

IMPACT



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CREDITS

Graphic Design

ARIF RATANSI [bseen.com]

Editor

ALIYA K. ISMAIL

With deep gratitude to all contributors and photographers

Front cover (L to R):
Jana Said, Stella Nalwoga and
Giovanna Martins Vial



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Message from The Chair & CEO



We were delighted when our work from 2020 to 2022 at the governance and operational level resulted in Imagine Canada accrediting The Spark of Hope Foundation for a five-year period through their Standards Program. SoHF is now one of only 283 nonprofit organizations in Canada that share this standard.

We are also thrilled that 26 scholars graduated in 2022, many of whom overcame huge challenges to pursue higher education while coping with the impact of the pandemic. Our congratulations to all of them.

Our admiration for our 69 current scholars remains unbounded, 18 of whom we welcomed in 2022. Further, our alumnae also make us proud, and we share some of their stories in this fourth issue of IMPACT. They are using their education, leadership skills and confidence to bring about transformation in some of the world's most vulnerable and isolated communities.

Our university partnerships continue to flourish, and we are delighted with our renewed and expanded partnership with the Aga Khan University (see interview on page 13).

We would like to thank Rubina Havlin, who so ably chaired the Board from January 2020 to September 2022, and retiring Board directors Vina Nadjibulla and Dr. Shaheen Shariff. Their contributions have been invaluable in the growth and development of the Board. We are delighted to welcome Cora Di Pietro to the Board of Directors.

We'd love to hear your feedback on this issue of IMPACT. We look forward to the continued, generous support of our partners and donors in 2023.

Doug Lawson, CPA
Interim Chair, Board of Directors

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

KEY NUMBERS

→ **219** Scholarships
(69 current students)

→ **62** Scholarships
at the Master's level

→ **56** Students in
S.T.E.M. fields
(Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)

→ **41** Students pursuing
Medical studies

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

→ **63** Institutions
attended globally

→ **31** Countries of origin:
Afghanistan, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia,
India, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyz
Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua,
Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, South Africa, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania,
Turkey, Uganda and Yemen.

→ **5X**

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

OUR ALUMNAE

Where are they now?



“ I want to build people’s capacity to conduct community-led research embedded in feminist principles. ”

Sana Iqbal | Pakistan

PhD, Ethnic, Cultural Minority, Gender and Group Studies
Coventry University
United Kingdom

I had a dream to pursue my Ph.D. and advance interdisciplinary research in the field of gender studies. I’m interested in evidence-based policy research which can improve the social and economic lives of communities through fostering equity, inclusion and diversity.

My education has helped increase my ability to work on feminist research across different disciplines and projects, which in turn has allowed me to contribute to the work influencing advocacy and policymaking for gender equity. I have proposed innovative ways of integrating socio-economic development goals in urban transport planning for reducing poverty and building inclusive cities.

I’m currently a post-doctoral research fellow at the South Asian Studies Unit, Institute of Ismaili Studies, in London. My research focuses on female-centred rituals among the mystical and esoteric traditions from South Asia. I am studying the experiences and voices

of female devotees at Sufi shrines in Pakistan, with a particular focus on using a feminist lens to understand how they assert their gendered agency through these rituals and practices. The study is based on my recent fieldwork in Punjab, where I also had an opportunity to visit local archives and libraries and benefit from primary sources in Urdu.

In ten years, I want to be recognized as a leading feminist scholar from Pakistan and I want to have published a few books. I would like to build people’s capacity to conduct community-led research embedded in feminist principles. This would mean encouraging more participatory and bottom-up research that is centred on bringing the voices of people to the forefront. I wish to continue my journey and keep working on research that can influence the lives of women around the world. I would also like to connect with other women who are working as research professionals.



“ I want to be a role model for girls by showing them that I can do it, and if I can do it then hopefully that inspires other girls to reach for their dreams. ”

Fatema Hassanali | Kenya
MChB, University of Birmingham
United Kingdom

Medicine is something I wanted to do from a young age: I envisioned being a doctor and helping people with their healthcare. I always found it to be a fascinating career, and so it was a goal towards which I worked.

This scholarship made it possible for me to come to the UK to pursue this degree. Medicine is a long degree and an expensive one: it would have been very difficult for me and my parents to afford it had we not had support from The Spark of Hope Foundation. Given that I've had this ambition of being a doctor for such a long time and worked toward it for so long, I'm grateful that I was able to receive the Spark of Hope Foundation scholarship.

