



For Afghan Women's  
Education

## ACADEMIC DIASPORA CONFERENCE

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### THE DIASPORA'S ROLE IN AFGHANISTAN'S SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

*In collaboration with Afghan Professional Network, British Afghan Coordination  
Council, iNex Studios, Afghanistan Now and Afghan Voice Radio*

**Conference Coordinator - Mrs. Rahela Sidiqi**

*(BA & M.A)*

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## About The Trust

### What is The Farkhunda Trust?

The Farkhunda Trust was founded by an Afghan woman, Rahela Sidiqi. She is a social & women's rights activist with a determination to increase the contribution of women and the young in Afghanistan's developmental process. The Farkhunda Trust aims to provide scholarships and mentoring to underprivileged and intellectually exceptional female students. By facilitating their opportunity to progress in higher education. With our deep interest in helping those in Afghanistan to achieve their ambitions in social, economic and political equality of the sexes.

### What Are Core Values of The Trust?

A commitment to assisting talented but vulnerable women to achieve their full potential the efficient and effective mobilization of resources with transparent results that are based on their achievements ***"I would like Afghan girls to be educated to enable thousands of Farkhunda's to defend Afghan women's rights."*** (Farkhunda Malikzada's mother, Hajera Bibi, March 2016).

The Farkhunda Trust was constituted as a charity by trust deed in February 2016. An experienced and committed Board of Trustees, with a wide range of skills, governs it. Rahela H. Sidiqi is the Trust's Founding Director. The Board, together with the Director and an Executive Committee, make all major decisions regarding strategy, policies and finance. Meetings of the Board are convened every six months to address strategic issues and review operational activities. We hold our annual general meeting to discuss the relevant topics that affect the scholars and the challenges women face in Afghanistan on their journey to higher education. Over the past 30 months, the Farkhunda Trust has been staffed exclusively by volunteers in the areas of fundraising, finance management, communications and strategic advice, as well as coaching and mentoring of its scholars. In addition to the volunteers, two Kabul based coordinators receive salaries currently paid for by the Trust's institutional partners, Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education (GIHE) and Dunya University (DIHE). The Farkhunda Trust signed a new MOA with Benawa University in Kandahar. Five scholars have started their studies in addition to twelve scholars at GIHE and DIHE in Kabul.

## WOMEN'S HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

"The Farkhunda Trust has already proven a record of assisting and empowering women in its two and half years of operation with indication of moving to remote years to support more women. This is a tremendous achievement and one which we hope will be built upon"

- Ms Kamini Paul, Chair of the Farkhunda Trust Board.



# ACADEMIC DIASPORA CONFERENCE

## What did the conference achieve?

On Sunday the first of September 2019, we held our first Trust's conference in collaboration with Afghan Professional Network, iNex Studios, Afghan Voice Radio and British Afghan Coordination Council and Afghanistan Now. We presented our charity's values and ethos through a representative panel discussion on the progression of education for women in Afghanistan. We focused on the Afghan diaspora's role in Afghanistan's social, economic and political development process

## The conference conceptualisation –

The initial idea for the conference was set out by the trust director and a group of us whom had experiences in academia and the formalities of bringing about sustainable change with well-researched solutions. At the time with the Afghan peace talks in Doha, the Farkhunda Trust, in partnership with Afghan Professional Network, Afghan Voice Radio and the British Afghan Coordination Council, brought together experts, academics and activists to explore to role of Afghan diaspora in Afghanistan's social, economic and political development. Afghan Diaspora Conference aimed to build a stronger diaspora community, who can contribute meaningfully through research, debate and engagement on the most pressing issues facing Afghanistan today. From peacebuilding to women empowerment to education, to create a new generation of change makers. Despite decades of ongoing conflict, Afghan people have realized significant, tangible developments in their own lives and in society more broadly. Foreign aid and humanitarian assistance have contributed to these improvements, but Afghans themselves have been the agents and executors of such labour. These victories are hard-won, and the number of civilians being killed in attacks increases daily. Organised by The Farkhunda Trust, the conference explored and highlighted the role of diaspora in peacebuilding, public-engagement in peace-building civic engagement, women's empowerment and government and what the future of Afghanistan can look like. The conference brought together activists, journalists, academics to tackle some of the toughest challenges facing Afghanistan.

## WOMEN'S HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

"While women have made great strides in the country, progress remains fragile: we believe that continued transformation in Afghanistan is a question of women's leadership. Young women must be equipped with the knowledge, tools and confidence to advocate for their rights, build the institutions integral to the country's future and steer the nation's sustainable development. Yet, good leaders do not emerge spontaneously or without support. The new generation in Afghanistan is more connected, creative and courageous in their approach to solving problems, but they face many barriers. We believe that investing and supporting this generation of young women through university education, mentorship and the right kind of opportunities is fundamental to progress in the country."

