

IMPACT

2019 UPDATE

PROTECTING
the forests of Cameroon

MITIGATING
climate change in mountain regions

COLLABORATING
with the University of Central Asia

KEY numbers

→ **150**
SCHOLARSHIPS provided
(83 current students)

→ **53**
INSTITUTIONS attended globally

→ **42**
STUDENTS at the Master's level

→ **46**
STUDENTS in S.T.E.M. fields
(Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)

→ **25**
COUNTRIES of origin:
Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Benin, Bosnia, Cameroon, Colombia, India, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, South Africa, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uganda and Yemen

→ **23**
STUDENTS pursuing medical studies

→ **7x**
MULTIPLIER EFFECT
*for every donor dollar contributed,
thanks to the generosity of partners*

→ **7**
PHD STUDENTS, STUDYING:

*international public law; globalization and international economic law;
mobility and transport; forest sciences; educational studies; and hepatology*



from **THE CHAIR** *and* **CEO**

In 2019, the Spark of Hope Foundation celebrated its fifth anniversary. Our original goal was to support 50 female students by the end of 2019. We are very excited and humbled that thanks to the generosity of donors, partners, volunteers and many others, we've provided 150 scholarships to female students from 25 countries, studying at 53 institutions around the world, at the Bachelor's, Master's, professional and PhD levels. Many of these students come from war-torn areas, remote locations, or areas prone to natural disasters. We are also very proud of the 65 alumnae who are already beginning to make an outsized impact in their communities.

As you read from the profiles in this inaugural issue of IMPACT, many of our alumnae are tackling one of our biggest crises: climate change. In addition, many other alumnae are focused on tackling one of the key ways to combat poverty: improved education. They are using their education, leadership skills and confidence to effect change in some of the world's most vulnerable communities.

We are deeply grateful for the support of all the Board Directors who have served the Foundation so ably since its inception, and welcome new Board Directors who begin in 2020. Our challenge is to put in place longer-term funding, develop new partnerships, and increase even further the number of students we support each year to achieve our dream of creating a growing pool of bright, highly-educated women leaders, each of whom is creating change in her community and making a huge difference in the world.

We hope you enjoy this issue of IMPACT and look forward to your continued, generous support.

Doug Lawson, CPA
Chair, Board of Directors

Narmin K. Ismail, MBA
Founder and CEO

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Credits

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OUR ALUMNAE

where are they now?



Sumaira Ali, Pakistan

MEd, Aga Khan University – Institute for Educational Development
Pakistan



Being an educationist and a teacher, I love my profession. I believe that I can play a significant role in shaping the lives of students and that teachers can act as change agents in society. Pursuing my Master of Education at AKU-IED was a dream that became a reality because this scholarship enabled me to complete my studies.

The Master's program was a great opportunity for me to learn new knowledge and skills from different professionals. Whereas previously I was unable to deliver my content to students in an effective way due to lack of pedagogical knowledge, I can now convey my ideas to learners effectively. This platform also gave me an opportunity to enrich my content knowledge and gave me insight about different teaching strategies.

This scholarship provided me the ability to complete my education without me or my family being financially burdened. Having completed my degree, I'm applying my pedagogical knowledge in my field and have already received a promotion. I also conduct workshops for teachers to impart my new knowledge and help them improve their teaching.

To educate and shape the life of even a single student is a great achievement. Therefore, I will continue to play a role to facilitate students in getting educated. I now have the opportunity to impact the lives of many students over my career.

I believe that being an educationist and a teacher, I can play a significant role in shaping the lives of many students.



The scholarship from the Spark of Hope Foundation helped fund my Master of Science in Geomatics from Université Laval, which has helped expand my professional horizons.

In addition to my prior studies in architecture, this Master's degree helped strengthen my knowledge in sustainable development, especially how land surveyors can contribute to sustainable development. It has also given me the opportunity to conduct a research project in its entirety, setting the stage for my career in consulting.

Going forward, I can provide advisory and certification services related to land surveying and sustainable development. Thanks to the support from the scholarship, I am now a self-employed practitioner and a great asset for my family.

