

Rahela Trust

Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements

April 2022 - March 2023



For Afghan Women's
Education

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Our Vision, Mission & Values

Vision and Mission

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.

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.

Key Messages

Message from Samantha Rennie, Chairperson of Rahela Trust



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the Taliban still allow nursing students to attend college. This may yet change, but again, we will adapt.


Samantha Rennie, Chairperson

Just as Afghan women warned us, the Taliban has reneged on earlier public promises and reverted to increasingly arcane and misogynistic measures, while the world seems intransigent to a rogue 'state' committing atrocities against its own people. Yet some brave women and men are standing up to this, at great personal risk to themselves, and I feel privileged to be able to support their work.

Among them is the trust's founder, Rahela Sidiqi, whose extraordinary passion and tenacity, expertise and networks are deployed in relentless pursuit of our mission. Thankfully, she is supported by the wonderful Mollie Tant, who has taken on much of the Trust's day-to-day management and fundraising. I'm very grateful to them both, as well as all the volunteers who have contributed to the work reported here.

This includes my fellow trustees, whose wisdom has provided constructive challenge and stable stewardship throughout the year. I look forward to addressing the imbalance of Afghan female representation on the board in the coming year.

As we restart scholar recruitment in 2023-24, we'll be focussing on the only subject that can get women in Afghanistan out of the house and offer some sense of a future: the Taliban still allow nursing students to attend college. This may yet change, but again, we will adapt.



Rahela Trust is now one of the very few NGOs - let alone women's organisations - still operational at the grassroots in Afghanistan. We work under the radar, delivering results through trusting relationships, community connections and agility. None of which larger mainstream NGOs could hope to possess.

I want to thank Annie Lennox and The Circle, the Refugee Council, Omid International, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), and the Universities of Cambridge and Sheffield for their support during the year, along with individual Afghans and British allies. Putting the safety of Afghan scholars, volunteers, partners and donors above all other considerations has taken a toll on our income this year, though. This limits our ability to promote the trust's name and associations, or to demonstrate impact through personal stories. We aim to adjust future fundraising accordingly through more events and informal networking.

In the meantime, please take the time not just to read this report, but to act on it. The achievements documented here belie the challenges faced by Rahela and others in delivering them. Afghan women need your support more than ever right now and you can be assured that your money goes directly to building a future for them - and for their country when the time comes.

Message from Founding Director, Rahela Sidiqi



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I am pleased to see that we are observing our scholars become true leaders...I hope increasingly to see the community and local leaders recognise our scholars' commitment to giving back to their society.

Rahela Sidiqi, Founding Director

The situation in Afghanistan remains critical. The situation for women worsens day by day with the imposition of increasingly repressive decrees. But our work continues.

Using a practical and flexible approach, we enable our scholars to continue their studies and work. We maintain our resilience and do not give up, else we risk losing a generation of talented young women who are the true future leaders of Afghanistan. Isn't it true that an education is a basic right of women, a key part of the SDGs? The high mark achievements and commitments of our scholars, even after the Taliban's regime was reinstated, did not stop. They've continued to support their communities.

Scholars have rather changed their approach, focusing on home and community-based education to girls and children in their communities. Our nursing scholars are able to attend in person, while other scholars are studying online. A mix of our online and graduated scholars are participating in English language and soft skills courses with the goal of later finding remote work. However, essential resources like computers and internet access are urgently needed. I am pleased to see that we are observing our scholars become true leaders. We need the next generation to become the agents of change. I hope to increasingly see the community and local leaders recognise our scholars' commitment to giving back to their society.

I am grateful to our hard working team in Afghanistan and in the UK, particularly for our young champion Mollie Tant and her effective support. Likewise, the support of our great chair, Samantha Reine and all our Trustees. My heartfelt thanks to each and every organisational levels and individual donors who had vital contribution to the success of Rahela Trust for achieving its mission and Goal in this challenging time

Legal & Administrative Details

Trustees

Samantha Rennie (Chairperson)
Sear Sadat (Treasurer)
Mel Bradley MBE
Marika Theros
Kamini Paul
Liz Mermin
Mel Whitney-Long

Founder & Director

Rahela Sidiqi

Development Officer

Mollie Tant

Further Details

Charity Number

1165763

Registered Address

6, Station Parade, Northolt Rd, South Harrow, Harrow HA2 8HB

Bankers

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

Independent Examiner

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

Structure, Governance & Core Values

Rahela Trust is pleased to present its annual report and unaudited financial statements for the charity in the year 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023.

