Against Hunger (AAH)** and the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** who were offering training opportunities and chances to volunteer in social activities.

Each scholar underwent a three-day Covid-19 and Omicron spread prevention training, hosted by the **IRC**. They were encouraged to share their knowledge with their local communities and there are currently plans to host training sessions after their final exams.



There are five scholars at Bost University who are heavily involved in carrying out activities in their communities.

One of our scholars **\*Faiza** manages and teaches basic subjects to a class made up of young children. She is passionate about education and thinks it is one of the best ways to secure a bright future for Afghanistan. She is in her third semester.

Another of our Bost University students, **\*Ghazal** teaches very young children in her home and donates teaching materials and notepads to the students.

The scholars at Bost University took part in the three-day Covid-19 and Omicron spread prevention training ran by the **IRC**. They too have taken steps to share these skills with their local communities.

## Gawharshad University, Kabul

At Gawhardshad University, the scholars are encouraged to share their skills. They are committed to helping women gain greater economic freedom.

One of our top scholars, **\*Sabrina** has hosted several sessions for local women. She focuses on teaching them entrepreneurial skills which enable them to sell items that they sew. As part of this, she helps build their sewing capabilities by demonstrating various sewing patterns.

**\*Maeda** is an especially talented mathematician. Throughout both semesters, she has hosted troubleshooting sessions for her peers who are struggling in the subject.



## Dunya University, Kabul

We have one student at Dunya University who is extremely motivated to encourage younger girls to value their education and gain greater freedoms.

This year, **\*Saboora** has hosted seven days of workshops to young girls in her community who have been deeply demoralised by the resurgence of the Taliban. She tries to spark hope and motivation within her students so they do not lose hope, mirroring the mentoring she has personally received through Rahela Trust.

**Saboora** has also hosted seminars for housewives exploring the impact of parent's behaviour on their children. The attendees were extremely receptive and engaged in the conversations that followed.





## Benawa University, Kandahar

There are eight Rahela Trust scholars at Benawa University. The social activities here have been impressively diverse and reflective of the various scholar's passions and interests.

**\*Sanaz** has conducted many awareness-raising sessions in her community, focusing on various topics including; violence against children, the rights of children and the importance of education. Schools, community leaders, parents and administrative personnel have all been in attendance at these sessions.

**\*Shahzadah** has focused on matters of health. She is key to helping with doctors' appointments, facilitating conversations, helping patients to fill in forms and ensuring services run smoothly overall.





# 3. Engaging the Diaspora

## Overview

Our UK-based activity in connecting wider diaspora and Afghan refugees together in support of women's education is an extremely important aspect of Rahela Trust. Given our extensive and deep networks in the country and within diaspora communities, this is integral.

We hold a number of events to foster engagement each year including an Annual Lecture and General Meeting, Annual Academy Conference and other, smaller social and fundraising events. Due to Covid-19, we have been unable to host the Annual Afghan Diaspora Academic Conference for two years and so are thrilled to report our second conference will be held Monday 19th September 2022 at the University of Cambridge.

This section will explore several diaspora initiatives undertaken by Rahela Trust:

- Annual Lecture & General Meeting
- Director Activity Summary
- Diaspora Community Wedding

## Annual Lecture & General Meeting

Rahela Trust hosted its Fifth Annual Lecture during a time where populations around the world continued struggling with a global pandemic that placed heavy burdens on all aspects of society - from job markets to health, education and social services. Unsurprisingly, women have been disproportionately affected by the impact of Covid. From increased violence to worsened economic rights, existing gender inequalities have only intensified. For Afghanistan, this, and the fall to the Taliban in August 2021, has put the future of women and girls at even greater risk than pre-pandemic.

This year's lecture focused on the current state of Afghanistan - what Afghans and the international community can do to secure a more positive future for the women of Afghanistan, and the country as a whole. We also explored the experience of our students and how they have been tackling unprecedented challenges, as well as how Rahela Trust has managed and adapted to new developments.



## Speakers



### **Elizabeth Winter - Fifth Annual Lecture Chair**

Founding member of British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) and a Trustee of Afghanaid. A social scientist and researcher, she specialises in civil society development.



### **Rahela Sidiqi - Founder & Director of Rahela Trust**

Founding Director of Rahela Trust, Rahela is also a core founder of the National Solidarity Programme in Afghanistan. Since 1993 she has worked as a women's rights activist at the grassroots and policy levels in Afghanistan.



