



ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Letter from our CEO

Dear Friends,

I write to you at the close of a year unlike any other in Charmaghz's history: 2025 was a year of profound endings, and equally profound beginnings.

I also write to you as someone stepping into a new role. In early 2026, I had the honor of becoming Charmaghz's CEO, following the decision of our Founder, Freshta Karim, to transition out of the organization after eight years of extraordinary leadership. Freshta's vision—which began in 2018 as an initiative to bring storybooks and agency to Afghan children through our first, Blue Mobile Library—has since touched the lives of more than a million child visitors, and built something far larger than any one of us. I am deeply thankful for her leadership, in particular during a time of immense change for Charmaghz. I take on this role with sincere respect for the legacy she established, gratitude for the foundation she laid that is now the crucible for our current and future work, and a deep sense of responsibility towards the futures of the Afghan girls who we have committed to serve.

This Annual Report tells the story of a pivotal year for Charmaghz, across every aspect of our strategy, programs, and operations. As most readers will know, in 2025 we went through the heartbreaking process of closing down our 17 Mobile Libraries in Kabul, following irreversible operational challenges with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Given the extraordinary circumstances of the past year, we have approached this report somewhat differently: the sections in this report are arranged in broadly chronological order, so readers have a sense of how the 12 months of this unexpected year played out for our team.

Our Mobile Libraries were never simply places to read; they nurtured children's curiosity, their ability to consider the world through a critical lens, and their confidence to think freely. It was precisely those characteristics that the de facto authorities in Afghanistan saw as a threat, and which led them to halt our work.

Because of the deep community trust, strong programmatic foundation, and dedicated partnerships we built over eight years, the end of our Mobile Libraries has not meant the end of Charmaghz. Given the nation-wide ban on Afghan girls' education after 6th grade, our leadership team, in consultation with our Board, unanimously agreed that addressing this life-changing educational gap for girls and women would be the focus of our work going forward.



In 2026, we are (ambitiously!) implementing four online education programs for Afghan women and girls, three of which are pilots. This next year for us will be spent testing and iterating these four programs, learning about what works—and what doesn't—and making adjustments, small and large, to ensure that we are delivering as much learning as we can for each of our students.

Every girl enrolling in our programs is unique, and will join us from somewhere in the messy middle of their equally unique educational journeys. Our decision to run a set of four very different programs—offering a structured secondary school, English classes, entrepreneurship training, and book clubs—is grounded in the belief that every girl's route through the swerving path of education is her own. Given the system-level convulsions that have disrupted and dismantled education for Afghan girls over the past four years, some students will be at the very start of their education; others will have had their schooling interrupted; and others will be ready to advance to the next phase. We are designing our programs to meet girls at a variety of different points, ensuring that no matter where she is in her education journey, there is a way for her to keep learning.

Afghanistan is actively losing a generation of capable doctors, informed mothers, spirited politicians, caring neighborhood leaders, driven scientists, and nurturing aunts and sisters. We refuse to believe the situation is beyond repair. We've seen how genuine learning unlocks possibility and gives young people a sense of control over their own lives—we witnessed it daily in the smallest of moments within our Mobile Libraries, and in children who were not only eager to learn, but who deeply desired to be heard.

That same desire—to be heard, to matter, to learn—is what continues to drive our work on behalf of Afghan girls and women. Our classrooms will look different going forward—video calls and online chats instead of the book-lined walls of our Mobile Libraries—but our conviction has not wavered: when given the chance, these girls will not only shape their own futures, but help shape the future of their communities and country. We are honored to walk and learn alongside them, and we are grateful to have you with us as we do.

With deep thanks and resolve,
Liz Robinson
CEO, Charmaghz



Liz sharing about our work in a recent panel at Skoll 2026

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A girl reading a book inside one of our Mobile Libraries

Saying Goodbye to our Libraries

Decision to close

Impact of the Libraries



Decision to close

Since the Taliban regained political power in 2021, operating as a civil society organization in Afghanistan has required navigating an increasingly restrictive landscape.