Reference and administrative details are set out on page 5 of this report. The report complies with current statutory requirements, the charity's governing document and the Statement of Recommended Practice of 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. Rahela Trust is governed by its constitution, last amended on 3rd April 2021.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the governance of Rahela Trust and they perform their duties with close adherence to the Charity Commission for England and Wales. The Board seeks to appoint members who have a wide range of appropriate skills and knowledge of the issues and the sector that will allow them to govern and grow the charity successfully. Our trustees bring a range of skills to support Rahela Trust's mission through Afghan field experience, peace building, media, academia, charity governance, charity law, fundraising 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 risk, and review financial and operational activities. Trustees consider urgent issues by WhatsApp and email as they arise, with extraordinary trustee meetings convened as required. The Trustees have conducted a skills review to identify potential gaps in the Board that can then be suitably recruited for. The appointed individuals must 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 staff in Afghanistan, employed through our partners, including two Kabul-based coordinators and one finance officer, one mentor and one coordinator in Helmand and one coordinator and mentor in Kandahar.

Day-to-day activities are delegated to the Director. The Director is supported by the Development Officer and an Advisory Committee.

Strategy, Goals and Objectives

In 2016, Rahela Sidiqi, renowned women's rights activist and Afghan refugee, set up Rahela Trust (formerly Farkhunda Trust) in response to brutal attacks on educated women in her home country. The original mission, vision and values of Rahela Trust remain unchanged since then, as does our charitable purpose:

"To advance the education of women in Afghanistan by providing financial and such other support as the trustees from time to time see fit."

In 2021, trustees developed a three-year strategy with four goals. Following annual reviews and in the light of the Taliban takeover, Goal 3 was changed from 'lesson sharing' to 'international advocacy'. In 2022-23, new scholarships were paused, but have now resumed. Goals 1, 2 and 4 were reaffirmed during the year.



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



2. Increasing the engagement of diaspora communities and British allies in national development.



3. Influence the international community to support the education of women and girls in Afghanistan



4. Strengthening and growing Rahela Trust to increase our impact.

Trustees also confirm that they have taken the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance into account when making any decisions relevant to it.

Our Work This Year



1. Scholarships & Mentoring

Scholarships

Between April 2022 and March 2023, Rahela Trust achieved the following:

- Total number of Rahela Trust scholars recruited since 2016 rose to 40.
- Five scholars graduated in 2022, each with overall scores between 70-99%.
- Four scholars were recruited in 2022 and successfully began their courses in March 2023.
- Five scholars successfully transferred from their original degree to nursing, starting their courses in March 2023.
- One new Afghan university partnership was established, adding nursing as a new course choice.

In the year 2022-2023 we were pleased to see five of our scholars graduate from university, each with average scores between 70-99%. Given the political situation and threat of violence the scholars face every day, this is a huge triumph. One of our partner universities, who we've worked with for five years, was forced to close their doors due to security risks. We were therefore required to find an alternative partner university, to ensure our scholars were able to continue studying.

When it became clear that the Taliban would allow women pursuing nursing courses to attend university in person, our team engaged our extensive in-country network to seize this opportunity (this exceptional circumstance may be attributed to the alignment of the nursing curriculum with midwifery, as per Sharia Law's mandate for female medical personnel to attend to women's medical needs). We began seeking a university partner that could offer nursing courses to our students while meeting our stringent due diligence standards.

In January 2023 Rahela Trust identified a university that matched our requirements and formalised a partnership agreement with them. This significant milestone allowed us to welcome four new scholars into our programme in 2022, all of whom commenced nursing degrees in March 2023. They are each committed to building a positive future for themselves and their communities.

The successful recruitment and enrolment of new scholars in the nursing program marks a significant achievement for Rahela Trust. Despite severe restrictions on internal movement, our in-country staff went to great lengths to visit the applicants' homes and meet their families. This is to ensure that adequate support from their communities for their educational pursuits exists.

During the same period, five of our current scholars decided to transfer from their original fields of study in medicine or law to pursue nursing. Their choice was primarily driven by a need to maintain a life outside the confines of their homes, something the Taliban is making extremely difficult.

When the Taliban Ministry for Education banned girls beyond grade six (age 12) from attending school or university on 22nd December 2022, we held an extraordinary trustee meeting to review risks and operations and agreed to strengthen our safeguarding measures. We decided to continue supporting existing scholars as universities scrambled to move back online (as they had done under Covid). Additional measures included:

1. Updating our risk register and reviewing it, and new risks, at each trustee meeting.

We issued scholars with advice, supported by feedback received from women who had lived under the Taliban before. We have been using aliases to avoid including identifiable information in our administration documents.

2. We provide each scholar with a mobile phone and laptop.

This is so they can contact the University Coordinator and Director 24/7 through online messaging platforms.