### **Samantha Rennie - Chairperson of Rahela Trust**

Experienced charity relief executive, she has worked with Rosa, the UK Fund for Women & Girls and Handicap International. She is a lifelong champion of social justice and the power of grassroots movements to effect change.



### **Fawzia Koofi - Political Leader & Activist**

Leader of the Movement of Change for Afghanistan party and the first woman to lead a political party in Afghanistan. Ms Koofi is an active figure in the field of women's rights in Afghanistan and has played an active role in the enactment of protective laws for women and children.



### **\*Yumna - Rahela Trust Scholar**

*\*Name changed for safeguarding purposes*

Attends Dunya University.



## Rahela Sidiqi

This year, Rahela Sidiqi explored the efficacy of the **Rahela Trust's** scholarship programme and evidence that following the Rahela Model approach is successfully achieving results.

Utilising the example of a former Rahela Trust student, Amina who graduated from Gawharshad University, it is clear that higher education, coupled with coaching, mentoring and networking is key to forging organically grown and empowered female leaders.

Providing individualised coaching and direct access to 24/7 academic and personal support through instant messaging apps [such as WhatsApp] has proved imperative to building confidence and strength in scholars, especially throughout Covid and the Taliban's takeover. Rahela Trust's mentoring philosophy encourages the adoption of values including respect, honesty, kindness and helpfulness to others. This is key to establishing female leaders.

Amina is an excellent example of someone who has embraced these teachings. Since graduating, she has worked closely with nationally regarded journalists, secured official employment with Afghanistan's government just three months after graduating, and is now a mentor to girls who follow in her footsteps.

Rahela's key message is for the young people of Afghanistan to not lose hope, and for the diaspora, allies and others to support Rahela Trust Scholars in any way they can.



**(L-R)** Rahela Sidiqi, Rahela Trust scholar, Annual Lecture & General Meeting participants, Rahela Trust scholar Amina.

## Fawzia Koofi



Fawzia Koofi outlined the unique context Afghanistan finds itself post-conflict and urged the international community to use their leverage to instigate meaningful political dialogue.

The complexity of the situation in Afghanistan is such that some provinces were taken by the Taliban without force. There is a portion of Afghanistan's population who are genuine supporters of the new leadership, all the while many of the young, empowered, talented and educated groups have been driven out of Afghanistan, spelling greater difficulties for the country's future.

At this time, the Taliban's actions have demonstrated an exclusionary approach to gender. Since the ban in December 2021, girls' education has yet to be reinstated and it appears it will remain this way for the foreseeable future. There are also no females working for the government.

Moving forward, Ms. Koofi stressed that the importance of policies and laws affecting women and girls cannot be underestimated. A political conversation between the general population and the current government is required to establish a meaningful political structure that represents *all* the people it serves. The Taliban need to open up to dialogue and establish their legitimacy nationally and internationally in order to achieve this. Ultimately, Ms. Koofi makes it clear that political dialogue is a priority if empowered Afghan women are to feel safe, and free to positively contribute to their country.







## Rahela Trust Scholar - \*Yumna

*Yumna* shared her personal story with those attending the virtual lecture. It was a very special moment for us as Mrs Sidiqi and her in-country mentor had spent great time and work drafting, finalising and practising in English with *Yumna*.

Yumna's transcribed speech can be found in the Index **[Item A]** at the end of this report as we would like her words to live outside the Annual Lecture. We have included a shortened version below.

"Growing up in the Logar Tribe, they did not send their daughters to school due to being conservative and having a complicated opinion....my uncle...was obliged to leave our village because I was not allowed to go to school... "As soon as I finished school, due to my interest in continuing my education, I successfully passed the Dunya university entrance exams for the faculty of economics...however, as soon as the first semester ended...my grandmother was not able to pay my education costs...I was obliged to leave the university.

"The light was sparkling in the dark...I was given hope....fortunately, I joined the school of Rahela Trust...it was through coaching mentoring and moral building...and the encouragement and support of Ms. Sidiqi...I achieved 99% Mark in my academic studies. I am getting better and better and moving stronger than before....I took responsibility...I learned that I must be someone who does not give up on honesty, truthfulness, kindness, and service to people. I was able to do something for my capacity building...I am proud...