To be able to learn at one of the best healthcare institutions in the UK is going to enable me to develop my own clinical practice, my own communication, and enhance my ability to be the best doctor I can be. I hope to give back to the community through my profession and

perform my role as a physician to the best of my ability.

My education gave me exposure to a whole new country, a whole new healthcare system, a whole new course, a different lifestyle in the UK, and seeing how healthcare works over here has made me aware of the challenges we face in Kenya and how different it is. In an ideal world you would want things to be like they are here in the UK, but there are resource limitations in Kenya, which means that isn't always possible. Hopefully, I can take some transferable skills and better my practice, improve myself and contribute to the betterment of society.

I want to be a role model for girls in Kenya by showing them that I can do it, and if I can do it then hopefully that inspires them to do it. I want them to realize they too can achieve something, and whatever career they choose, if they work hard, they can go forward and be the best they can.

OUR ALUMNAE

Where are they now?

“ *I envision an Africa that thinks differently of itself in terms of development, and I want to empower other like-minded young women from different communities to reach their goals.* ”

Stella Nalwoga | Uganda

MAS, International Law and Economics
World Trade Institute, University of Bern
Switzerland



My goal in pursuing my Master's degree was to become an international trade and investment policy expert. My main interest is in private sector development for sustainable business growth, especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. I want to focus on supporting governments to make policies conducive for harnessing the benefits of digital trade, especially e-commerce.

My education has helped my whole family, as I now have more options in terms of what I'm able to do in society: I'm not just confined to employment as a lawyer. I have also developed the skills necessary to help people through civil society organizations and through advocacy work, and I have a better understanding of the needs of communities.

After completing my Master's, I undertook a traineeship in Brussels for a year, which ended in September 2022. I'm now starting out as an independent consultant, and have been networking and submitting consulting proposals.

I was nominated to the advisory board of the newly-launched *Legal Issues in Technology*, the flagship journal for the International University of East Africa in Uganda. The publication aims to focus on technology law and create a body of knowledge specific to Africa.

I believe a mindset shift is necessary for the continent: I envision an Africa that thinks differently of itself in terms of development, an Africa that is able to take on the reigns of development. I hope to relate what I've learned back to the African context, and adapt it for the African environment.

In ten years, my goal is to have an established practice and be a well-recognized policy expert, focusing on Africa. I want to be a role model and I believe in giving back and empowering other like-minded young women from different communities to reach their goals.



I can confidently say “I am the proud daughter every parent wishes for.” I am Gul Suma, from the Northern Areas of Pakistan. I am currently based in Islamabad working as a Technical Sales Executive at Evamp & Saanga, a renowned software house in Islamabad providing services for the last 22 years.

I come from a lower-middle-class family and received my early education at the Diamond Jubilee School, Ahmedabad, Hunza. I was at the top of my class throughout my schooling and studied on a full scholarship from seventh grade until graduation. I graduated from the Computer Science and Information and Communication Technology program at the Asian University for Women (AUW), Chittagong, Bangladesh. I am proud to be my family's, and my community's first woman to receive a scholarship to pursue a foreign degree. My journey from Hunza, Pakistan to Chittagong, Bangladesh, changed my life and it is the journey that has made me the support and strength of my family today. I graduated from AUW in 2017 and returned to Pakistan due to financial obstacles facing my siblings in continuing their studies. I decided to stop studying and start earning to help my siblings continue their education.

“ I want to help orphans with their education so they can become independent and fulfill their dreams. ”

Gul Suma | Pakistan

BA, Computer Science and Information and Communication Technology
Asian University for Women
Bangladesh

I started my career as an assistant manager with a company working for Amazon, but my growth was limited. So, I joined a software house as a front-end developer for a year, but as my financial expenses were increasing, I started taking courses from Coursera, and other online platforms that offer part-time jobs. I worked three jobs in three different domains for three years and helped my siblings with their education at renowned universities in Pakistan. I don't know of anyone else from my village or area that has been able to help their siblings like I have. I am proud that I've enabled one sister to get her Master's in finance and accounting, another sister to pursue aerospace engineering and my brother to complete his undergraduate degree in computer science. In addition, I helped four orphaned children with their education, with the assistance of family, friends, and colleagues.

I look forward to applying for further studies in Germany or Canada. In ten years, I want to be the CEO of my own software company. My brother is a full stack developer, so I plan to establish my own software house with him in the near future.

I am thankful and blessed to have had the support of The Spark of Hope Foundation which helped me in many ways during my undergraduate degree at AUW. I hope to pay forward this support.