Since completing my studies, I have launched O'dev, an advisory firm focusing on sustainable development in architecture and urban planning projects in Quebec.

Arabelle Dada-Amos, Benin
MSc, Geomatics, Université Laval
Canada



I plan to work closely within the context of developing countries to help implement best practices in sustainable development.

Within the next five years, I plan to work closely within the context of developing countries to help promote and implement best practices in urban planning that coincide with sustainable development practices when creating or redesigning new neighborhoods.



May Al-Herek, Syria
BSc, Environmental Sciences, Asian University for Women, Bangladesh
MASc, Environmental Engineering, Carleton University, Canada

I have become a role model for girls interested in S.T.E.M. fields that I wish I had when I was growing up.

I discovered my passion for lab research during my undergraduate studies, where I finished the typically year-long thesis in one semester. With two peers, I was able to build on my thesis and compete as a regional finalist at the Hult Prize 2018 in Malaysia.

My parents received a lot of push back from our community when they allowed me to go abroad for my education. For them to see me now achieving my goals encourages them to advocate for women's education among their friends. I have become a role model for girls interested in S.T.E.M. fields that I wish I had when I was growing up.

As Syria is still in the early stages of recovery, my country desperately needs strong, open-minded young leaders to revive hope and mobilize the community towards a healthy post-war reality. After completing my Master in Environmental Engineering, I hope to work with organizations that provide safe drinking water to remote communities, starting with the ones in Syria and moving on to the rest of the world.



OUR ALUMNAE

where are they now?

Gulzada Ali, Pakistan

MEd, Aga Khan University – Institute for Educational Development

Pakistan



I am one of the first women from my community to receive a well-respected higher education and I have laid down a milestone for other girls and women in our society.

I had to take a loan to further my education as I wanted to undertake M.Ed. studies at Aga Khan University. The loan from the university was a lot of money particularly for my family, and it created a lot of stress and tension at home, as well as fear of how we were going to repay it. This scholarship provided hope and encouragement to my family. It also provided a sense of ease and comfort by halving the loan amount I owed. This allowed me to continue my studies by decreasing the burden on me and my family, and I am thankful and grateful that I managed to successfully complete my studies.

My education has strongly contributed to my professional development and confidence as an educator. Through the programme at AKU-IED I have learned a lot about educational theories and practices, curriculum development as well as professional assessments. Now regarded as an educated woman, I have been extended opportunities that I otherwise would not have had. For example, I received an opportunity to work in a competitive institution that is contributing to my intellectual growth as well as improving my economic status. I now feel like a valued and dignified member of my society, someone intellectually capable and financially secure and independent.

My educational development has significantly contributed towards improving the quality of life of my family. I am now a role model at home, someone who is applying the ethics of honesty, humility and generosity in their daily life as well as the pursuit of knowledge to live a balanced and sustainable life. I am most proud of having the opportunity to pursue a route of quality education to help uplift my family.

In my community in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, I am embraced as a “change agent” and role model. I am one of the first women from my community to receive a well-respected higher education and I have laid down a milestone for other girls and women in our society. I have demonstrated that the pursuit of higher education, particularly for girls and women, is possible. I’ve helped motivate the leadership in my community as well as parents to encourage their girls, even if they are poor, to strive for more and pursue education and learning opportunities. Now, more than 30 girls from my small village are studying in different universities and pursuing careers to better serve their communities. I am confident that collectively, our education will make a significant impact on generations to come.



Aaliya Dad, Pakistan

MES, Environmental Studies, York University

Canada



The scholarship from the Spark of Hope Foundation enabled me to pursue my Master's degree in Canada, during which I completed a thesis project with fieldwork in Pakistan on rural communities and climate change, with a focus on resilience building including planning, management and conservation.

My education has helped me to take advantage of an array of diverse professional and academic opportunities that would have otherwise not been possible. To date, I have worked as a research assistant for several international organizations including Focus Humanitarian Assistance and the World Wildlife Fund and even had the chance to complete an internship in Malaysia with a consultancy firm. My education has grounded me and honed my skill set in this competitive economy.