"Yumna who was...very shy yesterday..presents with...braveness...today...I convey...honesty, working on herself, empowering others. To be a stable human being in society to be a role model in society, these are the values that I learned from Rahela Turst...I learned...the effective and efficient use of resources is important...that the money given to me for projects for women and girls should be used carefully...it was an internship for me...that these resources should be used...well...I learned that I had to work harder in the face of the Taliban...and never give up.

## Director Activities with Afghan Diaspora Community

Rahela Sidiqi, Rahela Trust's Director is an active women's rights activist and represents the Trust and its unique approach to development at various events including, international conferences, lectures, workshops and advocacy sessions.

See more information below.

### Danish Refugee Council

In November 2021, Rahela attended the Danish Refugee Council *Afghan Diaspora Conference* in Copenhagen. The aim of the conference was to offer a space for the Afghan diaspora to come together, network, learn from each other and assert their positions as key stakeholders who should be consulted by European member states and EU institutions.



*Rahela Sidiqi is pictured at the conference, third from the left*

### Advocacy Initiatives

Rahela frequently organises and participates in events which advocate for Afghan women's right to education and freedom. See below for some of the 2021 highlights:

- (1) Advocacy session with Baroness Fiona Hodgson and 80 women from Afghanistan
- (2) Co-Chaired for the Danish Refugee Council alongside Samira Nawa Amini, Danish MP and three professional Afghan women panellists



*Rahela Sidiqi is pictured third from the left.*



(3) Rahela Co-founded the Afghan Women Coalition for Change (AWCC) in February 2022 with support from The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). There are 16 members.



Rahela Sidiqi is pictured fourth from the right.

(4) Rahela was asked to be a panellist by the EU Parliament for the *Public Sessions of Equality Committee* on two occasions.

(5) She also mobilised women activist refugee groups and educated them on how to support higher education for women in neighbouring countries.

### McGill University, Canada: Women & Girls Speak Out: Prioritising Education in Humanitarian Aid in Afghanistan

On 23rd March 2022, McGill University hosted an innovative event which provided the opportunity for women and girls, in all their diversity, to advocate for their own rights, needs and interests - and a chance for the international community to listen. Rahela was a speaker alongside Founder of Learn Afghanistan, Pashtana Durrani.

**Women and Girls Speak Out:  
Prioritizing Education in  
Humanitarian Aid in Afghanistan**

A PARALLEL SESSION TO THE 66TH UN  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

**MARCH 23 | 12 PM EST | LIVE VIA ZOOM**

Hear first hand accounts of Afghan girls and young women  
read by Canadian youth supporters of CW4WAfghan

REGISTER AT:  
[BIT.LY/CSW66-CW4WAFGHAN](https://bit.ly/csw66-cw4wafghan)

**PASHTANA DURRANI**  
SPEAKER  
FOUNDER OF LEARN AFGHANISTAN

**RAHELA SIDIQI**  
SPEAKER  
FOUNDER OF THE RAHELA TRUST

**CLAUDIA MITCHELL**  
MODERATOR  
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR,  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION, MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan



# Diaspora Community Wedding

## Summary

On the 19th March, Rahela Trust's Executive Team were invited by Farid and Lida Rahimi to attend, speak and fundraise at their wedding. As a long standing Rahela Trust Ambassador, Farid wanted to use the opportunity to appeal to his friends and family about a cause that is close to his heart. He, like many other Afghan men, believe that women should have the right to an education and to be treated as equals in society. We are extremely grateful to Farid and his now wife, Lida for their generosity and kindness.

In total, the evening not only resulted in **£531.11** fundraised for Rahela Trust, it also served as a moment for members of the Afghan community to connect with Rahela Trust, and develop relationships and form connections with our Executive Team.



**(L-R)** Rahela Trust Volunteer Ziarmal Gharghasht, Rahela Trust's Development Officer Mollie Tant, Rahela Trust Volunteer Safia Nasrat, Rahela Trust Ambassadors; Mansoor Fazli and Marwan Ahmadzai.

## The Wedding

Guests began arriving at 6PM in preparation for the celebrations - our Development Officer arrived first and was seated on a table designated for close family members. It was a great opportunity for her to see an Afghan wedding from start to finish as the only Rahela Trust guest who hadn't attended one before. She had the pleasure of speaking to those sat at the table (and very much enjoyed the sugared almonds [Nuqal] which were generously supplied...and the green teal!). Later, our Rahela Trust Volunteers and Ambassadors arrived and they sat together on their table. It was time for the wedding to commence.