- **Ms. Rahela Sidiqi,**  
**Founder & Director**



# Conference Proceedings



## Speakers and Panelist –

- **Rahela Sidiqi:** Founder and Director of Farkhunda Trust.
- **Kamini Paul:** Chairwoman of Farkhunda Trust.
- **Counsellor Mohammad Yaser Sadeq:** Embassy of Afghanistan in London Diplomat.
- **Shinkai Karkhail:** Member of Parliament in Afghanistan.
- **Professor Gloria Moss:** Academic Researcher in Management and Marketing. Honorary Member of Farkhunda Trust.
- **Dr Althea Rivas:** Academic Researcher in International Relations and Global Development. Trustee for Farkhunda Trust.
- **Sana Safi:** Senior Presenter BBC News Pashto, Journalist and Producer.
- **Professor Naysan Adelparver:** Academic Researcher and Honorary Member of Farkhunda Trust.
- **Marika Theros:** Academic Researcher at Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit.
- **Royan Khayri:** Humanitarian, Oncological Researcher and Farkhunda Trust U.K. Ambassador.
- **Liz Mermin:** Producer, Director and Journalist.
- **Mariam Safi:** Academic Researcher for Policy Research and Development Studies.
- **Dr Seley Gharanei:** Academic Researcher in Molecular Biology.
- **Sarajuddin Isar:** Academic Researcher in Political Economy.
- **Farid Rahimi:** Academic Researcher in Sustainable Development.
- **Walid Halimi:** Academic Researcher in Politics and Globalisation.
- **Fereshta Omar:** Head of Diverse Workforce – Ministry of Justice. Vice President of Afghan Professional Network.
- **Hogai Aryoubi:** Academic Researcher in Peace and Education.
- **Dr Mustafa Edries Amiryar:** Academic Researcher in Energy Engineering.
- **Kudsia Kaker:** Founder of Qatalyst Global and President of Afghan Professional Network.

## WOMEN'S HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

"The Farkhunda Trust has been something of an eye-opener or would have been had I not been in some expectation of such a heart-warming, professional, impressive occasion. It also was enjoyable and informative, and I do thank you warmly for inviting me to be part of your organisation."

- **Mr. Justin Glass,**  
Chairman of Inter-  
Cultural Society of  
London

## A FOREWORD FROM REHLA SEDIQI, DIRECTOR OF THE FARKHUNDA TRUST.

*"I urge the diaspora to pay attention to this crisis. The situation in Afghanistan is one of the world's worst man-made humanitarian crisis, with many thousands of people dead and injured and millions displaced. Women's rights are being violated, the people face psychological trauma, and beyond the immediate devastation of the conflict, women are having their futures stolen by being denied access to education due to financial circumstance. Our hope for the women of Afghanistan is that soon they will be able to live peacefully, have their rights protected and feel safe. We must not allow the devastation to continue for one more day, and we must urgently restore access to higher education for disadvantaged women in the country."*

## TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE DIASPORA PLAY A ROLE IN AFGHANISTAN'S SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?

### Preface

Afghanistan as a nation that has witnessed the brunt of destruction of modern society from the cold war to the war on terror and has too seen the greatest agony, the mass of immigration of its people in history since 1979. One of the main source countries for refugees globally, Afghanistan has stayed resilient and determined in sharing its unique culture and traditions with its widespread diaspora. The migration of the people led to the emergence of a considerable Afghan diaspora. The large-scale emigration began with nations neighboring the country taking in refugees then onto far corners of the globe including Australia, North America and the United Kingdom.

In Britain, whilst the communities of Afghans have maintained an active engagement with Afghanistan since the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001, there is a gap in their understanding and wish to explore how they can contribute with an effective role in supporting the efforts in building stability in the country once more. The aim of this conference was to bring together academic members of the Afghan diaspora, along with politicians and experts. By exploring the comprehensive approach to the dynamics of the community who have established themselves in the U.K, we were able to discuss how their potential can be best utilised. The report provides a framework for future developments on the role the diaspora plays in Afghanistan, engaging with policy makers to advance social, political and economic laws.

Entering its fortieth years of war, The Afghanistan Conflict has been a series of wars fought in Afghanistan since 1979. Starting with the Saur Revolution military coup, to an almost continuous series of armed conflicts has dominated and afflicted Afghanistan. The United Nations describes the conflicts as “People that are facing multiple crises, including armed conflict, displacement, drought, chronic underdevelopment and weak investment in basic services, all of which demand a humanitarian response.”<sup>1</sup> Alongside the tens of thousands of casualties caused by the conflict, 6.3 million of the population need humanitarian assistance, including an estimated 3.8 million children<sup>2</sup>.

Pakistan and Iran together host some 2.5 million Afghan registered refugees, with equivalent numbers of unregistered refugees also expected to be present in both host countries. In addition, it is estimated that there are some 300,000 settled in the United States, at least 150,000 in the United Arab Emirates, perhaps 125,000 in Germany, and smaller numbers in Canada, Australia and across Europe. While many of those in the UAE are temporary labour migrants, the majority elsewhere are settled permanently and often educated and skilled. It is estimated that there are about 10,000 Afghan refugees in India, mostly settled in Delhi, including many Hindus and Sikhs. The economic and political significance of the diaspora outweighs its numerical significance. It sends home remittances on a significant scale that support households and communities in Afghanistan (and in refugee camps), it invests in Afghanistan, and has contributed significantly to political processes over the past 12 years<sup>3</sup>.

## Development Process

The developmental process involved in the reconstruction of a post-conflict state includes a variety of actors, both in the homeland and abroad. The transnational linkages and diasporic connections when utilised allow for substantial influence on the peace-talk negotiations and framework for the direction of the country’s development. The growing acknowledgment that the Afghan diaspora has a role to play in Afghanistan has been explored little by those in academia. We can shed light on the case of state building process. The focus of the extant literature is on the impact of war confined to the role of the Afghan government and international players. This report attempts to expand the focus with a brief exploration of the role of the diaspora in post-conflict development process.