By exploring connections between agriculture and climate change, including adverse effects on land and crops, we can identify ways in which communities can improve food security and sustainability.

It has been a tremendous asset to my family that I am financially independent and have been able to return to Pakistan to work full-time in Karachi and support my family in the mountains of Northern Pakistan.

The academic work that I am invested in - climate change in Pakistan and building resilience - is very timely and relevant in the wake of global warming. Particularly for vulnerable and remote communities in the mountainous regions of Pakistan, equipping these communities with the right information and tools through surveying and workshops is contributing to safer practices and minimizing hazards in high-risk areas. I am currently working on a project with the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme to improve nutrition for women and children under five in Sindh. By exploring connections between agriculture and climate change, including adverse effects on land and crops, we can identify ways in which communities can improve food security and sustainability.

Recently, I also had an opportunity to attend the UN Summer Academy in Ghana where I was also selected to present some of my climate change research on Gilgit as part of the conference's final discussion. I would like to continue pursuing my studies in climate change, the environment and peoples' well-being. I have witnessed it firsthand: women in power, empower.

Current scholars with **BIG** ambitions

Zuhal Suhrob, Tajikistan
BA, International Development Studies, York University
Canada



"I hope to contribute to the social development of Tajikistan as well as other surrounding Central Asian countries by empowering more female youth to pursue their education. I would like to pursue a Master's in Education and Public Policy so I can help reform the education system in Tajikistan. I believe the success of every society depends on the strength of its education system."



“I want to start an organization in Tajikistan that will help women to boost their confidence and improve their potential, as well as help them find their voice in society and play an active role in the development of the country.”

Intizor Dorobshoeva, Tajikistan

MA, International Relations, University of Ankara Yildirim Beyazit
Turkey



“I want to be a role model for girls by showing them that they can excel even in male-dominated fields such as medicine and inspire them to consider a career in healthcare.”

Fatema Hassanali, Kenya

MD, University of Birmingham
UK



Dema Daoun, Syria

BA, Economics, Asian University for Women
Bangladesh

“I want to return to Syria and enact social change and work on the economic upliftment of women all across the Arab world.”



Salma Farha, Syria

BA, Bioinformatics, Asian University for Women
Bangladesh

“After my undergraduate degree, I hope to pursue a Master’s degree and conduct scientific research. I also hope to be a role model for women to pursue higher education, especially in S.T.E.M. fields.”





Letter from a scholar

Elvire Djongo, Cameroon
PhD, Forest Sciences, Université Laval
Canada



Protecting the forests of Cameroon

Dear Spark of Hope donors,

It is my honour to share with you these words of gratitude for the scholarship you awarded me.

Cameroonian by origin, I have been involved for 16 years already in protecting the environment through the promotion of reforestation. From my first year of training at the Faculty of Agronomic Sciences of the University of Dschang (Cameroon), I created the Association of Agricultural Engineering Students of Menoua subdivision. The first activity we carried out was the setting up of a nursery of *Terminalia mentali* (ornamental shrub) which we then transplanted into the various districts of the subdivision for the beautification of the city.

After obtaining my engineering degree, I was integrated into the Cameroonian civil service and assigned to the Garoua Wildlife School where I still teach today.

I was the first woman to teach in this unique institution in Francophone Africa.

After the creation of the Association of Women Agricultural Engineers (ACAFIA) in the North Cameroon region, many activities were carried out on my initiative. Our main mission is to strengthen the role of women in environmental protection. The achievement of this mission requires involvement in environmental projects through awareness raising and training in rural women's associations, schools, high schools and colleges.

In addition to the other projects currently being implemented, ACAFIA has trained women in the North Cameroon region, an ecologically fragile area, to use improved stoves (consuming very little firewood) for cooking meals. Every June 5th, competitions are held in high schools and colleges on topics related to environmental protection and the participation of young girls is always encouraged.