3. We provide each scholar with the cost of transport, lunch and stationary every month.

Afghanistan is facing an acute economic crisis and we recognise our scholars can't study if we can't meet their basic needs.

4. We provide small amounts to each scholar to develop and deliver community projects.

5. We developed and adopted a new safeguarding policy.

We also ensured that universities are familiar with our safeguarding policies and confirmed that they understand their roles and responsibilities, e.g., informing us if there are any problems faced by scholars, such as if any scholar's attendance falls below 85% or if their personal/educational circumstances change.

We ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to staff and the communities we work with.

The situation in Afghanistan is highly unpredictable, and no measures can completely guarantee safety. We therefore view risk assessment as an ongoing process. If necessary we will seek advice from relevant NGOs and provide written international guidelines, translated as appropriate. Our goal is to ensure that the women taking part in our programme feel as safe and secure as possible while continuing to receive a quality education.

The Future of Scholarships

Following an options appraisal and strategic review in July 2022, and ongoing risk assessments throughout the year, scholarships will continue to be a priority for Rahela Trust for the foreseeable future. Despite the challenges, women are still managing to receive a university education in Afghanistan, and as long as this is the case, we continue to believe our mission is viable. In 2023 - 2024 we aim to increase the number of scholarships we offer, focusing particularly on nursing.

Mentoring

As part of our aim to create confident, educated, female leaders who can help make Afghanistan a more progressive, inclusive, and equitable society, we provide leadership mentoring to our scholars. The mentoring approach applies to all in-country stakeholders, including coordinators, mentors, and university personnel.

Our Founder and Director Rahela Siddiqi oversees the mentoring programme. Traditionally, sessions are delivered by Rahela, our in-country national coordinators, and university mentors quarterly, monthly and weekly, respectively.

This year, however, we adapted to the worsening situation by making mentoring far more fluid and accessible on a needs basis. Rahela has therefore been on hand to support scholars whenever requested. Each scholar has received between 7-19 contact hours each per month on an individual or group mentoring basis. We've also been encouraging an increase in co-mentoring between scholars, providing mutual support at a time when fear, anxiety and hopelessness run high.

Graduates

Given the current circumstances, RT graduates continue to receive mentoring on a needs basis. All 20 graduates are members of an online chatroom and can contact Rahela and the in-country coordinators as and when they need to. Between April 2022 and March 2023, Rahela was contacted over 60 times by graduates for mentoring and moral support.

One of our graduated scholars who is based in Afghanistan has begun to host trauma-release counselling for female university students and other women in her community. She reaches an average of 45 women per month. She says she was inspired by the Rahela Trust's mentoring model in this much-needed work.

In addition, we provided additional practical support to scholars through new partnerships we developed with experts and institutions outside of Afghanistan such as a ten-month Computer Engineering course by USC Viterbi School of Engineering to some of our Computer Science graduates, and an English Language course by an Afghan Danish mentor.

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It was not only Rahela Trust's financial support...I learned how to extend my network at the national and international level and I now have digital work income as a physician from Australia.

RT Graduated Scholar

RT was a school of learning commitment for me. I love my community work and supporting other women, I will continue, but I was also working with ICRC until women's work with the aid community was stopped.

RT Graduated Scholar

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Partner Universities

This year has posed many challenges to our partners. One of our university partners was forced to close its doors due to security threats in December 2022, and so it has been a key priority to work closely with the University Chancellor of each university to ensure the correct measures are in place to protect students, especially women.

Rahela Trust has offered ad-hoc meetings with universities to advise on security, protocol, and gender sensitivity, providing over 12 hours of consultation time over the year.

Our mission includes capacity building to strengthen partner universities' gender sensitivity. We were delighted to hear from several at our Annual Conference in October, particularly with how committed they remain to the education of women, and their flexible approach to supporting this.

Community-Based Initiatives

To put their learning into practice, scholars are supported to deliver community-based initiatives. This increases the impact of scholarships exponentially, as their knowledge and skills are passed on to other women and girls in the community. It also helps scholars to build their practical and reporting skills, and their confidence.

During the period October 2022 – March 2023, nine out of 20 scholars continued delivering community initiatives. Among the 11 not continuing, three scholars were in hiding or had left Afghanistan for countries like Pakistan or Turkey. An additional four were new to the scholarship program, set to start in May 2023. Security concerns and fear stopped the remainder from taking part. We empower scholars to assess safety based on our guidance, their lived experience, and on-the-ground knowledge, before engaging in any activities.