Despite these immense pressures, Charmaghz not only sustained but also expanded its operations in one of the world's most challenging contexts. **By the beginning of 2025, we had grown to 17 Mobile Libraries that had welcomed a total of 1.1 million child visitors since 2018, and proudly, 52% of those visits were from girls. We did this while sustaining a dedicated team of 88 staff members, 95% of whom were Afghan and 76% of whom were women.** We had also introduced our Book Lending Program to enable older children and those unable to participate on-site to continue learning from the comfort of their home. We had envisioned expanding this program into in-person book clubs where teenage girls could safely meet, connect over stories, and share their voices. The momentum of our work was so strong that by early 2025 our team had secured permissions and were finalizing plans to expand our Mobile Libraries into Bamyan province.

However, in March 2025, we received an order from the Taliban in Afghanistan to close our office in Kabul and cease operating our Mobile Libraries. Several agonizing months of negotiations followed as we made every effort to keep the Libraries open. Following this, in July 2025, amidst tightening nationwide restrictions, we were forced to make the heart-wrenching decision to officially close our Mobile Libraries.

Impact on our team

The closure of our Mobile Libraries left us with no choice but to lay off nearly our entire Afghan team. We recognize that in an environment already defined by economic strain, the loss of these roles - held predominantly by Afghan women - impacted entire households that relied on a stable income. As we transition and re-build our team, where possible we have prioritized hiring back former colleagues who shaped so much of our work.

Impact at a Glance

1.1 million

child visitors since 2018 including 52% visits from girls

6,000 borrowers

Our Book Lending Program reached 6,000 borrowers, including 64% girls, since its launch in 2024.

17 Mobile Libraries

across 15 districts in Kabul

While the closure was a profound loss, the reasons behind it serve as the ultimate confirmation of our mission's power. Our libraries were not just offering spaces for children to read and engage with books, but they were also actively fostering agency, equity, and independent thought. The work was so transformative that it was seen as a threat to the restrictive status quo.

Because of the deep community trust and strong foundation we built over eight years of operations, the closure of our Mobile Library program did not mean the end of our work. We knew we had to pivot, and we were prepared to adapt. **In mid-2025, our team and Board aligned around a new mandate for the organization: to provide online education to Afghan girls and women who are banned from school after 6th grade.**

Guided by our experience of delivering education programs in an already-challenging context, we launched an intensive ideation phase to design new online programming that could enable girls to continue learning, despite the restrictions on education. While we still deeply believe that both Afghan girls and boys need high quality educational support, we also have witnessed the devastating reality of the de-facto authorities' restrictive policies regarding women and girls, and have chosen to focus our efforts on ensuring Afghan women and girls can access high-quality learning pathways that enable them to shape their own futures.



During donation of Mobile Library resources to schools and an orphanage

Impact of the Libraries

My favorite part of working with Charmaghz was seeing the children's faces light up when they discovered a new book or learned something new. Their laughter, questions, and excitement made every day special. I loved being part of their journey — watching them grow, dream, and imagine. It reminded me that through stories and learning, we can open new worlds for children and help their imaginations fly.

-Librarian Lead (North team)

When I came to the library, I felt very happy and made many friends. This library is very beneficial for us, giving us the chance to learn, read different books, and develop mutual respect and acceptance.

-Azita, 9 year old girl



Azita with her book outside our Red Mobile Library

Being with the children was truly enjoyable for me. Being alongside those who had felt little love before, when they came to our libraries, they were genuinely very happy. There were even days when they would say to us, “Teacher, this is the only place where we can speak freely without any fear.” Every minute, they would eagerly wait for the moment we would come to visit their neighborhoods.

-Librarian

My daughter, Haasenat, is only three years old, but she is full of excitement and waits for the library with a lot of joy. Her favorite books are the alphabet and drawing books. As parents, we are happy with the library; it is the reason that Haasenat knows a lot of children's songs now. Thanks to the Charmaghz team for inspiring and nourishing the talents of our children.

-Haasenat's parents



Haasenat showing her drawing

Zala is a little girl with limited vision in one eye and a deep love for stories and games. When we first began working in her area, I noticed that she would wait for us every day at one o'clock. On the days we arrived, she would often say to me, 'I wait for you every day, but why don't you come?' When I explained that we only come on scheduled days, she simply replied, 'I wish you could come every day.'

She shared with me, 'When you come, I feel like I am fulfilling my dreams. I don't go to school, but I feel that this is the only place where I can learn and play, and I am very happy to see you and play games with my peers.'

