



For Afghan Women's
Education

Annual Lecture - Annual General Meeting 10th January 2020



What is Farkhunda Trust?

Farkhunda Trust was established to provide education opportunities to Talented & disadvantaged young women in Afghanistan. The Trust gives them access to scholarships to pay for their university education, and mentoring. In Afghan society many women are still held back by expectations relating to their gender, preventing them from accessing an education. Farkhunda Trust is working to break down those barriers, and graduates from the programme are encouraged to work with the next generation to help them access opportunities in education and employment.

What are the Trust's core values?

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 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. Since it was founded, 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 and one in Kandahar receive salaries currently paid for by the Trust's institutional partners, Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education, Dunya University and Benawa University in Kandahar.

Annual Lecture 2020

The Farkhunda Trust annual lecture took place on 10th January 2020 with the theme of music in Afghanistan. The Chair of the lecture Hamid Hakimi welcomed speakers with a range of expertise, from the worlds of ethnomusicology and women's education. The evening culminated with a performance of traditional Afghani music performed by Veronica Doubleday and John Baily.

Music has played an important role in Afghani culture for centuries. The music draws from the country's wide influences, from Persia and India, and the country's own different ethnic groups. However, music in Afghanistan has come into some difficult times. Some people believe that music is forbidden for religious reasons, and the years of war have impacted the country's musical heritage. But Afghanistan is making big strides forward to encourage more people to learn and enjoy music, and celebrate the country's own traditional music. Schools have been developing to encourage students to learn from a young age, and university courses have been going from strength to strength. In particular, more women are beginning to learn how to perform, and are making an important contribution to the continuation of Afghanistan's traditions.

Speakers

John Baily, Emeritus Professor of Ethnomusicology and Head of the Afghanistan Music Unit at Goldsmiths University of London

Mirwaiss Sidiqi, visiting research fellow at the Department of Music at Goldsmiths University of London

Marika Theros, senior fellow at the Institute for State Effectiveness and policy fellow at Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit at the London School of Economics

Dr Haqm al Nawrozi, senior international public health expert

Mel Whitney-Long, international development professional

Rahela Sidiqi, Founding Director of the Farkhunda Trust for Afghan Women's Education

Chaired by Hameed Hakim, research associate in the Asia-Pacific Programme and the Europe Programme at Chatham House

Presentations

Mel Whitney-Long

The Chair of the Farkhunda Trust Outlining the background and the aims of Farkhunda Trust, Mel explained in 2019 the trust was able to support 19 young women with scholarships. All Scholars of Dunya, Gawharshad and Benawa Universities successfully completed their spring - summer term, achieving high grades. Working with the Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies, Farkhunda Trust has set up a mentoring scheme for the scholars. During September 2019 Farkhunda Trust held a conference on the topic of the Afghan diaspora's role in Afghanistan's social, economic and political development process, and saw 75 attendees.

Rahela Sidiqi

While women's rights are enshrined in Afghan law, there are a number of issues that hold them back from reaching their full potential, with high percentages facing violence and marriage as teenagers. Rahela is aiming to use education to break down barriers for women to reach their full potential. Music is inaccessible to women, with some who have performed music being prevented from returning home by their families. Access to a music education is difficult for women, as most private universities do not offer music studies. Through the work of Farkhunda Trust, Rahela hopes to expand the reach of education and allow more women to reach their full potential. The inspiring story of graduated scholar Amina Khurasani and current scholar Suria were shared by Rahela during the lecture.





Amina Khurasani said: "The FT was the place where I learned to build my confidence to be good at presenting, to be able to defend my rights, and advocate and increase awareness for women rights. I have provided several academic papers. I have learned how to effectively mentor other students at my university, in my working environment and in my community. Therefore I now support the education of four students. I am not only the executive member of my office but also support a publication called Nemrokh and I founded Hamasai Tagheer. I provide voluntary mentoring to FT scholars based on the FT mentoring policy and our prepared plan.



Suria Muhsini said: "I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart Farkhunda Trust for helping to make my dream to come true. It has helped me to overcome depression. We had serious economic problems because my father lost his job due to illness. Now I am able to study with a peaceful mind and am committed to help other girls into higher education. I am committed to support other young girls who live in poverty and help to lift them up out of poverty. I will study hard to gain an excellent degree. My goal is to become a university lecturer, and

Mirwais Sidiqi

Mr Sidiqi manages the Aga Khan Music Initiative in Kabul. Founded in 2000, the school grew to open a second location in 2006 in Herat. Music education for girls was introduced at the school in 2010. The school has developed an important collection of traditional Afghani music, which is normally taught orally. Students are also taught about Western music. The school has been able to identify and support ustāds, or masters, of music. Through an agreement with the Department of Music at Kabul University, students are able to sit a specific exam to gain entrance to continue their studies at university. Over time, the people of Afghanistan have begun to embrace music again, which is helping the school to flourish, and ensure the continuation of important cultural traditions.

John Baily

John Baily outlined his experience of meeting with Afghanistan National Institute of Music. The school provides regular schooling alongside training in Afghan, Indian and Western music. Many of the pupils are from orphanages and impoverished families. At the school he found an inspiring community of



people learning to perform styles together, and embrace the musical heritage of other countries. The women's orchestra Ensemble Zohra travelled to the UK in March 2019 and performed several concerts. Mr Baily found that the largest group of performers in tertiary level music education are women, giving hope for the future of female performers in Afghanistan.

At the end of the panel questions were raised by the participants about the sustainability of the program and the plans to develop it more widely in the future.

Verbal & Written Feedback

During the social and networking time several participants expressed their interest about the programme. Heidi Kinsington said “I really love and believe the FT program and I would like to do more and attend the academic conference in October.”

Sodaba Kamrawa said: *“I am so impressed with what the Farkhunda Trust does for our young girls. I will try to collect some more standing orders during this coming Ramazan.”*

Mahera Hameedi said: *“I learned a lot more about FT now and I really want to support it.”*

Marwan Ahmadzai said: *“FT should receive more help to give our youth hope, to give us a helping hand and to support girls education.”*



Gloria Moss said: “The Annual Lecture was amazingly engaging. It is such a beautiful programme.”


Likewise, some participants wrote some feedback. FT Trustees said that the Annual lecture was a success. People were very much interested in the programme.

Michelle Nomoni, PhD Student, City University of London

I would like to thank Farkhunda Trust for organising this annual lecture, and providing a platform where the diaspora can gather and learn about diverse issues facing Afghanistan. There remains a large hole in the heart of the Afghan people, where music was forcibly removed and musical heritage that once was so important, is now lost. This year's theme on music was an excellent opportunity to reflect and listen to the achievements the speakers had made in rebuilding our music culture. They shared their experiences along with the benefits music has in rebuilding a fractured society, and how they encourage the youth to pursue the art.

Dr Mohammad Nowroz Haqmal

The annual lecture was an excellent opportunity for all of us to learn about Farkhunda Trust's vision, mission, achievements and challenges.



*Hameed Hakimi, Chatham House Fellow Associate
Farkhunda Trust is a great initiative and it has such a powerful reason for why it exists. It also has a noble intention, that of empowering and educating young women. This is great and must be celebrated.*