Current scholars with **BIG** ambitions

“ I aspire to help as many people as I can, and help them take control of their health. I want to educate people on how to lower their risk of disease through nutrition, so they can improve their quality of life and longevity. ”

Jana Said | Palestine

BS, Nutrition, Lebanese American University
Lebanon



“ Bearing witness to human suffering and inequality has evoked in me a willingness to be of service to others. I want to work on protecting refugees and others affected by humanitarian crises.”

Giovanna Martins Vial | Brazil

Master in Human Rights and Humanitarian Action, Sciences Po
France

“ I want to show the rest of the world our culture, traditions and thousands of untold stories. Being heard and seen internationally provides the opportunity to work together on environmental, economic and social issues. ”

Madina Shogunbekova | Tajikistan

BA, Communications and Media, University of Central Asia
Tajikistan



“ My dream is to become an empowering female doctor in the Arab world. I want to be able to give hope to people and one day offer free health services to those who need it the most. ”

Salwa Abouljoud | Lebanon

MD, American University of Beirut
Lebanon

“ I aspire to be a skilled and in-demand programmer. Once established in my career, my dream is to start an organization that supports youth in studying information technology. ”

Aelina Daniar kyzy | Kyrgyz Republic

BSc, Computer Science, University of Central Asia
Kyrgyz Republic



LETTER FROM A SCHOLAR

Improving the professional development of educators

Saleema Bano | Pakistan

MPhil, Aga Khan University - Institute for Educational Development
Pakistan



Dear Spark of Hope Foundation,

I was raised in a lower-class family in the northern areas of Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan. I received a Master's degree from Karakoram International University and worked as a pre-primary teacher for three years at Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan.

During my professional journey, I observed and experienced issues related to gender, low socioeconomic status, out-of-school children and educational challenges in various schools in Hunza.

I also became concerned about teachers' professional development, which is currently a major issue in Pakistan.

I realized that I could not simply watch these issues persist—I wanted to be part of the solution. This motivated me to enrol in the MPhil program at AKU-IED, so I could gain further insight into the education system and ways to improve it. My research focus is on pedagogy and the professional development of teachers in schools.

I initially had to defer my studies at AKU-IED, something I had dreamed of since my secondary education, so that I could financially support my sister who was studying. I still found it difficult to manage my finances, but I'm thankful that the Spark of Hope Foundation scholarship has helped alleviate part of the financial burden.

After the completion of my MPhil, my career priorities will be working with students from low socioeconomic areas and out-of-school children by introducing non-formal school initiatives. Moreover, I want to promote educational change in rural Pakistan by increasing awareness of professional development practices in schools to eliminate learning barriers such as rote memorization.

I want to promote a conducive learning environment in schools through teachers so that I can witness the holistic development of students.

As there are limited resources, I want to be helpful to my community as an educator as well as a researcher. I hope to be an inspiration for students and teachers and support the holistic professional development of teachers as well as students in Gilgit Baltistan.

BRIDGING THE ECONOMIC DIVIDE

Nashina Rashid | Tanzania

BComm, Accounting, Ontario Tech University
Canada



How has this scholarship helped you further your education?

The Spark of Hope Foundation scholarship allowed me to pursue a degree in accounting and finance at a top-tier institution in Canada, which I would not have been able to afford otherwise. It provided me with financial stability, allowing me to focus on my studies and engage in extracurricular activities that enriched my university experience.

How has your education helped you?

My education has equipped me with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in my career. It has also broadened my perspective and understanding of the world, which has been invaluable in both my personal and professional life.

Why did you choose to study commerce?

I have always been interested in accounting and finance. I believe that a strong foundation in commerce can lead to a variety of career opportunities and enable me to make a positive impact in my community and beyond.

What are you doing right now?

I am currently working as a staff accountant at KPMG, one of the world's leading accounting, auditing, consulting and tax firms—a dream job I had aspired to and worked hard to attain. I am also working towards achieving the designation of Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA). I am grateful for the opportunities and experiences my job and position have afforded me, and I am committed to growing and advancing within the company and in my profession.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

I hope to have furthered my career at KPMG, obtained my accounting designation, and taken on additional responsibilities. I also aspire to become a mentor and advocate for young women pursuing careers in accounting and auditing, and hope to one day have my own auditing firm.

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

I hope to use my skills and knowledge to make a positive impact in my community and country. Specifically, I am passionate about promoting financial literacy and empowering women to achieve financial independence. I believe that by working to bridge the economic divide, we can create a more equitable and just society.