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<sup>1</sup> UN OCHA (2019): <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-humanitarian-response-plan-january-2018-december-2021-2019-update>

<sup>2</sup> UN OCHA (2019): <https://www.unocha.org/afghanistan>

<sup>3</sup> Tabasum Akseer (2014): <https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/afghanistan/akseer.pdf>

Afghan society has been described as a microcosm of diverse cultures and identities. The plurality is the consequence of centuries of migration of people from different culture and ethnicities travelling through this central Asian nation. To understand Afghanistan's people, we need to appreciate the complex society dynamics with ethnic tensions and thread of communications. The success of building the state with a peaceful democratic government is contingent on the capacity of the process to compromise and accommodate the divergence, that stems from the diversity. The diverse Afghan people include the: Hazera, Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Aimak, Turkmen, Baloch, Pashai, Nuristani, Brahui, Pamiri, Gujjar and Punjabi. These are all Afghans. These Afghans all have their own unique identities, but they all share their strong affirmation of loyalty to Afghanistan, including the traditions and culture.

## **Bonn Agreement 2001**

The diaspora's behaviour is the outcome of their collective motivation, encompassing their individual perspective on the idealised goals for the country's development. These perspectives are influenced by their experiences and earlier positions in the nation and their current host country. The Afghan society is reflected as not homogeneous and is often divided on ethnic, tribal and sectarian lines. One such occasion that solidified the position diaspora and contributed to the stability of the nation was the 2001 Bonn Agreement. The Agreement on the Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of a Permanent Government Institutions. The initial series of agreements passed intended to recreate the State of Afghanistan following United States invasion in response to 9/11 terrorist attack.

The complexity of the Afghan people was enigmatic during the talks in agreeing a protocol for a transitional government after the conflict in Afghanistan. There were fractions that were represented during the discussions: 1) the delegation of former King Zahir Shah exiled in Rome; 2) United Front from the Northern Alliance; 3) intellectuals exiled in Cyprus funded by Iran; and 4) Peshawar Pashtun Refugee Leaders. Since there was no nationally agreed-upon government had existed since 1979, thus it was necessary to ensure there was a transition period before the establishment of a permanent government. The Bonn Agreement provided a framework for the later constitution that was established in 2004 and the presidential and parliamentary elections that followed. It emphasized the need for strong, centralized government institutions and failed to account for the state's cultural and political history, as the country had previously relied on informal, regional power structures to deliver security and services<sup>4</sup>. The diaspora played a significant role in the formation of constitution and policy formulation, and further assumed several responsibilities, such as working for reconciliation of ethnic differences, institutional capacity building, and finally in addressing economic issues.

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<sup>4</sup> United Nation Peacemaker (2001): <https://peacemaker.un.org/afghanistan-bonnagreement2001>

## Reconciliation Process

The diaspora played the role as a mediator between the people within the homeland and the international actors. Those within the diaspora were selected according to their affirmation of loyalty and ethnic kinship to Afghanistan<sup>5</sup>. The development of human resources with skilled members of the international Afghan community was instrumental in the transferring of knowledge and technologies to the nation. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) was a key player in the mobilisation of the diaspora with supporting development and reconstruction. IOM has already had considerable success in mobilizing the Afghan diaspora to support development and reconstruction, and in the past decade about 1,000 Afghan experts have returned either temporarily or permanently to Afghanistan. There is a long-term strategic need for qualified Afghans to participate in the on-going reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in the country. This is something which IOM is doing on a programmatic basis, mainly with supporting the return of qualified Afghan nationals (RQA) currently in Iran and the Netherlands and other European countries.

By focusing on placing experienced individuals mainly in public administration sectors in Afghanistan that are still recovering from the period of conflict. While great strides have been made in the public sector since 2001, there still remain considerable capacity building needs. However, in light of the existing 'youth bulge' with young educated leaders emerging, there will be an increased need to shift the focus of RQA activities on training and building the capacity of the emerging generation of young Afghans. The programme has enhanced multifaceted models that enable diaspora members to invest their skills and resources back into their home countries. IOM together with public and private sector partners will identify and prioritize key sectors that can be considered crucial to human development particularly women and youth whom benefit from diaspora resource mobilization<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Relief (2012): [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CFC\\_Afghanistan\\_Agreements\\_June2012.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CFC_Afghanistan_Agreements_June2012.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> IOM (2014): <https://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/Country/docs/Transition-Crisis-and-Mobility-in-Afghanistan-2014.pdf>



## ***Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals – Social, Political and Economic***

The Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) programme<sup>7</sup>, which was initiated by United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), made an important contribution in this regard. TOKTEN is a special volunteer programme that appeals on expatriate nationals to volunteer in their country of origin for a short period of time. The programme was able to initiate the return of some of the diaspora to contribute to the transfer of knowledge and skills development on tenure basis with influential roles in health and education. Two examples of such prominent figures were Dr Sayed Asker Mousavi and Dr. Anwar ul-Haq Ahady who came to serve as TOKTEN volunteers. The Dr Ahady went onto become the governor of The Afghanistan Bank and then holding the position as Minister of Finance from 2004-'09. Dr Ahady played a vital role in implementing novel banking system with pioneering computerisation banking in the nation with monetary policy reforms<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, Dr Mousavi went onto becoming a key revolutionary Educational Advisor to the Ministry of Higher Education with the TOKTEN program<sup>9</sup>. Dr Mousavi achieved the establishment of the Bamiyan University and overseeing development programmes with a new Department of Computational Sciences at the University of Herat. We must note at this point the Afghanistan's leaders whom shaped the political climate, government and development of the nation with their administrations. Two key figures from the diaspora were both elected Presidents Karzai and Ghani. Their governments along with their electives were able to make strides towards the foundations of achieving sustainable peace.