The bride, dressed in a beautifully embroidered emerald green dress and groom in a matching suit entered, with one of the significant elder women in the family dancing her into the great hall. Following this, the dancing commenced. It was a joy to behold with many smiling faces and voices chattering and laughing.





After some time, the bride and groom exit with some significant members of their family to complete the Islamic part of the wedding ceremony. When they returned, they had both changed from their green coloured outfits - Lida into a traditional white wedding dress and Farid in a navy blue suit - to mark their marriage as now official. More dancing commenced to the sound of flamboyant drums and romantic-edged poetry sung in Dhari.

Just before it is time for everyone to delight in the feast, Rahela Trust's Executive Team assembled on the stage and gave the presentation. Farid concluded the speeches to consolidate our asks and appeal to his guests to donate what they could. The food was absolutely delicious and ranged from tomato roasted aubergine to slow roasted lamb, an array of mouth watering curries, rice, an abundance of delicious salads and naan.



When feasting was over, the Rahela Trust team went from table to table to explain a little more about the scholarship programme and collect any donations. It was an excellent opportunity to hear the questions potential Afghan donors have, and many expressed their agreement in the mission of Rahela Trust.

The night's formalities were now over and the only thing left to do was celebrate. Certain guests had changed into the brilliantly colourful and ornate traditional Afghan dresses and the floor became a sea of colour, jollity and excellent dance moves.

**(L-R)** Rahela Trust's Development Officer Mollie Tant making a speech to wedding guests. Farid Rahimi stands behind her.

# 4. Strengthening the Organisation

## Future Plans

### Diaspora & Ally Engagement

Going forward, we plan to continue hosting the Annual Lecture and General Meeting, Annual Academy Conference and other events.

We are looking forward to hosting the Annual Academy Conference, Monday 19th September 2022 at Cambridge University after a two-year hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Conference will take place at the University of Cambridge and aims to highlight the challenges to accessing secondary and tertiary education faced by women and girls in Afghanistan.

The diaspora community is of the upmost importance to us. With the arrival of 15,000 more Afghan refugees to the UK in December 2021, our focus will be on connecting this network to already-established communities and introducing them to the work that we do.

Following the success of our Trustee and Bookkeeper, Mel Bradley MBE's British Community donation group, who we are most grateful to for their support, we aim to continue to drive support from UK-based groups. We are exploring opportunities with universities around the UK, hoping to establish connections, fundraising initiatives and student volunteers. We believe that the students of today will be invested in improving women's rights and securing positive futures for girls in Afghanistan.

### Improving and Developing Communications

Leverage our Social Media Volunteer to action the newly developed Social Media Plan across Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn to increase visibility and communication.

Develop our website and a quarterly newsletter for our donors, supporters and friends. This will include reports on Rahela Trust activity, events in Afghanistan and positive diaspora news.

Host more events, both virtual and physical, targeting younger people [below 30 years old] from the diaspora and ally community, serving as a cultural and idea-exchange opportunity.

Build out our resource offering to Afghan refugees settling in Europe and the UK, as well as information and tools to those who also want to help.

## Fundraising

The Trust's income experienced an 8.7% increase from last year totalling **£51,861**.

We were excited to have been successful in our bids for funds from the following organisations; ***Amanat Foundation, Afghan Connection, Jalal Agha Foundation, GRA Emergency Fund*** and the ***National Lottery Fund***. We would like to express our sincere thanks to them for their support.

Community donations including (Diaspora and British Community donations) have also seen a positive increase of 24.3% and 41% respectively.

Recruitment for new scholars was paused this year and so our focus has been on Strategic Goal Number Four. This concentrates on strengthening the capabilities and robustness of Rahela Trust as an organisation. We are therefore delighted to have made our first hire in March 2022, and now have a part-time Development Officer in place.

## Looking to the Future

For the year 2022-23, we are planning to resume the recruitment of scholars for the 2023 cohort. This means our efforts will again begin to revolve around fundraising for scholarships. We have increased attention to submitting applications to Trusts and Foundations and are currently developing a three-year fundraising strategy. We'd love to see more scholars with your support.

In October 2022, we are excited to be hosting our fifth Afghan Diaspora Academic Conference at the University of Cambridge.