INSTITUTIONS attended

BANGLADESH

Asian University for Women
MAG Osmania Medical College
Sylhet

BELGIUM

University of Antwerp

BENIN

African School of Economics

CANADA

Algoma University
Brock University
Carleton University
Dalhousie University
McGill University
Ontario Tech University
Queen's University
Toronto Metropolitan University
Trafalgar Castle School
Trent University



University of Alberta
University of British Columbia
University of Calgary
University of Toronto
University of Waterloo
Université Laval
York University

FRANCE

Sciences Po



Sorbonne University

HUNGARY

Central European University

KAZAKHSTAN

KIMEP University

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

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

LEBANON

American University
of Beirut
Lebanese American University
University of Balamand

LIBERIA

Cuttington University
Monrovia Bible College
United Methodist University

NEPAL

Nepal Engineering College

NETHERLANDS

UWC Maastricht

NICARAGUA

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

PAKISTAN

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

POLAND

UITM - University of
Information, Technology and
Management
WSB University

SWITZERLAND

University of Bern
University of Geneva
University of Lausanne/EPFL

TAJIKISTAN

University of Central Asia
(Khorog campus)

TURKEY

University of Ankara Yildirim
Beyazit

UK

Coventry University



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

USA

Mount Holyoke College
University of California
Santa Barbara



Wartburg College
Yale University

*Photo credits (clockwise from left):
Justin Soule; Martin Argyroglo/Sciences Po;
Coventry University; UC Santa Barbara.*

COLLABORATION WITH AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Farid Panjwani
Dean, Institute for Educational Development
Aga Khan University
Pakistan



Tell us a bit about Aga Khan University.

Established in 1983, Aga Khan University (AKU) was the first private university in Pakistan. With operations now in three continents and over its 40-year journey, it has empowered women, promoted diversity and strives to ensure that everyone has access to life-changing opportunities. In 1993, AKU established the Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) with the goal of teacher development. In addition to developing the capacity of over 60,000 educators, AKU-IED's most significant role has been in restoring respect to the teaching profession and to the field of education.

How did the collaboration start and what does it entail?

AKU's relationship with SoHF began in 2015, with scholarships offered to 15 women from AKU-IED's programmes and one scholarship for a student of the Medical College. It was intended as a supplement to AKU's existing scholarships to ensure full funding to students without which the students would either not be able to accept admission to AKU, drop out before completing their studies, or be forced to take on huge loan burdens. Since 2022, the scholarship agreement has evolved to include women from undergraduate, graduate or doctoral programmes within any school, college or institute at AKU.

What is the focus in terms of students and programmes?

AKU offers undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programmes in the areas of nursing and midwifery; medicine; educational development; the study of Muslim cultures; media and communications; and arts and sciences.

AKU-IED offers a Master of Education, an MPhil in Education, and a PhD in Education. Our key areas of focus include: early childhood education and development, educational leadership and management, science, mathematics, non-formal education, and most recently, environmental education.

How are students selected for the SoHF scholarship?

Scholars are selected based on their academic record, English language proficiency, leadership potential and their passion to make the world a better place.

How does this partnership help students at AKU?

At AKU-IED most students join us mid-career and have a dual responsibility of providing for their families while managing the costs of their education. Although AKU offers scholarships and financial assistance, many students still struggle financially. SoHF has made it possible for students to focus on their studies, while caring for their families—and graduate almost debt-free.