Aside from politics, substantial contributions to the reconstruction of the economy have been made by key visionaries from the diaspora. The international aid market has given the greatest investments in the nation's development. Diaspora investment channels have mobilised finances into numerous business opportunities from real estate, education, health, aviation, banking and telecommunications. The contribution of the diaspora in economic and social welfare sectors have been illustrated by their dedicated participation. However, the political narrative in Afghanistan is swayed by the involvement of the diaspora with some implications.

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<sup>7</sup> Migration Policy Report (2011): <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/151138/PR01.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Dr Ahady (2019): [http://www.afghan-bios.info/index.php?option=com\\_afghanbios&id=58&task=view&total=4210&start=203&Itemid=2](http://www.afghan-bios.info/index.php?option=com_afghanbios&id=58&task=view&total=4210&start=203&Itemid=2)

<sup>9</sup> Dr Mousavi (2014): <https://www.refworld.org/docid/534bd8d1b.html>



Power structures that exist involve highly educated diaspora members that rose to new political power groups. There have suggestions that political elites within the country view the diaspora members holding important positions and occupations as a challenge to their authority. These views have added a new dimension to the existing contestation of power in the country with new powers challenging the traditional tribal leaders and urban elites.

The first-generation diaspora leaders have shown to have failed producing a significant impact. Their collective intentions may had been to create a developed society, able to stay connected with the rest of the world; yet some of their individualistic attitudes for personal gain of capital or power has led to a greater disparity between the elite diaspora investors and the people they once tried to aid. However, the ones in their ranks that were able to pursue philanthropic opportunities to benefit the wider population. The nature of the constitution set up by the diaspora and those with substantial power in 2001, allowed some to pursuit individualistic agendas. Leaders that were driven by personal agendas of business pursuits and capital gain from short-term projects, profited at the expense of the community. The constitution encouraged an overcentralised government run from Kabul, denying the country's provincial and district governments from receiving developmental aid packages. The constitution facilitated corruption of a small number of government officials profiting from international effort in the development of the country, taking resources away from their departments and into personal gains. There was an increased amount of resentment that built up against the government. President Ghani's and Chief Executive Dr Abdullah's government changed the perspective of many Afghans with their dedication to combatting impertinent investments from old powerful diaspora members, whom sought to exploit the people.

At present the new government of Afghanistan has accelerated the country to be a contender of a fast-paced economy with gross-potential for investments and international trade agreements. They have cracked down on corruption. Both the government and citizens has shown an interest to stand against corruption and collaborate frequently to prevent it by displaying and promoting the integrity in judicial processes. The media play a key role with exercising their right to highlight wrong doers that exploit for personal agendas. The government's objective is not to seek new commitments but to identify key actions and implementation foci in existing laws, strategies and reform agendas. The endemic is tackled by: 1) Merit-based and transparent civil service recruitment; 2) Implementing the Access to Information Law; 3) Addressing impunity and the role of the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre (ACJC); and 4) The role of citizens and media in holding the Government accountable<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> UNAMA (2018): [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/anti-corruption\\_side\\_meeting.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/anti-corruption_side_meeting.pdf)



## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the participation of the diaspora that have engaged in the country's politics and state-building in the post-conflict agreements set the foundations upon the social structures, legal framework and economic direction. The academic characterisation of diaspora participation in post-conflict scenarios acting as either peacemaker or peace-breaker is an expressed as an over-simplification, with the outcome being related to existing and new structural realities. Afghanistan's diaspora members have become peacemakers at the different regional and international levels in various social sectors. They have taken to the role as working jointly with other incumbent groups, international players and NGOs. However, it can be argued that the diaspora, who have actively participated in Afghan politics and become members of the government, could not be successful in the state-building process on a regional or provincial level. The diaspora leader has shown an interesting in contesting for power and resources, ultimately creating the conditions for internal conflicts and divisions that which will further widen the ethnic and tribal gap.

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# Conference Proceedings

## Panel Discussion –

- 1) Women's Empowerment and Governance; 2) Peace and People's Engagement; 3) Economic and Taxation

**Rahela Sidiqi:** Implementation of legal framework is hard and challenging in Afghanistan's context. 87% Afghan women still face a high level of violence. According to CSO, number of recorded violence against -women between 2017-2018 increased by 60% & from 800-1400 cases. Based on HRW out of 280 murder cases only 50 cases led to convictions & early marriage rate is over 51%. But as indicated in HDI of 2018 report, issue's facing women are not only in Afghanistan but is current global matter. One out of three women globally face violence, issues for women in higher education are also visible. Higher Education Gender policy lack implementations tools and procedures. I hope the existing nature of challenges gradually change, as over 50 percent of the population are under 23 years old, as there could be less resistance in coming decades. However, there has been some general progress for women: e.g. women in management and leadership roles are only 9% compared to the 2% five years prior. Including, for the first time 13 female Deputy ministers and an 18% increase in 2018 with the number of female students recruited in higher educational institutes. In March, we hope to hold a two-day conference, were we will be analyzing the feasible applicable methods and approaches for women and youth engagement to support Afghanistan's development. This process will be dedicated to the advancement of the young female generation hoping to pursue higher education and leadership roles in the continuation of a progressive Afghanistan.

**Professor Gloria Moss:** The professor gave an insight into a thoroughly researched analysis of the statistical progress of women in higher education. She emphasizes the importance of an inclusive support network with mentoring schemes, translating to higher grades achieved with the transferable work place skills. Knowledge has become the most important factor in economic development. It is higher education that is the main producer of knowledge around the world, and it is primary repository and source of knowledge production in the developing world. The impressive increase of girls in education from basic education in the year 2000 from 5,000 to 2.4 Million in 2009 with another 24,800 in higher education. Gloria expressed the progress behind the scenes of the Trust with inclusive leadership following the self-determination theory: one-to-one mentorship by FT Director: library approaches, note-taking, time management, exam preparation, essay writing and weekly training by the coordinator. The success of the trust is highlighted with all students have remained on the programme and scoring over the 4 years of intake at 85-100 (with a few 70+).