Such a mission is important to achieve because women play a crucial role in the management and conservation of resources. Unfortunately in African societies and precisely in North Cameroon, women are often excluded. My challenge, without offending traditions, is to

empower women in the protection of natural resources, which includes planting trees, developing income-generating activities, efficient consumption of wood energy, etc. **My dearest wish is to sensitize and train as many women as possible in North Cameroon in the creation of shea plantations and other woody species as a means of reducing poverty and contributing to fight climate change.**

Today my struggle is to combat desertification in Cameroon as a whole. Certainly there is still a long way to go, but I want to be the "Wangari Maathai" of Cameroon.

I am in the final stage of my PhD thesis in Forest Sciences at Université Laval. The financial resources available were insufficient and constituted a major handicap to the conduct of my field research. The scholarship came at the right time, because it protected me from the financial stress without which I would never have completed my thesis.

Dear Spark of Hope Foundation donors, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you and promise to maintain my environmental leadership for as long as I live.



How has this scholarship helped you further your education?

The Spark of Hope Foundation has not only helped me financially but more importantly, has helped me discover my potential. By mentoring me throughout the different stages in my career path, from helping me figure out which university to attend for my postgraduate studies to securing significant scholarships and financial assistance at Carleton University to guiding me through the visa application process, to connecting me with professionals to guide me through my career goals, the Foundation has been an integral part in every success through my academic studies and now my career.

How has your education helped you?

My education prepared me well for a smooth transition from university in Lebanon to graduate school in Canada to a consulting career by providing me with the skills necessary to succeed.

My engineering degree with a specialization in Mechanical Engineering prepared me well for work in sustainable energy. The six years I spent pursuing both my undergraduate and postgraduate studies have opened many opportunities for me to pursue a rewarding career.

What are you doing right now?

I am currently a Strategy Consultant at FTI Consulting in Toronto, in the strategy construction practice, where I provide quantum and risk analysis to assist companies deliver capital projects on budget and schedule.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

I want to become a major player in my team at a senior level, boldly setting directions for companies. Women are underrepresented in this role. I want to be more involved in organizations that support women from an earlier age in North America and in my home country of Palestine to help them set clear goals for their future. By sharing my story, I hope to inspire them and help more young women dream bigger and achieve the impossible.

Israa Issa, Lebanon

BEng, Mech. Engineering, American University of Beirut
Lebanon

MEng, Sustainable Energy & Policy, Carleton University
Canada



A passion for
sustainable
engineering



INSTITUTIONS *attended*

BANGLADESH

Asian University for Women
MAG Osmania Medical
College Sylhet

BELGIUM

University of Antwerp

CANADA

Carleton University
McGill University
Queen's University
Ryerson University
Trafalgar Castle School
Trent University
University of Alberta



**University of British
Columbia**

Hover Collective
UBC Brand & Marketing

University of Calgary
University of Ontario Institute
of Technology
University of Toronto
University of Waterloo
Université Laval
York University

FRANCE

Sorbonne University

HUNGARY

Central European University

KAZAKHSTAN

KIMEP University

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

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

LEBANON



**American University
of Beirut**

Lebanese American
University

LIBERIA

Cuttington University
Monrovia Bible College
United Methodist University

NEPAL

Nepal Engineering College

NETHERLANDS

United World College
Maastricht

NICARAGUA

Managua University Medical
College - UNAN Managua
UCAN Managua: Universidad
Cristiana Autonomade
Nicaragua

PAKISTAN

Aga Khan University -
Institute for Educational
Development



**Aga Khan University
Medical College**

Allama Iqbal Medical College
Ayub Medical College
Benazir Bhutto Medical
College
Fatima Jinnah Medical
University
Institute of Space Technology
Government College
University Lahore
Lahore University of
Management Sciences
(LUMS)
National University of Science
and Technology (NUST)
Rawalpindi Medical College

POLAND

UITM - University of
Information, Technology and
Management

SWITZERLAND



University of Bern

© Universität Bern, Kommunikation & Marketing
Photo: Nadine Steinmann

University of Geneva
University of Lausanne

TAJIKISTAN

University of Central Asia
(Khorog campus)

TURKEY

University of Ankara Yildirim
Beyazit

UK

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

USA

Mount Holyoke College
Viterbo University
Wartburg College

Nasir Pirani,
Director, Advancement and Public Affairs
University of Central Asia
Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan



New collaboration with the **University of Central Asia**

Tell us a bit about the University of Central Asia.