We will be carrying out a strategy review in the light of the Taliban situation

## Key Risks

The Rahela Trust maintains a risk register that is reviewed at each trustee meeting. This year, the Taliban takeover and international sanctions placed additional risks on the charity that we are monitoring closely between meetings as well as considering during them. Key risks and measures to manage and/or mitigate them are as follows:

**Threats to security and safety of scholars:** Pausing new scholar recruitment to focus on safeguarding existing ones. Safeguarding policy and emergency contact numbers circulated again to scholars and volunteers in Afghanistan. The Director maintains open and on-going WhatsApp communications with each, providing direct support, connecting them with other local and international networks and NGOs and advocating for individuals with relevant 'allied' Foreign Affairs Ministries. Working collaboratively with the BAAG group on NGOs helps increase effectiveness in managing these risks.

**Failure to secure funds to support existing operations and growth.** Pausing new scholar recruitment; focussing on Goal 4 (Strengthening the organisation, fundraising). Maintaining communications with existing donors; Emphasising current situation and RT risk management measures with new donors; Strategy review to be held July 2022 to reconsider future funding requirements.

**Transfer of Funds to Afghanistan:** Following the introduction of international sanctions, international banks no longer accepted transfers into Afghanistan. To maintain our activities in-country, Trustees researched alternatives and agreed contracts with XXX (name) Hawala system for transferring funds into Afghanistan and with Ghawarshad University for onward distribution to scholars and volunteers. In response to exceptional international currency fluctuations, the Rahela Trust is also maintaining a higher level of unrestricted reserves than in previous years.

In November 2021, the official regulator, the Charity Commission of England and Wales, reviewed the Rahela Trust's monitoring and management of key risks, including those above. It concluded: "While the trustees confirmed the situation is fluid and in a state of constant change, the trustees demonstrated a good working knowledge of how to manage and mitigate any potential risks that arise with working in an area deemed high risk by the Commission."

## Reserves and Going Concern:

The Trust currently has no investments or policy for reserves. Trustees approved expenditure on the recruitment of scholars and other activities only when sufficient funds were received.

## Public Benefit:

The Trustees confirm that they have due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. The Trust provides scholarships and support for vulnerable and disadvantaged young women in Afghanistan, and trustees confirm that all activities conform to the guidance on public benefit.

## Statement of Trustees' responsibilities:


Law applicable to charities in England & Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities during the period and its financial position at the end of the period. In preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view, the Trustees should follow best practice and:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and the financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

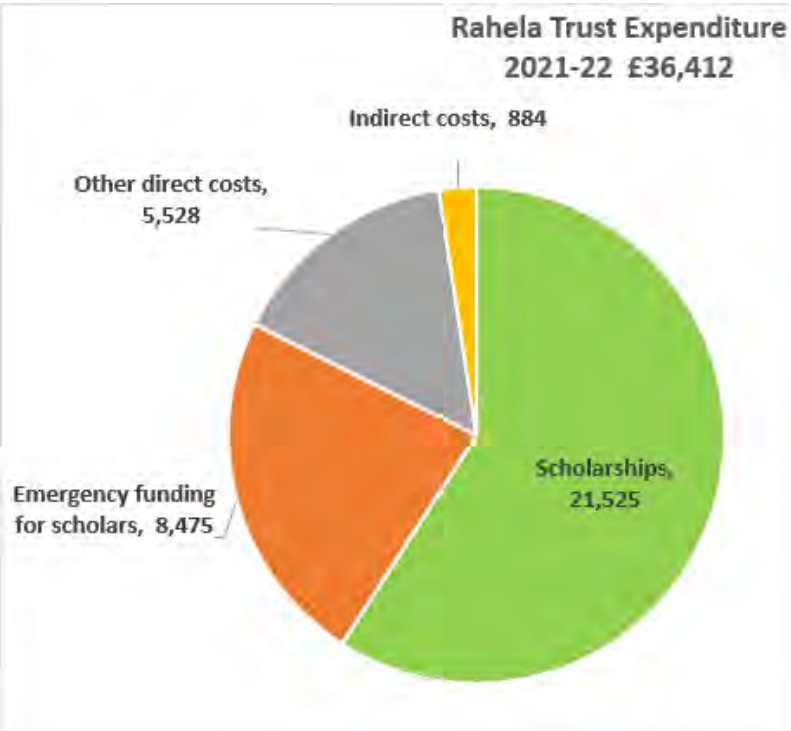
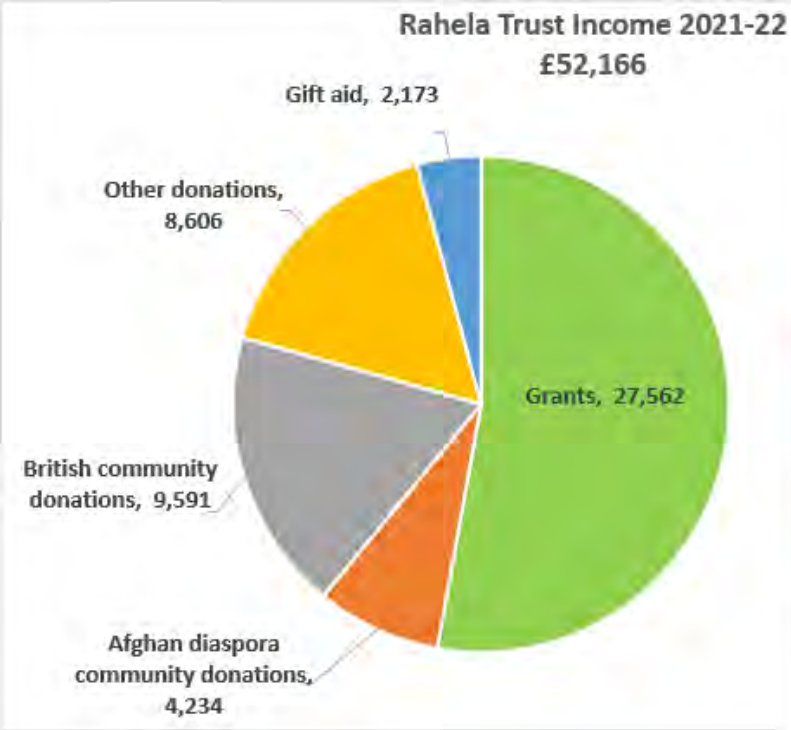
There is no statutory requirement for our accounts to be audited. The Trustees have appointed Sarah Watling at Monksilver GP Accounts as a suitably qualified Independent Examiner.