## WOMEN'S HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

"The FT advocates the current issues that challenge the progression of women in higher education. We believe in promoting learning and enabling students both in the UK and Afghanistan to gather skills to better society's prospects in the future. By building up the foundations of the war-torn country, we can aid intelligent and forward-thinking individuals to support new initiatives. Bridging the gap with our conference between the British and Afghans, we can provide a support network of sponsors and advocates in agreeing the mobilization of aid to resilient students. Generating links across the United Kingdom with recruiting young and professional target groups with our events, we can focus on sustainability of the Trust and the celebration of education. I believe we can empower those most vulnerable in Afghanistan and doing so by bringing together the diaspora."

- Mr. Royan Khayri, Oncological Researcher.



## Panel Discussion –

### Counsellor Mohammad Yaser Sadeq:

The Counsellor for Consular Affairs highlighted the great strides the government has made with diaspora affairs, engagement and involvement with knowledge transfer. They have emphasized their continual dedication with the progression of women and education. President Ghani signed in 2015 an action plan for the resolution security and peace negotiations including the participation of protection and gender equity. The number of women in positions of political leadership roles from female diplomats, ambassadors and national army. The government is committed to advocate the increasing roles and opportunities given to women. The educational challenges have been resolved with more universities in Afghanistan and the encouragement of more student with studying abroad with the great support of scholarship programs like the British Chevening fund, Funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The highest number of participants taking the Concord exam includes 39% of those being women. The encouragement of the government of Afghanistan promoting the importance of higher education and English with doors opening to better opportunities nationally and internationally. They are committed to continue their support of Farkhunda Trust and future initiatives.

## WOMEN'S HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

"I found the Farkhunda Trust conference helpful for me to understand the current situation of women in higher education in Afghanistan and my role, as a part of the Afghan diaspora, in aiding in their academic success."

- Ms Hogai Aryoubi, PhD  
Candidate for Peace &  
Education Research Group,  
University of Cambridge

### Contact

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**Dr Seley Gharanei:**

Placental structural and functional adaptation to a diabetic environment. Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM) can affect up to 18% of the pregnancy worldwide and its prevalence is increased by 64% in the past 2 decades due to continues rise in obesity. GDM is a metabolic disease characterised by impaired glucose tolerance, with the first recognition during pregnancy. GDM is associated with maternal and foetal/neonatal complications such as birth trauma, respiratory distress syndrome, intrauterine growth restriction, preeclampsia, macrosomia and neonatal hypoglycaemia. Neonates born to GDM pregnancies are at an increased risk of developing diabetes, hypertension and other metabolic disorders later in life, contributing to the already alarming increase in obesity and diabetes. Similarly, neonates of pregnancies complicated by GDM tend to have a higher proportion of fat mass and a higher birth weight. Higher placental weight as well as increased placental nutrient transport will contribute to the enhanced foetal fat accumulation in GDM.

The placenta is a heterogeneous organ and yet nutrient exchange between mother and foetus occur specifically in the exchange surface called syncytiotrophoblast (STB). The human placenta is sensitive to the hyperglycaemic milieu and responses with adaptive alterations of its structure and function. To better understand GDM-related changes of fetoplacental angiogenesis and epigenetics, we are investigating the placental structural, functional and epigenetic changes in diabetic and normal pregnancies, using samples from a large cohort of GDM and control placentae.

**Sarajuddin Isa:**

The research focuses on the fiscal dimension of state-building in Afghanistan. It aims to examine the relationship between state-building and taxation in post Bonn Afghanistan comparing Karzai's and Ghani's administrations, but whilst also scrutinizing this relationship in relation to earlier periods of Afghan history. It aims to first explore how taxation was negotiated/decided in post Bonn era, second what factors have influenced these negotiations and finally what impacts they consequently had on the extractive capacity of the state. These negotiations and policies will be located within a wider historical perspective through a mapping of the historical emergence of the state-building and taxation, which dates back to the reign of Durrani's in 1947.

**Farid Rahimi:**

Armed conflicts and ethnic tensions have dominated the situation in Afghanistan for more than 30 years, which have produced a large scale migration, as well as destroyed the livelihoods of many men, women and children. Since the Bonn Agreement (2001), whilst Afghanistan is experiencing some amelioration, of course, with ongoing challenges, settled Afghan diasporas in the western world may contribute to the general realm of girls education and women empowerment in Afghanistan. This paper is the analysis of the complexity of diaspora, ethnicity, as well as Afghan diaspora in the UK and their role in promoting education for girls and women empowerment in Afghanistan. It brings insights from academic resources including primary data collected from both the UK and Afghanistan which provides a clear picture of the issue and explains the challenges and obstacles. In Afghanistan, between January and February 2019, three interviews have been conducted with Afghan citizens, primarily high profile governmental officials. In the UK, among Afghans from different socioeconomic, ethnic and political backgrounds, covering age ranges from mid-20s to the mid-60s, the research has involved six interviews between March and April 2019. Additional data is collected from six informal interviews. Whilst the research found a kind of fragmented Afghan diaspora in the UK, nevertheless, their role is significant and their contribution towards girls education and women empowerment in Afghanistan is pivotal.