Within the group of nine scholars who continued with community initiatives, 14 different types were recorded, reaching a total of 370 women and children across four different areas of Afghanistan. These are broken down as follows:

Activity	Count	People Reached
Literary / Grammar	5	61
English Language Lessons	6	67
Maths Lessons	6	43
Dari Lessons	1	5
Computing Classes	1	4
Islamic Studies	1	10
Biology Classes	1	N/A
Self-learning Skills	1	5
Embroidery / Handicraft	2	2
Book Club	1	2
Awareness Raising Sessions	4	66
Hospital Volunteering	2	45
Midwifery Classes	2	60
Motivational Seminar	1	N/A
Total	34	370

Next Steps

After a pause in new scholarships in 2022-23, we aim to grow the number of Rahela Trust scholars, and grow and develop our mentoring programme.

While our partner universities have gone to extraordinary lengths to provide remote study for existing scholars, by 2023 the only in-person study option for women in Afghanistan became nursing and midwifery. This is attractive because it's the only way women can escape the confines of their homes and meet peers in a learning environment. And it's the only profession that the Taliban will currently allow women to pursue - providing a glimmer of hope that was extinguished in law, journalism, IT and other student areas. Several existing scholars in these subjects have now transferred to nursing for these reasons.

In 2023-24, Rahela Trust will therefore re-start active recruitment of new scholars, focusing exclusively on nursing and midwifery courses.

In the coming year, we will also use the support provided by The Circle NGO to bolster the mentoring we provide to scholars. Through a partnership with The Circle NGO, March 2023 saw the beginning of the Diaspora Changemakers Network. The network aims to increase the level of support we can provide to women in Afghanistan whilst building a deeper sense of solidarity between Afghans based in the UK and Afghanistan.

In addition, through partnerships with trauma relief experts and mentor recruitment within the Afghan diaspora, we intend to increase the level, type and effectiveness of mentoring support available to our scholars and graduates. We will be developing a Mentoring Handbook to formalise and record our approach to mentoring.

Graduates

Before the Taliban, Rahela Trust graduates went on to set up their own restaurant businesses, build careers as journalists, and go into medical fields, the civil service or NGOs. Rahela Trust would provide mentoring and network support as requested by the graduate. Given that women are no longer allowed to work, we have dedicated more of our resources to finding Rahela Trust graduates home-based knowledge-building opportunities.

Through our growing partnership with the University of Cambridge (see page 16), we have been working towards the launch of a joint, in-country English Teacher Development Programme for 18 students, with the support of Voice of America. This is set to launch in the next reporting year April 2023 - March 2024. It aims to equip women with the skills to expand community-based learning through remote lessons and solar-powered tablets which hold a digital library full of helpful resources.



Amina meets Rahela in person for the first time.

Separately, working with The University of Sheffield, we are offering a mix of 15 Rahela Trust students and graduates a six-week remote English language course launching in June 2023. This scheme will act as a pilot to establish the scope for scalability beyond Rahela Trust students.

English language skills are hugely important for the future of women in Afghanistan, especially if they wish to build solidarity and professional networks, or study and work internationally, or with international organisations.

In 2023-2024 we expect to support 10 Afghan women through our partnership initiatives with the University of Cambridge and the University of Sheffield's English Language Teaching Centre. We estimate that each woman will further impact ten people within their wider communities through outreach programmes.

Our graduated scholar - now journalist - Amina Omid (pictured above) has been safely evacuated from Afghanistan to Kosovo, as part of a temporary journalistic program hosted by the Government of Kosovo and the Association of Journalists of Kosovo. Rahela Trust helped negotiate and administer Amina's move.



2. Engaging the Diaspora

Founded by an Afghan activist, working with other Afghan women and men, Rahela Trust is embedded in the Afghan diaspora. The diaspora has a unique understanding of Afghan culture and insight into the challenges young women in Afghanistan continue to face. While trustees were then formally recruited for the additional skills and networks they brought, Rahela Trust remains embedded in the Afghan community in the UK.

Continuing to engage the wider Afghan community is central to strengthening the impact of our work and furthering our mission. We achieve this through events like conferences, lectures, networking and cultural celebrations. These serve as an opportunity for ideas on furthering the education of women in Afghanistan to be presented and discussed, for thoughts and opinions to be shared, and for solidarity and sisterhood to be expressed in an Afghan-centric environment.

Beyond this, we aim to help connect members of the diaspora with each other to foster a greater sense of network and belonging, as well as promote greater intercultural understanding and collaboration with UK allies.