The Annual Trustees' Report and Financial Statements were approved by the trustees at their meeting on 6th October and signed on their behalf by the Chair.

Signed:   
Samantha Rennie, Chair of the Rahela Trust  
Date: 6th October 2022



# Financial Statements



# Financial Statements

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### Independent Examiner Report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Rahela Trust for the year ended 31/03/22.

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below \*) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Sarah Watling  
Monksilver GP Accounts  
The Old Schoolhouse  
Monksilver  
Taunton  
Somerset TA4 4HY

Date: 29/9/2022

Signed: Sarah Watling  
Sarah Watling

# Financial Statements

RAHELA TRUST  
PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	<u>Notes</u>	<u>12 Months</u> <u>31st March</u> <u>2022</u>			<u>12 Months</u> <u>31st March</u> <u>2021</u>		
		£	£	£	£	£	£
		<u>Restricted</u>	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Restricted</u>	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Total</u>
Receipts							
Community Donations:	2						
British Community Monthly Donations		9,591		9,591	6,800		6,800
Afghan Diaspora Community Monthly Donations		4,234		4,234	1,642		1,642
Unrestricted Donations			8,606	8,606		8,051	8,051
Grants:	3						
Afghan Connection		-		-	13,251		13,251
Amanat		-		-	17,036		17,036
Jalal Agha Foundation		9,721		9,721	-		-
Big Lottery		9,721		9,721	-		-
GRA Global		8,120		8,120	-		-
Mother & daughter		-		-	901		901
Gift Aid:	4						
HMRC Charities			2,173	2,173		-	-
Total income		41,387	10,779	52,166	39,630	8,051	47,681
Deduct:							
Direct Costs:							
Scholarship Costs	5	21,525		21,525	29,508		29,508
Emergency Funding for Scholars	6	8,475		8,475	-		-
Total Scholarship Costs		(30,000)		(30,000)	(29,508)		(29,508)
Other Direct Costs:							
Volunteer expenses			2,813	2,813		1,590	1,590
Telephone and IT costs			1,665	1,665		1,130	1,130
Marketing costs			1,050	1,050		600	600
Printing, postage & stationery			-	-		68 (3,388)	68
Total Other Direct Costs		-	(5,528)	(5,528)	-		(3,388)