**Walid Halimi:**

Afghanistan is a conservative Muslim society governed in a traditional way for many centuries has attempted to change and grasp the tapping of modernity several times. Commencing with King Amanullah Khan's first attempt in the early 20th century, and the recent endeavours post-2001, the woman her prestige and rights have played a crucial role in determining the outcome of these transformations. This research, therefore, is designed to pinpoint what are the contemporary obstacles in the way to Afghan women's development and their active participation in the socio-political affairs of the country.

Religion, culture and underdevelopment, as three prominent social factors will be studied and analysed. Considering the scope of this research paper, and living in the diaspora, it seems practical to conduct a conceptual approach and mainly rely on a desk review of the existing qualitative researches performed by the Afghan scholars and major organisations such as the USAID and the UN. Particularly, scrutinising academic writings and scriptures pertaining to the rights of women in Islam will construct a bigger part of this study. Similarly, the achievements of the Afghan Women in diaspora provides the opportunity to back up theoretical arguments that the Afghan Woman – given the opportunity – could be equally significant and active as many other successful women around the globe.





### **Fereshta Omar:**

Through a Human Resources lens, this paper looks to compare the recruitment processes between the United Kingdom and Afghanistan. The focus is on key steps which are undertaken within recruitment, the reasons behind why these steps are undertaken and how it benefits an organisation. The different stages of the recruitment process are discussed in depth, for example, advertising job roles, attraction, screening, interviewing and hiring. The paper concludes by highlighting recommendations, which can be undertaken within organisations in Afghanistan to strengthen the overall recruitment processes, as well as improve transparency and build employee capability.

### **Hogai Aryoubi:**

A significant issue with studies conducted by large global organizations, external consultants, members of the Afghan diaspora- who can be considered outsiders by the locals, and other academic investigators who conduct research in Afghanistan, is the neo-colonial attitude that tends to still come with the 'subject to object' quantitative research orientation. Moreover, non-quantitative neo-colonial research is created, conducted, produced, and owned by outsider investigators, though knowledge and experiences come from the subjects. A decolonizing response to the dehumanising and colonial history of research is Indigenous methodology. The Indigenous paradigm is informed by indigenous and tribal knowledge systems (Chilisa 2012). Therefore, Kovach (2016) argues that the dismissal of Indigenous methodologies is the dismissal of certain knowledges, and thus, a form of neocolonialism. There is a necessity for studies in Afghanistan to be co-created, co-conducted, co-produced, and co-owned, with the participants and communities that are involved for research to be ethical and just.

### **Dr Mustafa Edries Amirya:**

Energy storage systems (ESS) are key devices to balance between electrical energy supply and demand by improving the quality, efficiency and stability of electrical systems. They can enhance the flexibility electrical systems by mitigating electrical supply intermittency, which has always been a major problem in developing countries and has recently become problematic in developed countries, due to the increased penetration of renewable generation. The subject of this research is flywheel energy storage systems (FESS), a technology that is gathering great interest due to technical and environmental benefits offered over alternative energy storage solutions.

The research describes the assessment of a small-scale energy systems incorporating FESS with solar photovoltaic (PV) and a diesel generator for use in islanded residential premises with highly intermittent or non-existing electrical grid infrastructure. In this application, incorporation of FESS is shown to be beneficial in comparison to a system without storage or one with the alternative storage technology, such as chemical batteries. The model of flywheel system is developed and combined with the model of an islanded residential power system incorporating a diesel genitor and solar PV system. Such a system would be particularly useful for off-grid applications or those with weak grids as occurs in developing countries such as Afghanistan.

### **Conference Conclusions:**

- Access to education for marginalised and vulnerable women in Afghanistan must be continued financially and politically with the creation of a safe spaces.
- Women require the continual commitment of the Afghan Government in supporting and advocating their educational rights.
- Leadership and resilience are imperative for educational change.
- Investment for women in rural areas to pursue higher education is critical and a need for all citizens to support.
- Establishment of Lobby groups/committee to introduce the need and strength of Afghanistan at Socio Political Forum.
- Establishment of Women's Education Trust Fund.
- Utilise the engagement of diaspora members' knowledge and skills at all levels.

## Conference Academic Feedback –

### Sarajuddin Isar:

Diaspora's role particularly their remittances in many developing countries is crucial in economic development process. Today remittances in the world represent one of the global financial resources, which sometimes exceed the flows of foreign direct investment (FDI), public aid and private capital flows. According to the World Bank figures, remittances flows to the developing world has reached 414 billion US dollars in 2013 that is almost one third of the GDP of these countries.

The growing wave of migration in recent years has led remittances to rise massively. There are 232 million international migrants and almost 70 million internal migrants, whose remittances transferred were projected to reach over half a trillion US dollars in 2016. Remittances make up 30 and 40 percent of household income in developing countries and these remittances are often sent by friends and family members who have migrated.

In Afghanistan, remittances have also been on rise given the growing rate of migrations, and asylum seekers in Europe. A report by the Guardian stated that as of September 2017, Afghans accounted for the largest number of asylum applications in the EU. With these growing rates of Afghan asylum seekers and migrants, remittances to Afghanistan have also risen. Based on the World Bank record, remittances to Afghanistan increased from 141 million U.S. dollars in 2008 to a maximum of 312 million U.S. dollars in 2017. Based on a report published by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Central Bank of Afghanistan measured these reflecting them in the balance of payment. They shared a rather optimistic figures measuring the outflow remittances standing at 354 million US dollars and inflows at 679 million US dollars which contribute to 1.6 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2011.