Annual Conference

In October 2022, we partnered with the University of Cambridge to host our first Annual Afghan Diaspora Academic Conference since the Covid pandemic. Supported by funding from the Refugee Council, Omid International, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), and the University of Cambridge, we brought together Afghan refugees, donors (50% Afghan), Trustees, the wider diaspora community, and



Group photo, Annual Conference, 17th October 2022.

allies to consider challenges, opportunities and new solutions to delivering our mission. Forty five people attended in person and 30 participated over Zoom.

Some of the topics discussed and explored at the conference include:

- The need to provide women and girls' access to media and the internet, as well as finan-

-cial support for women's civil society initiatives that promote equality;

- The importance of psychological and trauma support;
- How to offer remote, internationally-run English language courses to women;
- The need to create a centralised database for Afghan-focused organisations across the UK and beyond to make it easy for refugees and asylum seekers to find services catering to their needs.



Group photo, Annual Conference, 17th October 2022.

Actions taken following learnings from the conference included:

- To support community-based education we built towards the launch of a joint, in-country English teacher development programme for 18 RT scholars in collaboration with the University of Cambridge and Voice of America.
- RT has made it a priority to provide financial support and internet data allowances where possible, particularly when building out projects with partners.
- Due to research highlighted at the conference and by our scholars, we are looking to expand the psychological and trauma support RT provides.
- Building on discussions around international remote learning opportunities, RT is set to embark on a programme in collaboration with the University of Sheffield to improve English Language skills.

By integrating these findings into our work, Rahela Trust is striving to create comprehensive and impactful programs that address the specific needs and aspirations of Afghan women today. We remain committed to listening, learning, and adapting our approach to ensure that our initiatives are effective, sustainable, and aligned with the priorities identified through our collaborative discussions.

Feedback received was overwhelmingly positive. However, we did learn some lessons for next time including more time allocated to networking, so fewer presentations.

AGM & Annual Lecture

On Monday 27th February 2023, we hosted our AGM and Annual Lecture at the House of Lords. Talks centred around how women can access education and work in Afghanistan today. The event was chaired by Baroness Fiona Hodgson of Abinger, CBE, and we had five expert speakers including Dr. Davood Moradian (Director of the

Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies, AISS), Forozan Rasooli (Afghan Women's Rights Activist), Hameed Hakimi (Associate Fellow at Chatham House and Senior Fellow at Atlantic Council), Wahidullah Azizi (Anti-corruption & Social Activist), and Dr. Marika Theros (Policy Fellow and Peacerep's Afghanistan Research Director, LSE - also a trustee at Rahela Trust).



Annual Lecture at House of Lords in February 2023.

In total there were 60 people in attendance, 24 in person and 46 online. Some key takeaways included:

- Advocacy is one of the most important tools we have to lift the ban on education for women and girls.
 - The international community needs to do more to fund organisations that provide scholarships to Afghan girls.
- This is a great way to help those who have already finished or those concluding 12th grade.
 - Scholarships should drop some criteria or innovate ways to support Afghan women. This could be dropping the English proficiency test required by most schools for Bachelors and Masters degrees or arranging pre-semester language courses to help them get up to speed.
 - The IT sector has great scope to provide Afghan women gainful employment due to the demand for IT skills in labour markets worldwide.

Nowruz, Afghan New Year

On the 20th March, we hosted an Afghan New Year's Celebration, Nowruz. The celebration took place in Solihull, featuring Afghan food and music from the famous Afghan musician Hashmat Ehsmand, and a set from DJ Rasheell. We engaged new and old Afghan refugees and encouraged integration and a celebration of Afghan culture. 50 people attended.

This event also raised £1,586 through ticket sales. The CEO and Founder of The Larkbury Group, Mr Khusal Ahmed generously donated the cost of 20 tickets, while Mr Rafi Hamdam donated six laptops for our scholars in Afghanistan.



Nowruz event in March 2023.

International Women's Day

To celebrate International Women's Day and bring attention to the continued violations of women's rights in Afghanistan, diaspora-led magazine ARIANA and the co-working and cultural events space Second Home came together to host an event in support of Rahela Trust. The event opened with a speech from the host for the evening, Founder of Ariana Magazine, Ariana Abawe and a few words from Second Home's Cultural Curator, Magdalena Moursy.

The first presentation was from Afghan poet, Hadisa Hussain Afzaly who read inspiring work in Farsi and then English. We then heard from our Founder and Director, Rahela Sidiqi, who gave an update on the current situation in Afghanistan and the women we work with. Audiences were then lucky to witness a panel of incredible speakers, including a member of Afghanistan's first women's football team, Sabriah Nawrozi Mohseni who dreams of becoming a member of Manchester City's Women's Football team; Former Afghan Judge Marzia Babakarkhail; and Blind Afghan disability rights activist and co-founder of Rahyab Organisation, Benafsha Yaqoobi and her husband, Mahdi Salami.