-Librarian, Purple Minivan



Librarians playing games with children outside our Purple Minivan



Parkhan

Overview

A note from our Parkhan lead

Overview

The closure of our Mobile Libraries meant that the plans we had developed in 2024 and early 2025 to expand our work—including to run book clubs in person for teenage girls—were no longer possible. By mid 2025 we had a process in place to develop new online education programming that would launch in 2026 (*see next section*). However, our team deeply believed that Afghan children, specifically girls, still needed our support, and that we needed to explore ways to continue reaching them in the short-term. The book clubs we had been planning to launch emerged as the perfect opportunity to continue serving Afghan girls in 2025—and could easily be pivoted to an online format.

The book club program, Parkhan, is designed specifically for Afghan girls who are currently excluded from formal education. The name itself combines two Persian words meaning "fly" and "read"—a reminder that learning has always been, and will always be, a form of freedom.

Parkhan creates safe, structured online spaces where girls come together to read, discuss, and reflect on books that expand their imagination, critical thinking, and sense of self. Through guided reading and support from trained Afghan female facilitators, participants strengthen their reading skills while reconnecting with the joy of learning and the power of collective thought.

In 2025, we successfully piloted Parkhan with a group of 13 Afghan girls. This first cohort demonstrated both a strong demand for the program and the feasibility of delivering high-quality, consistent online book clubs in a highly restrictive context. Designed to be accessible to girls across Afghanistan, Parkhan offers the stability and continuity that participants consistently identify as essential for meaningful engagement.



Librarian recording the loaned books at the Green Mobile Library during summer break.

A note from our Parkhan lead

Leading the book club program means a great deal to me. Being able to contribute to the education and intellectual growth of children and adolescents is deeply meaningful. For many years, I have dreamed of helping cultivate a culture of reading among young people, and seeing this vision come to life is incredibly rewarding.

From the initial application and onboarding phase to the everyday conversations during our sessions, we witness resilience and hope woven into everything the girls say and write. What strikes me most is their unwavering commitment to education. Despite the many obstacles in their path, they continue to pursue learning with determination and courage. The strength these girls show is truly inspiring.

• [READ THE FULL BLOG](#)