These reports values are likely to be considerable underestimates of true remittance flows, as the figures reported in the Central Bank BOP framework represent only workers' remittances and compensations of employees remunerated through formal systems. Given the prominent position of informal value transfer systems such as hawala as key facilitators of cross-border payments, these figures can be even higher. According to the World Bank, 80–90% of economic activities in Afghanistan involve the informal sector. A striking feature of the Afghan economy is the prevalence of informal activities, not just in agriculture (32% of GDP as in 2003) or through opium cultivation (35% of GDP), but also in most other sectors.



## Hogai Aryoubi:

The role of the Afghan diaspora can be to use its position of privilege to benefit people in Afghanistan by supporting the decisions that Afghans in Afghanistan make for their social, political, and economic development. The best usage of the Afghan diaspora may be to financially invest into the decisions that are made by Afghans in Afghanistan and offering a perspective, if asked for one, could also potentially aid the development process. The panel discussions were very interesting and thought provoking. I do think that the voices of the Afghan diaspora are severely missing in the areas of literature, arts, film industry, media, and other sectors that are not science, medicine, law, or engineering based. I would encourage young Afghans to follow their passions in higher education, rather than simply attain an education to enter a position that is encourage by parents due to its stability

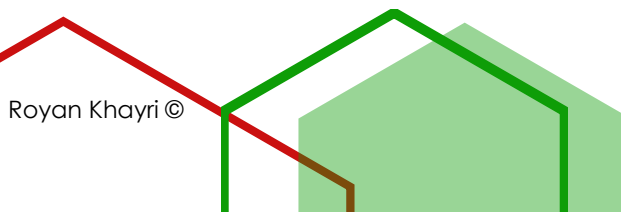
**Dr Mustafa Edries Amiryar:**

I believe diaspora will have a significant impact in Afghanistan's social, political and economic development process. They are more exposed to technological developments and have better access to facilities which are hardly available in Afghanistan. Those diasporas who have managed to take good use of such facilities and have progressed in their career will have a bigger impact in Afghanistan's development process provided they are given the opportunity and their opinion/research finding/achievement is welcomed from inside the country.

My research is on 'The Assessment of an Energy Storage Technology for use in Residential Premises in Developing Countries'. The focus is mainly on proposing an alternative technology to chemical batteries given their technical and non-technical issues. The findings of this research showed that the use of this new storage technology instead of chemical batteries will not only help the environment but will also improve reliability of an electrical system and introduce major cost savings in a year

I found this conference an excellent platform where diaspora can get introduced to each other, broaden their network and plan future collaborations. It was quite a diverse conference and I am glad to have been taken part and had the opportunity to present my research. I recommend the establishment of Diaspora Magazine as a platform where diaspora can share their opinions, thoughts, ideas, research findings, etc. This magazine can also serve as a platform for our compatriots in Afghanistan where they can stay up to date with diaspora progress and be able to evaluate their potential impact in the development process.

I believe the role of diaspora in Afghanistan's development process should not be ignored but encouraged to take active part and act as a bridge between their home country and developed countries. There are many areas that diaspora could play an active role and have a greater impact in the development process. From a technical and economical perspective, Afghanistan is in desperate need of an infrastructure in the energy sector. Currently it is relying on the imported electrical energy from foreign countries although itself is rich of resources for producing electrical energy to not only fulfil its needs but also export energy to neighbouring countries. However, due to many reasons including political and security issues, it is a huge challenge for the country to use its natural resources and become an independent energy provider in the region. Hence, as a short-term remedy, an alternative solution would be to store the energy when available in excess and use it when demanded. This strategy is implemented in most developed countries and can also be applied for the case of Afghanistan given its suitable meteorological condition suitable for producing renewables. Therefore, an important area of development for the energy sector in Afghanistan is a strategic switch from the so-called traditional energy generation methods to a new paradigm consisted of energy storage technologies integrated to the central and local electrical networks. Considering this, seeking an alternative to low quality chemical batteries sounds inevitable.



## Conference Attendees Feedback –

*"An outstanding conference. What an incredible spectrum of subject and experts, an extremely interesting day. I learnt a lot and met many talented individuals. I am pleased I could attend. An uplifting and inspiring day. I am honored to have been invited to be part of the discussion representing the Afghan diaspora. It was lovely to see the diaspora coming together and contributing to academia discussion on knowledge retributions. I am sure many solutions will come out of this conference for further discussions."* **Maya Evans.**

*"I had an amazing time at the conference today as I was embraced with love and kindness. I only hope the global community could experience the Afghan hospitality; rather than portray stereotypical views of poverty or conflict. I was able to learn much about the present condition of the nation and community. It was a privilege to be surrounded by inspiring forward-thinking individuals, that are resilient in the face of conflict to build a solid infrastructure. I do believe the diaspora will persist in making a permanent and remarkable change."*

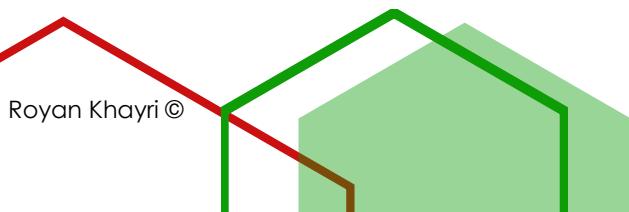
*"A very diverse group of people united in academia through different fields of study and expertise."* **Thalia Ostendorf**

*"It's crucial for the Afghan voices to come together as they have today to express a shared vision. A vision that unites them with the international community with channeling aid to Afghanistan"* **Ellis**

*"Thank you for arranging this conference. It is very important for the diaspora to come together and recognise the contributions they can make through their expertise and knowledge. By networking the diaspora can put their efforts in comprising solutions that can be discussed, utilised and endeavored by those in positions of influence and power."* **Mary Dobbing**



Thank you for reading our diaspora conference report. We hope that you can consider being a supporter and friend of the Farkhunda Trust. We would be delighted to discuss our mission and work in greater detail through our media platforms and future events.