The mission of the University of Central Asia (UCA) is to promote the social and economic development of Central Asia, particularly its mountain communities, and enable its population to preserve its rich cultural heritage as future assets. It is a “development university” of a new type, thoroughly innovative in both its mission and programs, and benchmarked to meet international standards of excellence. Its three campuses are in the mountain communities of Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Kazakhstan, and as a result it has access to an unparalleled laboratory for testing initiatives undertaken by students, faculty, and graduates that would be the envy of most Western universities.

What’s the focus in terms of students and programmes?

UCA offers undergraduate programmes in Communication and Media (BA), Computer Science (BSc), Economics (BA), and Earth and Environmental Sciences (BSc). From 2022 it also plans to offer Business Management and Engineering Sciences. Students admitted to UCA have a demonstrated record of academic achievements. They are winners of academic competitions, presidents of student government, passionate advocates for the disadvantaged, talented artists and musicians, award-winning athletes, and enthusiastic volunteers who lend a hand in their communities. While many students joining UCA come from urban centers, 70% are from secondary cities and small villages.

How did the collaboration start and what does it entail?

The Spark of Hope Foundation has been funding female students in Central Asia for quite a while. Some students of UCA had directly applied for scholarship assistance to SoHF, and in 2019 we began discussing areas of mutual interest with the Foundation and thereafter we signed a formal agreement.

How are students selected?

The Spark of Hope Foundation scholarships are available to female students from Northern Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Kazakhstan. They are selected based on their need, their GPA and an essay that highlights what kind of impact they envision having on their communities and the world after graduating.

How will this partnership help students at UCA?

Even though tuition fees are heavily subsidized by UCA, it is still a challenge for many students. SoHF scholarships help selected students graduate debt-free and reduce their personal financial commitment. More students are applying in the hope of securing SoHF scholarships.

What are your post-graduation expectations of students?

UCA expects graduates to be job creators, rather than job seekers, and their education has a heavy emphasis on entrepreneurial skills. Students acquire a broad-based liberal arts and sciences education that builds critical thinking and analytical skills to develop life-long learners and imaginative leaders.



FROM OUR *donors*

We are delighted to support the Spark of Hope Foundation as it enables young women in different parts of the developing world to achieve their dreams and aspirations of getting an excellent university education. It is heartening to see these young women already becoming leaders in their communities and countries, and starting to help solve some of the most difficult challenges that their communities face, from the impact of climate change in mountainous areas to deforestation to a lack of medical expertise in remote communities.

Leila and Sheraz Dato

Toronto, ON

JHAC has a strong commitment to social responsibility. After examining several options, we partnered with the Spark of Hope Foundation on providing multi-year support for university education for women from the emerging world. This has enabled the Foundation to increase the number of scholarships it can provide.

We are confident that these women from areas of conflict and remote mountain regions will make a valuable contribution to the societies they're from. These communities will be the beneficiaries of the positive impact that the Foundation's alumnae are already beginning to make.

*Amin Amlani, Executive Director
Jubilee Hospitality Association Canada*

Vancouver, BC

BECOME A *benefactor*

Our goal is to assist 1,000 students over the next decade with the multi-year support they need.

1. Your helping hand supports young women from areas of conflict and remote areas to become tomorrow's leaders.
2. These bright women will break the cycle of poverty in their families and make huge changes in their communities.
3. Your donation is multiplied 8x by participating universities and other partners. This increases your impact dramatically.
4. Your donation is tax deductible, reducing your actual cost significantly.
5. You can take advantage of convenient, affordable, and tax-smart ways to make a strategic donation, including gifts of stocks and securities, annuities, and bequests.