Ideation Phase

Overview

Insights from our survey with Afghan girls

Our next chapter

Liz and Freshta brainstorming during the ideation phase



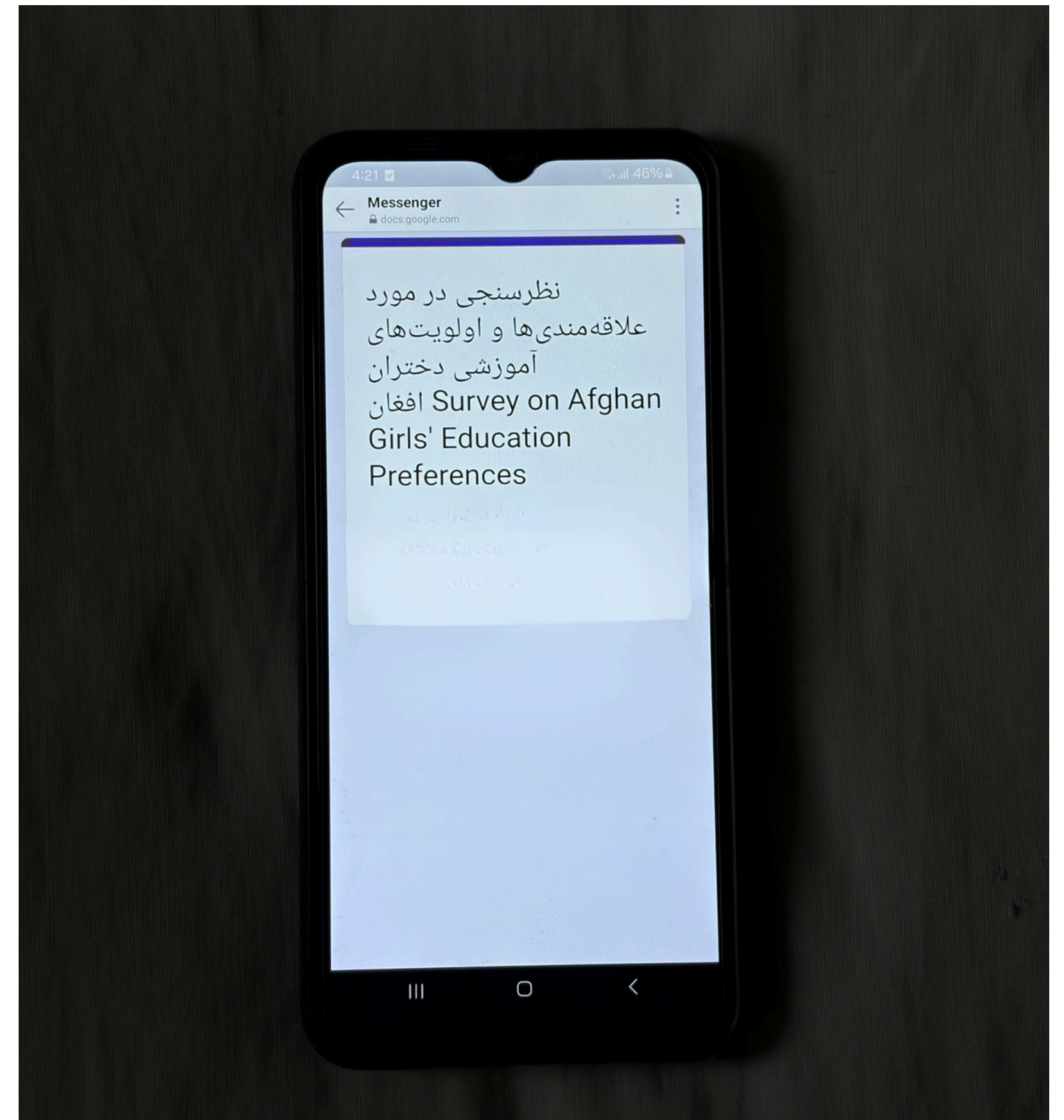
Overview

In August 2025, our team entered an ideation phase to design the next chapter of our program. Over the course of several months, we spoke with more than 20 peer organizations and consulted with seven current and potential partners. Most importantly, we sought feedback and input from Afghan girls themselves, through two Focus Group Discussions and a detailed survey with over 200 Afghan girls.

Our aim was clear: to learn as much as possible about the obstacles Afghan girls and women face when trying to access quality education, the opportunities and successes that do exist, and the gaps in the sector that we could have a comparative advantage in filling.

What the girls shared with us became the blueprint for our next chapter. Here is what we learned:

Afghan girls frequently navigate a fragmented and unpredictable digital education landscape. Many participants shared past frustrations with online programs that abruptly dissolved due to sudden funding cuts or escalating security challenges. Because of these disruptions, students emphasized that for a learning program to be truly meaningful, it must offer institutional stability, a structured and predictable curriculum, and a reliable, long-term pathway to completion.



Survey form circulated among Afghan girls during the ideation phase

Insights from our survey* with Afghan girls

Interest in Mentor-based Program

Girls want mentorship and personal guidance because it directly helps them navigate both academic and non-academic challenges.

Barriers to Participation

Major barriers to online education include expensive devices and poor internet, existing academic or digital skill gaps and unclear future pathways.

Desired Program Features

Programs need to feel credible, structured, and long-term, while still respecting the realities and constraints of their daily lives.

Participation in Education Since 2021

64 % of respondents shared that they have continued learning through informal or online platforms.

Motivation for Education

Primary motivations were studying abroad (41%), continuing their learning (31%), securing a job (17%)

Top Skills Girls Want to Learn

There is a strong interest in acquiring globally relevant skills. English language, digital/tech skills, and entrepreneurship emerged as the top choices selected by participants.



**The survey used self-selection sampling, and is not representative of all Afghan girls. Survey respondents tended to be highly educated, located in urban areas, and with strong internet access.*

Our next chapter

Through our research during the ideation phase, we learned that while many online education options exist, few offer clear pathways to jobs or higher education. Internet access and cost remain major barriers, and the quality of programs is often inconsistent. Most importantly, many girls shared how difficult it is when online schools abruptly close or lose funding mid-year.