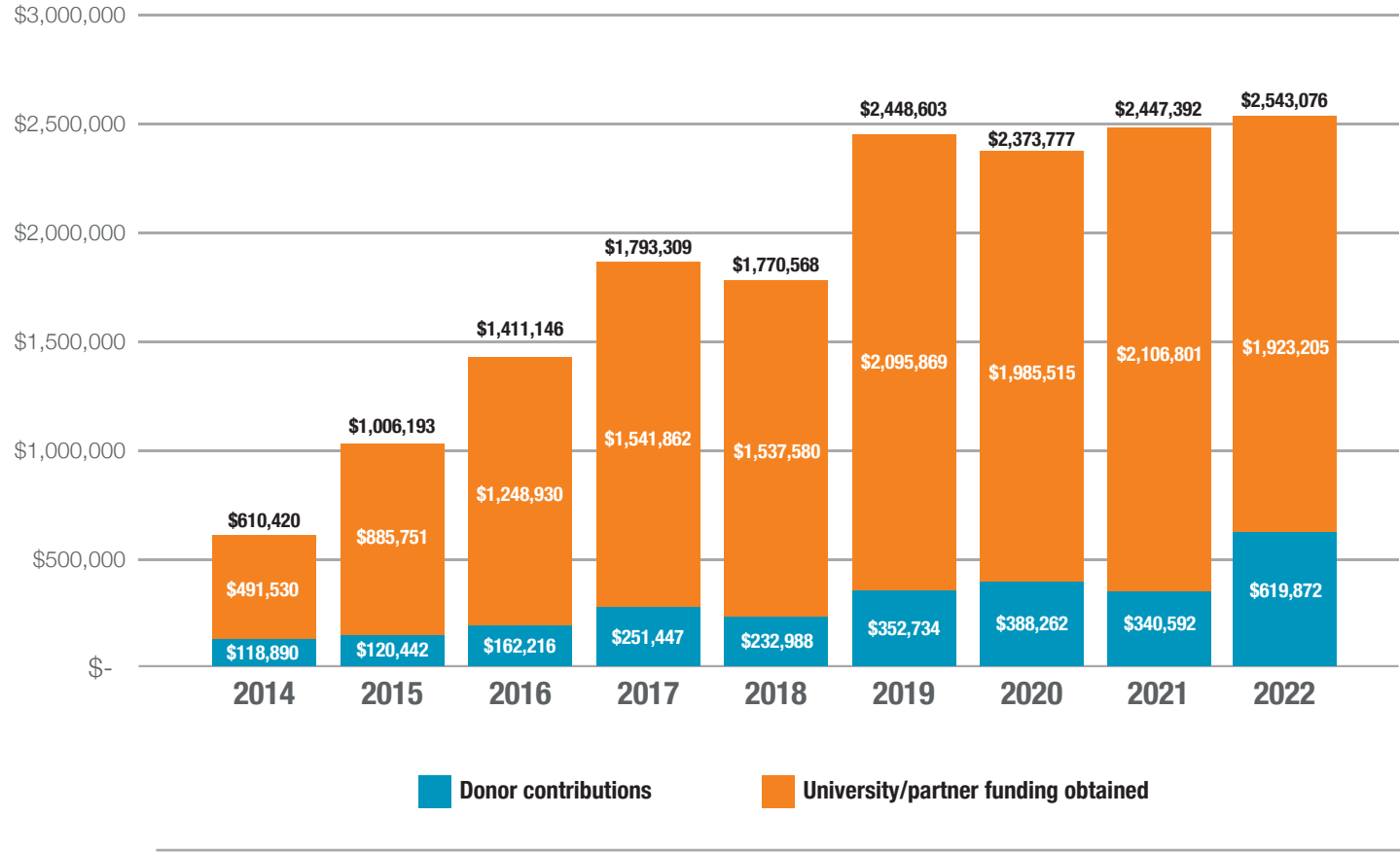
What are your post-graduation expectations of students?

We hope that the women receiving the scholarships will proudly take up their roles as change makers and leaders: equipped with the skills to improve the quality of teaching and learning, influence policy, enhance student learning outcomes, inspire positive climate action, and promote social justice and equitable access for all.

REVENUES and COSTS

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

Our program management, evaluation, marketing, and reporting costs amounted to only 8% of total funding in 2022. The Foundation's Board of Directors, partnerships and volunteers help us maintain this efficiency.



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

16% 12% 9% 8% 7% 7% 7% 7% 8%

BECOME A BENEFACTOR

EMPOWER THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN LEADERS

GOLD BENEFACTOR

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

SILVER BENEFACTOR

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

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

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

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

From our benefactors

Educating young women is one of the most effective ways to break the cycle of poverty, leading to healthier families. The Spark of Hope Foundation's mission to lift young women, their families and their communities out of the cycle of poverty is commendable and their achievements over a relatively short period of time has been remarkable. We are privileged and pleased to support the work of the Spark of Hope Foundation, and as a family look forward to continue with this support for many years to come.

Parviz and Mohamud Zaver
Calgary, AB

My support for Spark of Hope is an investment in the world's future and the belief that positive, high-impact change will come from young women leaders as role models and educated professionals.

Marion MacKenzie
Dartmouth, NS

The Foundation's passion for helping young women achieve their potential resonates deeply with us, and we are delighted to offer our support in honour of our niece, Naina Dossani, and our daughters.

Rozina and Akber Dewji
Toronto, ON

LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Byblos, Lebanon

The Spark of Hope Foundation

info@thesparkofhope.org

thesparkofhope.org

(416) 383-0400

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