The night closed with a traditional rubab performance and fashion show, featuring clothes from MAC Store London and food from Watani Box and Kulcha Kafe.



International Women's Day event in March 2023.

Communications

Our first e-newsletter was distributed in July 2022. These newsletters are designed to give our supporters regular updates relating to our UK-based and in-country-based activities. This includes news about scholarships, mentoring, projects with partners, and events. We also use the newsletter as an opportunity to shine a light on the personal stories of Rahela Trust scholars, volunteers and supporters, without whom Rahela Trust would not function. Since July 2022, we have increased our subscribers by 10%. This year we aimed to increase engagement on social media. Overall, we achieved the following:

- Twitter - 10% increase;
- Instagram - 27.2% increase;
- Facebook - 3% increase.
- LinkedIn - 53% increase.

We have also redeveloped our website, to improve usability and accessibility.

Next Steps

Over the next year, we aim to expand our reach beyond London and into cities like Birmingham, Leeds, Coventry, Nottingham and Sheffield, collaborating with Afghan-focused community organisations in each location. We will review and consolidate our communications and outreach to ensure diaspora engagement is grown proactively and sustainably. A key feature of our work this year has been creating new partnerships with Universities such as Cambridge and Sheffield. We have also brought new funders and donors on board who seek to be more engaged with our work. In the coming year, we will look to maximise these new opportunities and ensure we can develop and grow these partnerships in ways that are also sustainable for our small organisation. Trustees are keen to increase Afghan representation on the board and this will too be a focus.



3. Influence and Advocacy

As the Taliban makes education, and life, increasingly difficult for Afghan women, Rahela Trust is one of very few NGOs still operational and active at the grassroots in Afghanistan - especially outside of Kabul. We are therefore increasingly sharing lessons and case studies from our work to seek wider support for the cause of educating Afghan girls and women.

Our Director, Rahela Sidiqi, is also in greater demand as a speaker and panellist at national and international events. She shares examples of how the Taliban impacts women, lessons from the work of Rahela Trust about how this can be addressed, and increasingly uses these opportunities to call for more proactive bilateral and multinational support for the education of Afghan women.

Some events she has been involved with in 2022-23 include:

- March for Freedom for Afghan Women and Girls in London.
- Guest at the Global Convening on Women's Leadership for Sustainable Peace with UN Women in Geneva.
- Speaker at the Women on the Front Lines, Mena Chapter, Jordan.
- Speaker at the Afghan Leader's Forum in Brussels.
- Panellist at the Danish Refugee Council Afghan Diaspora Conference.
- Organiser and Key speaker at the Afghan Women Coalition for Change (AWCC) Conference
- Panellist at EU Parliament's Public Sessions of Equality Committee
- Speaker at McGill University, Canada: Women & Girls Speak Out: Prioritising Education in Humanitarian Aid in Afghanistan



Rahela at the Afghan Women Coalition for Change (AWCC).



Rahela in Geneva with UN Women.



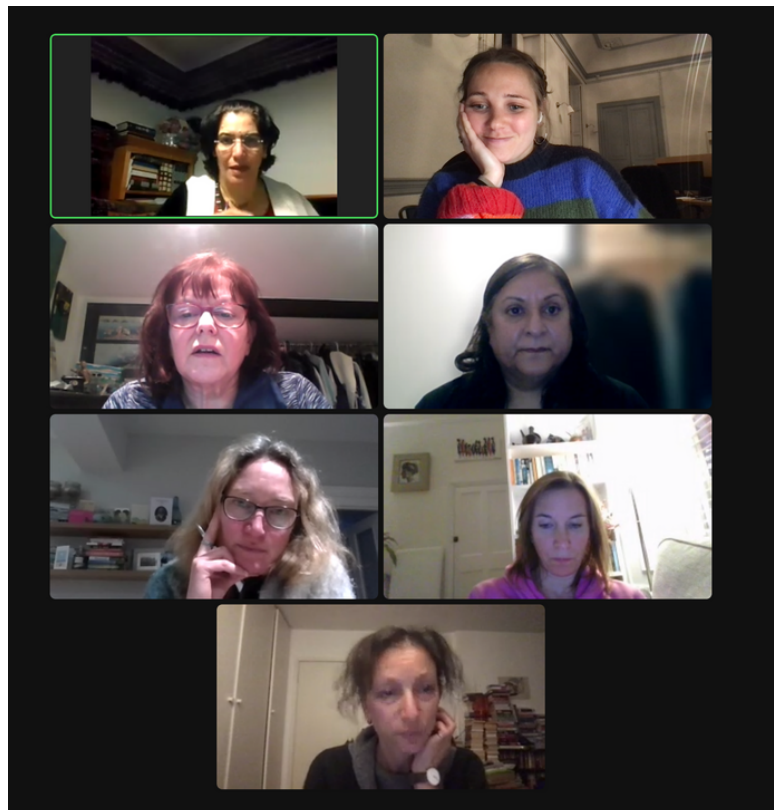
4. Strengthening the Organisation

Trustees adopted new policies for GDPR and Equity & Diversity as well as updating our Safeguarding policy and our financial policies and procedures.