They also told us that access to classes alone is no longer enough. Afghan girls need systems that convert learning into real outcomes—whether that is a job, the opportunity to pursue further studies, or greater confidence and independence at home. They need a comprehensive and supportive ecosystem.

Stability and consistency are essential for Afghan girls, and at Charmaghz, we are uniquely positioned to build something that lasts. With more than eight years of on-the-ground experience in Afghanistan, a team with lived expertise navigating volatile environments, and the governance and legal foundation of our new U.S. 501(c)(3) non-profit registration, we have the capacity to create real, enduring impact.



A girl writing on a piece of paper while visiting our Mobile Library.

After months of external consultations and internal design, we are introducing a model that intentionally meets girls at different points along their learning journey. **In 2026, our work will come to life through four distinct programs, reaching a total of 455 girls.**

We believe that every girl's path through education is entirely her own. Some participants will be well-placed to engage in structured academic studies, while for others, gaining skills to earn an immediate income will be the best fit. Our model also integrates support and guidance through mentorship for the girls who need it most, helping them navigate their unique paths safely and confidently.

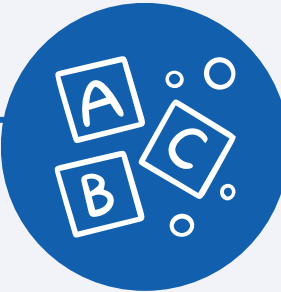
Our work in 2026 will serve as a pilot—we will test approaches, learn as we go, and adapt quickly based on data and direct feedback from the girls we serve. We are deeply excited about this next chapter, and we are hopeful that through this new set of programs, we can help Afghan girls build the futures they so deeply deserve.



Secondary School

Structured academic studies designed to prepare girls to enroll in university, online or abroad.

45 students



English Program

Building critical English language skills for education and employment.

50 students



Entrepreneurship Training

Building skills needed to earn an income and achieve independence.

30 students



Parkhan

A book club program which keeps the joy of reading and community alive

330 students

Our Vision and Mission

As we step into this next chapter, we want our guiding principles to reflect exactly what we are setting out to achieve. We have updated our Vision and Mission to align with the new pathways we are building, honoring our commitment to Afghan girls and the incredible futures we know they will shape when given the chance.

Vision

From their classrooms to communities, Afghan girls and women become the heartbeat of a rising Afghanistan.

Mission

To provide quality learning pathways that enable Afghan girls to shape their own futures.

2025 Milestones



In January, we gathered our community of donors, partners, and advisors for a special dinner in Oxford, UK to celebrate our shared mission and the beautiful work happening on the ground.



Our Founder, Freshta Karim, took the stage at TEDxOxford to share how our work is impacting children’s lives in Afghanistan.



Our now-CEO, Liz Robinson, spoke at the 2025 Education World Forum on the “Girls in Education” panel alongside education leaders from across Africa, Asia, and Latin America.



Our Founder, Freshta Karim, received the 2025 Earth Company Impact Hero Award for her work at Charmaghz. It was a powerful recognition of our team’s resilience during a deeply challenging year.

[• LEARN MORE](#)

2025 Milestones

- We secured our U.S. 501(c)(3) nonprofit registration in 2025 as The Freshta Foundation Inc., which establishes the strong governance and legal structure we need to create lasting impact for Afghan girls.
- Liz Robinson represented Charmaghz at the **WISE12 Summit in Doha**, connecting with global education leaders around this year's theme "Humanity.io: Human Values at the Heart of Education," exploring how innovation and technology can serve learning while staying rooted in empathy, equity, and human dignity.
- Freshta joined humanitarian sector leaders at **AidEx in Geneva**, a global gathering focused on humanitarian logistics and innovation.
- Liz and Freshta attended the **Skoll World Forum 2025**, engaging with social entrepreneurs and innovators driving systemic change around the world.
- Freshta represented Charmaghz at the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**, amplifying the voice of Afghan children's right to education on a global stage.