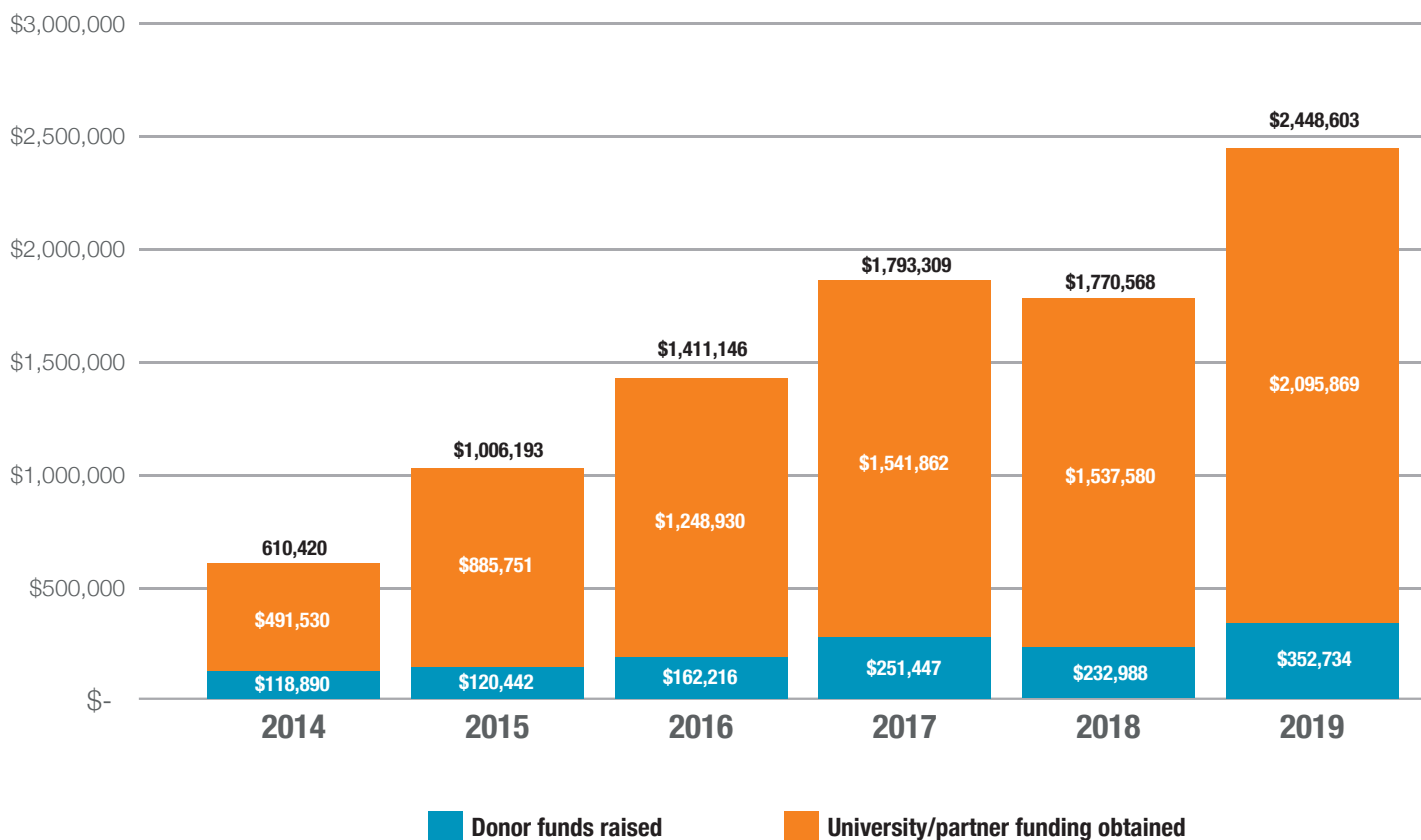
Silver Benefactor: \$250 per month or \$3,000 per year for four years provides a half scholarship.

Gold Benefactor: \$500 per month or \$6,000 per year for four years provides a full scholarship.

REVENUES *and* COSTS

Our annual revenues, raised through donor contributions, are allocated primarily to scholarships to help support our students. Our program management, evaluation, marketing, and reporting costs amounted to only 7% of funding received in 2019.

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



**PROGRAM MGMT.
AS % OF
TOTAL COSTS**

16%

12%

9%

7%

7%

7%



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA

Khorog Campus



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