With the appointment of Mel Bradley as a Trustee last year, trustees now receive and scrutinise regular financial reports at each meeting. Building on the positive feedback from the charity commission received the previous year, we carried out due diligence and appointed a new money transfer service to enable funds to be transferred securely into Afghanistan.

Our Development Officer Mollie Tant has been key to enabling us to strengthen the charity. She achieved great results in her first year, including the introduction of Office 365 which has improved the storing and sharing of data and reports, along with the charity's overall management and organisation.

Our valued team of volunteers have supported us to organise and host events, update and design marketing materials, and carry out fundraising campaigns and vital banking responsibilities. Our AV and Communications Volunteer, Ziarmal, was instrumental in delivering the Annual Lecture and Nowruz event, while our Banking Volunteer has helped us keep on top of our accounts.



Trustee meeting in March 2023

Next Year

We plan to increase the number of volunteers we work with so we can expand our UK-based activities, such as hosting events. We plan to review our Social Media policy and update our Safeguarding, and Financial Procedures policies. We will also host our annual Strategy Review in Autumn 2023.

Fundraising

Funds received in previous years towards multi-year scholarships appear in this year's accounts as reserves, although they were paid out just after the year-end. Institutional grants were received this year from British Refugee Council towards our October 2022 Annual conference.

Community donations from the diaspora totalled £6,147 including funds raised at our Nowruz community event and through the LaunchGood Ramazan campaign. We also raised £8,436 from our British community who are mainly donating via monthly direct debits. Donations from individual Afghans continue to form the backbone of Rahela Trust's scholarships. British allies also contributed to general donations - notably through our very successful 'scholar giving circle' and we received several major gifts from kind and generous friends of Rahela Trust.

We are enormously grateful to all our institutional funders and individual donors. We have submitted several fundraising applications for support with our work in the UK and in Afghanistan, covering all four strategic goals, which we hope to hear the positive outcome of in the new year.

Next Year

In the coming year, we will continue to identify and approach trusts and foundations with potential interest in our work, especially our advocacy and other work to engage new Afghan arrivals to the UK and community building within the diaspora.

We are also looking at how we can reach more individual donors from the diaspora and allies, with a more streamlined approach to engaging supporters in support of scholars and graduates. We are looking forward to taking part in The Big Give's Women and Girls Match Fund in October 2023, and to applying its lessons to a new longer term fundraising plan.

Key Risks

The situation in Afghanistan is volatile, fraught with risk. Trustees have confirmed their attitude to risk in supporting the continued viability of the charity's objects. The charity commission reviewed and approved trustees' approach to risk in the previous year. Risks are reviewed at each trustee meeting and as they arise. Our key priority in assessing risk is safeguarding scholars, therefore not all risks or measures are in the public domain.

Key risks and measures include:

Funds being diverted to the Taliban: Rahela Trust only partners with private (non-state) universities who can provide regular assurances that no funds support the Taliban. We have secured the services of a new money transfer provider following extensive due diligence.

Scholars no longer receiving accreditation: Trustees explored options, including foreign scholarships. With the cooperation of existing partners, we have now minimised the long term impact of the new Taliban edict forbidding women from receiving degrees or certificates.

Universities being compromised or closed: The national humanitarian crisis is impacting all Afghan universities as students fall away. One partner university closed during the year. A partnership with a new university was quickly established, with scholars being transferred to it with no break in studies.

Rahela Trust communication compromised: we have anonymised and adopted aliases for scholars and use a range of communication channels with them. Nevertheless, this creates a new challenge in profile-raising and communicating the impact of our work to donors. We are reviewing external communications and donor engagement in the coming year.

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 Tuesday 12th September 2023 and signed on their behalf by the Chair.

Signed: 
Samantha Rennie, Chair of the Rahela Trust
Date: Tuesday 12th September 2023

Financial Statements

Our expenditure on scholarships was lower in this financial year due to a delay in payment which was made in the following financial year.

The Balance Sheet shows a relatively high level of reserves. This is explained by the payment schedule to Afghan partners which means large payments from both restricted and and unrestricted funds are made just after the end of March each year.