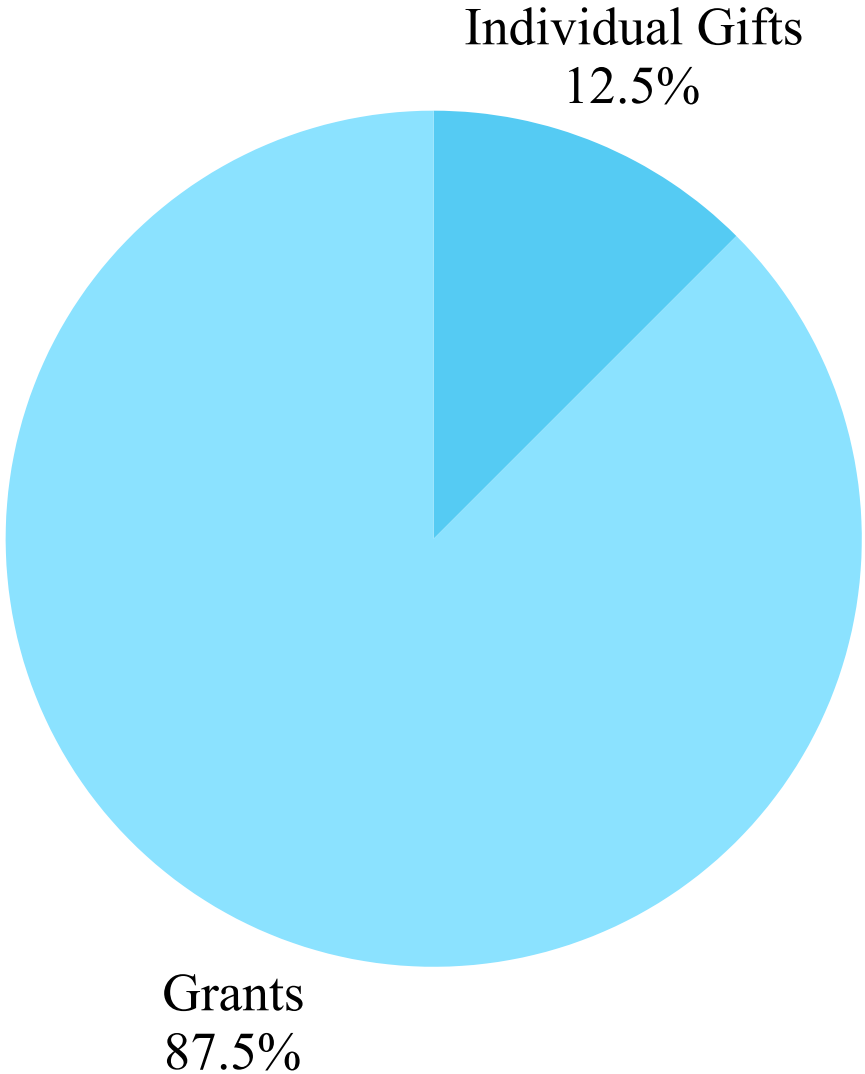


Charmaghz is committed to transparency and accountability in managing our financial resources. We sustain our programs through a diverse funding base, with support from foundations, institutional donors, and individual contributors.