## Acknowledgments

**Rahela Sidiqi - "We greatly appreciate all your support and continual dedication to the Trust. We are proud to have distinguished members of society with us."**

**Executive Team** - Marika Therose, Helene Therose, Safia Nadtat, Akbar Gul, Trina Nasiri

**Trustees** – Kamini Paul, Liz Mermin, Althea Maria Rivas, Mel Whitney-Long, Mutaf Rifat

**Afghanistan Coordinators and Friends of Farkhunda Trust** - Khadija Yawar, Shazia Mohsini, Frozan Ibrahim, Freshta Mateen, Tania Aria, Mariam Safi

**Collaborators** – Afghan Professional Network, iNex Studios, British Afghan Coordination Council and Afghan Voice and Afghanistan Now.

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Gharghasht Gharghasht

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Sara Berger

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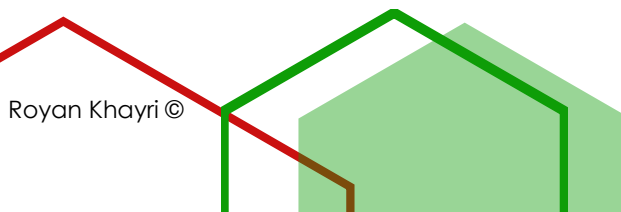
Walid Hamdard

Zahra Rahimi

Ziarmal Gharghasht

Zubaida Farhang

**Partners, Professional Volunteers & Friends of Farkhunda Trust** – Women and Public Policy Journal - DROP, Afghan Women's Support Forum, Benawa, Dunya and Gawharshad Universities.



## Ambassadors, Executive Team, Friends of Farkhunda Trust and Coordination of the Conference

- Afghanistan Now
- Ahmed Yusuf
- Akbar Khan
- Dr Althea Rivas
- Ameen Manjal
- Ameena Mangal
- Asya Tanweer
- Bashir Gharwal
- Farid Alimi
- Fatimi Solicitors
- Fereshta Omar
- Professor Gloria Moss
- Gharghasht
- Helene Therose
- Hogai Aryoubi
- Kay Kaker
- Lynn Colleen
- Mariam Safi
- Marika Therose
- Meral Alizada
- Nasrat Akber
- Professor Naysan Adelparver
- Rahela Sidiqi
- Royan Khayri
- Safia Nasrat
- Sahar Halamzai
- Samsor Faiz
- Sobada Kamraw
- Time For Real Peace
- Walid Halimi
- Ziarmal Gharghasht
- Zohra Afghan Boutique

## Conference Speakers -

- **Rahela Sidiqi:** Founder and Director of Farkhunda Trust.
- **Kamini Paul:** Chairwoman of Farkhunda Trust.
- **Counsellor Mohammad Yaser Sadeq:** Embassy of Afghanistan in London Diplomat.
- **Shinkai Karkhail:** Member of Parliament in Afghanistan.
- **Professor Gloria Moss:** Academic Researcher in Management and Marketing. Honorary Member of Farkhunda Trust.
- **Dr Althea Rivas:** Academic Researcher in International Relations and Global Development. Trustee for Farkhunda Trust.
- **Sana Safi:** Senior Presenter BBC News Pashto, Journalist and Producer.
- **Professor Naysan Adelparver:** Academic Researcher and Honorary Member of Farkhunda Trust.
- **Marika Theros:** Academic Researcher at Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit.
- **Royan Khayri:** Oncological Researcher, Activist and Farkhunda Trust U.K. Ambassador.
- **Liz Mermin:** Producer, Director and Journalist.
- **Mariam Safi:** Academic Researcher for Policy Research and Development Studies.
- **Dr Seley Gharanei:** Academic Researcher in Molecular Biology.
- **Sarajuddin Isar:** Academic Researcher in Political Economy.
- **Farid Rahimi:** Academic Researcher in Sustainable Development.
- **Walid Halimi:** Academic Researcher in Politics and Globalisation.
- **Fereshta Omar:** Head of Diverse Workforce – Ministry of Justice. Vice President of Afghan Professional Network.
- **Hogai Aryoubi:** Academic Researcher in Peace and Education. *Greatest Fundraiser Award of 2019.*
- **Dr Mustafa Edries Amiryar:** Academic Researcher in Energy Engineering.
- **Kudsia Kaker:** Founder of Qatalyst Global and President of Afghan Professional Network.



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- Baroness Fiona Hodgson
- Baroness Frances De Susana
- Deputy Mayor, Heidi Alexander
- Eve Ensile - Founder of one Billion Rising & V-day
- Heidi Kensington
- Glyn Strong
- John Bailey, Veronica Doubleday & Safer Sarmed
- Khayri Events
- Charity Aid Foundation
- V-day
- Tied Foundation
- Samira Kitman: Maftah E Hunar
- Noqra Afghan Artisans Jewelry
- Gulwali Passarlay, Walid Hamdard, Zubaida Farhang & Zahra Rahimi
- Wais Assadi
- Tomorrow's Hope TV
- Samsor Faiz & Akhter Nazari
- Marketing and Media – Photography and film: A. Gharghasht & Ziarmal Gharghasht & all their team

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