Independent Examiner Report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Rahela Trust for the year ended 31/03/23.

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: 29/8/23

Signed: Sarah Watling
Sarah Watling

RAHELA TRUST
PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

		12 Months 31st March <u>2023</u>			12 Months 31st March <u>2022</u>		
	Notes	£ Restricted	£ Unrestricted	£ Total	£ Restricted	£ Unrestricted	£ Total
Receipts							
Community Donations:	2						
British Community Donations		8,436	-	8,436	9,591	-	9,591
Afghan Diaspora Community Donations		4,048	-	4,048	4,234	-	4,234
Restricted donations from sponsors		2,010	-	2,010	-	-	-
Unrestricted Donations		-	5,520	5,520	-	8,606	8,606
Grants:	3						
Jalal Agha Foundation		-	-	-	9,721	-	9,721
Big Lottery		-	-	-	9,721	-	9,721
GRA Global		-	-	-	8,120	-	8,120
British Refugee Council		12,134	-	12,134	-	-	-
Gift Aid:	4						
HMRC Charities		-	1,925	1,925	-	-	-
Total income		26,629	7,446	34,075	41,387	8,606	49,992
<i>Deduct:</i>							
Direct Costs:							
Scholarship Costs	5	9,870	-	9,870	21,525	-	21,525
Emergency Funding for Scholars	6		-	-	8,475	-	8,475
Total Scholarship Costs		(9,870)		(9,870)	(30,000)		(30,000)
Other Direct Costs:							
Volunteer expenses		-	2,348	2,348	-	2,813	2,813
Telephone and IT costs		-	1,938	1,938	-	1,665	1,665
Marketing costs		-	800	800	-	1,050	1,050
Annual Academic Conference		3,810	-	3,810	-	-	-
Fundraising events		747	-	747	-	-	-
Staff Costs		14,942	-	14,942	-	-	-

Printing, postage & stationery		-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Other Direct Costs		(19,500)	(5,086)	(24,585)	-	(5,528)	(5,528)
Indirect Costs:							
Management and administration	7	-	1,800	1,800	-	264	264
Legal and Professional		-	758	758	-	300	300
Bank charges		-	101	101	-	320	320
Depreciation		-	76	76	-	81	81
Total Indirect Costs		-	(2,735)	(2,735)	-	(965)	(965)
Net Profit / (Loss) for the Year				(3,115)			15,673

RAHELA TRUST
BALANCE SHEET
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	<u>Notes</u>	<u>12 Months</u> <u>31st March</u> <u>2023</u>			<u>12 Months</u> <u>31st March</u> <u>2022</u>		
		£ Restricted	£ Unrestricted	£ Total	£ Restricted	£ Unrestricted	£ Total
FIXED ASSETS							
Tangible Assets	8	-	-	334	-	-	410
CURRENT ASSETS							
Bank		21,666	12,875	34,542	24,408	13,174	37,582
Cash and cash equivalent		-	-	-	-	-	-
		21,666	12,875	34,542	24,408	13,174	37,582
TOTAL ASSETS				34,876			37,992
TOTAL NET ASSETS				34,876			37,992
FUNDS							
Restricted funds		21,666	-	21,666	24,408	-	24,408
Unrestricted funds		-	13,210	13,210	-	13,584	13,584
		21,666	13,210	34,876	24,408	13,584	37,992
TOTAL FUNDS				34,876			37,992

RAHELA TRUST
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

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 & equipr - 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 British Community Monthly Donations (£8436), Afghan Diaspora Community Donations (£4048), and Restricted Sponsor Donations (2010) could only be used for university scholarships and mentorships. Other donations amounting to £5520 are unrestricted in nature.

3. Gift Aid

Gift Aid amounting to £1,925 was received by HMRC and it is unrestricted in nature.

4. Grants

Grants are restricted in nature and are made to support the provision of university scholarships and mentorships to underprivileged young women.

For the Year ended 31.03.2023, Grants were received from the following sources:

British Refugee Council	£12,134.40
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5. Scholarship and Emergency Fund Costs

Rahela Trust transferred £9,870.36 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

Trustees would like to wish a special thank you to the below.

All our Ambassadors of Support.

UK Executive Team

Ziarmal Gharghasht
Safia Nasrat
Rahela Sidiqi
Mollie Tant
Khadija Yawari

Afghan Executive Team

**Names have been omitted for security purposes.*

And all our Mentors and Coordinators.

Donors

Amanat Foundation
Charity Aid Foundation
Jalal Agha Foundation
Refugee Council
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.**

Contact

Rahela Trust

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For Afghan Women's
Education