**Indirect Costs:**

Management and adminitration	7	264	264	570	5 70
Legal and Professional		300	300	1,650	1 ,650
Bank charges		320	320	100	1 00
Depreciation		81 (965)	81 (965)	87 (2,406)	87
Total Indirect Costs		-		-	(2,406)
Net Profit / (Loss) for the Year			<u>15,673</u>		<u>12,759</u>

RAHELA TRUST  
BALANCE SHEET  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	<u>Notes</u>	12 Months 31st March <u>2022</u> £			12 Months 31st March <u>2021</u> £		
		<u>Restricted</u>	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>£ Restricted</u>	<u>£ Unrestricted</u>	<u>£ Total</u>
FIXED ASSETS							
Tangible Assets	8			410			491
CURRENT ASSETS							
Bank		24,408	13,174	37,582	14,347	7,481	21,828
Cash and cash equivalent				-			-
		<u>24,408</u>	<u>13,174</u>	<u>37,582</u>	<u>14,347</u>	<u>7,481</u>	<u>21,828</u>
TOTAL ASSETS				37,992			22,319
TOTAL NET ASSETS				<u>37,992</u>			<u>22,319</u>
FUNDS							
Restricted funds		24,408		24,408	14,347		14,347
Unrestricted funds			13,584	13,584		7,972	7,972
		<u>24,408</u>	<u>13,584</u>	<u>37,992</u>	<u>14,347</u>	<u>7,972</u>	<u>22,319</u>
TOTAL FUNDS				<u>37,992</u>			<u>22,319</u>
				-			-

The annual report and financial statements were approved by the trustees at their meeting on 6th October 2022 and signed on their behalf by:



Samantha Rennie

Chair of the Board of Trustees

RAHELA TRUST  
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

## **1. Accounting Policies**

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

Income

All income is recognized in the Statement of Financial Activities once received.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognized as expenditure on a cash basis.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Fixtures, fittings & equip- 15% on reducing balance

Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Charity is a going concern and further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

## **2. General Donations**

Donations are received from various sources. These included shoe box donations, one-off community donations, donations collected at charity events and conferences and online donations. Some donations are made for specific purposes and these funds can only be used for that specific purpose so therefore these funds are restricted. Donations received from Mel B Group (£9591) and Afghan Community Monthly (£4234) could only be used for university scholarships and mentorships. Other donations amounting to £8606 are unrestricted in nature.

## **3. Gift Aid**

Gift Aid amounting to £2,173 was received from HMRC and it is unrestricted in nature.

## **4. Grants**

Grants received are restricted in nature and are spent in accordance with the donor's wishes. In the Year ended 31.3.2022, Grants were received from the following funders for the purposes stated:

Jalal Agha Foundation: £9,721 (towards the recruitment of a part-time Development Officer)

National Lottery Awards for All England: £9,721 (match-funding of Jalal Agha Foundation towards the recruitment of development Officer)

GRA Global: £8,120 (towards emergency relief of scholars and volunteers facing famine)

For the Year ended 31.03.2022, Grants were received from the following sources:

Jalal Agha Foundation	9,721
Big Lottery	9,721
GRA Global	8,120

**5. Scholarship and Emergency Fund Costs**

Rahela Trust transferred £8,475, £6,525 and £15,000 in this reporting period. These payments were made to students to fund their university fees and expenses.

**6. Volunteer Expenses**

These include the costs incurred by the volunteers for the purpose of fund raising at charity events and conferences.

**7. Management and Administration**

These costs are administrative in nature, other costs include membership fees, web hosting and sundry expenses.

**8. Tangible Assets**

These consists of two printers and a computer

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# References

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Strzyżyńska, W. and Mohammad Makoi, A. (2022), The Guardian, "'Is it a crime to study?': Outcry as Taliban bar girls from secondary schools'. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/23/girls-in-afghanistan-school-taliban>

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A very special thank you to the below.

**All our Ambassadors of Support.**

**Executive Team**

Safia Nasrat  
Ziarmal Gharghasht  
Khadija Yawari

**And all our Mentors and  
Coordinators.**

**Donors**

Amanat Foundation  
Charity Aid Foundation  
Fard & Lida Rahimi  
Jalal Agha Foundation  
John Bailey & Safar Sarmast  
National Lottery Fund

**And all our Diaspora and British  
community donors.**

**We thank you for  
your continued  
support in our  
efforts to improve  
women's rights and  
access to tertiary  
education in  
Afghanistan.**

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## Contact

**Rahela Trust**

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[info@rahelatrust.org](mailto:info@rahelatrust.org)