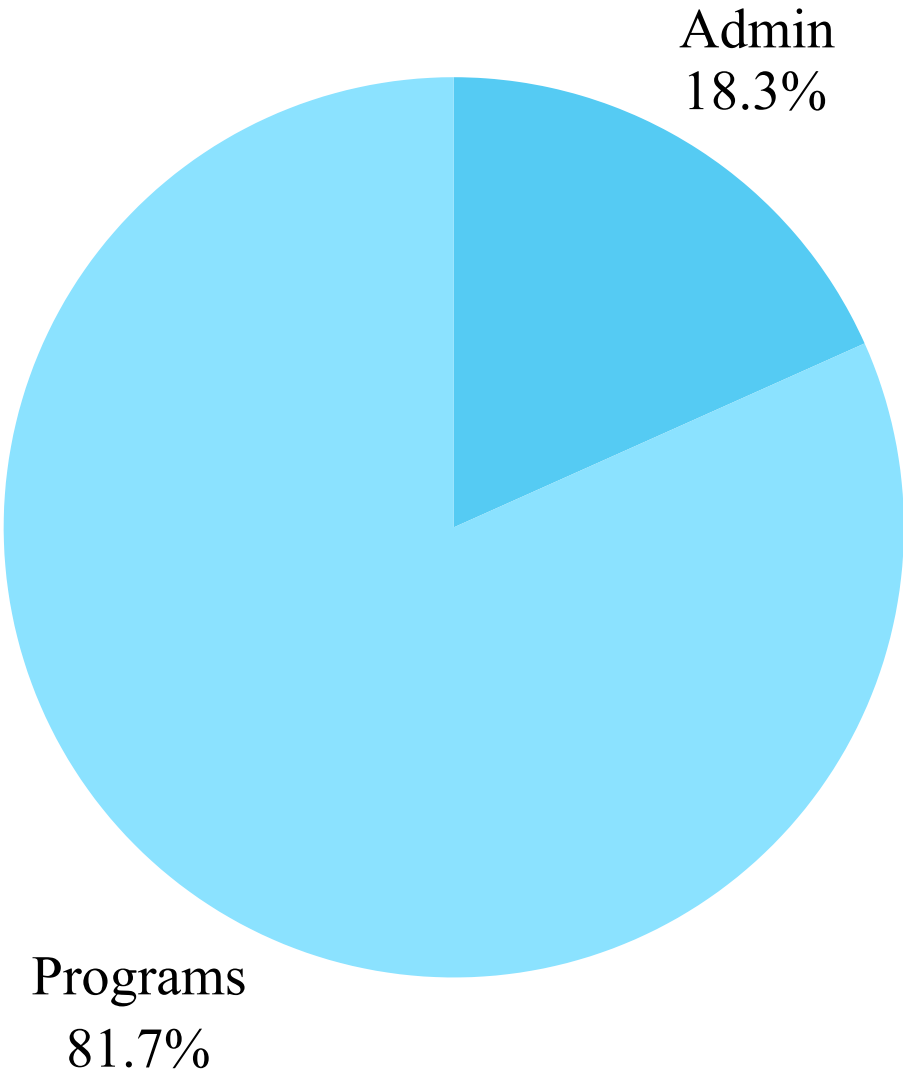
Additional financial reports are available upon request. Please contact us at info@charmaghz.org for more details.

Financial Summary

2025 Revenue - \$264,776



2025 Expenditure - \$337,620



Looking Ahead

Today, Afghanistan is actively losing a generation of capable doctors, informed mothers, spirited politicians, caring neighborhood leaders, driven scientists, and nurturing aunts and sisters. Due to the Taliban's policies against women and girls and the long-standing systemic issues within the education system, we are witnessing a society that is crippling half of its population, and undermining the other half in the process.

While the future of Afghanistan often seems bleak, our team refuses to believe that the situation is beyond repair. We believe that one of the critical pillars of a strong society is quality education. Education opens doors and restores learners' agency. We witnessed this daily in even the smallest of ways through the work of our Mobile Libraries. Children were not only eager to learn but also deeply desired to be heard. Our spaces ensured that each one of their voices mattered and that they knew they were capable of creating change.

While the programs we implement have changed, this guiding belief has not. By shifting the focus of our work and narrowing it to address the needs of women and girls, we believe we will strengthen the foundation of Afghan society, one girl at a time.

2025 was a year of transitions; we said goodbye to our beloved libraries and welcomed in a new chapter of our work through online education. While the nature of our work has changed, the heart of it has not. From what started eight years ago as a small project to cultivate children's love of reading in a little blue bus—our first Mobile Library—will now stretch across Afghanistan and into the homes of girls and young women, who will become the heartbeat of a rising Afghanistan.

As we begin this new journey, we aim to reach 455 girls and women from across Afghanistan by the end of 2026.

Our Supporters

We are so grateful to our community of partners, donors and advisors for their ongoing commitment to our mission.

Donors



Partners



We would also like to humbly thank all of our donors who wish to remain anonymous.

Our Team

We would like to thank our 2025 team, particularly our Afghan team members. We are thankful for their courageous commitment to the wellbeing of children and to fighting to ensure that all Afghan children have a brighter future. We are deeply saddened that many of our team members could not continue with us into our new chapter of work. One of the hardest parts of the last year was saying goodbye to those who made our libraries possible and who brought the magic of books to children daily.

Board of Directors

Liz Robinson - Chair, US Board

Derek Perez - Treasurer, US Board

Gabriele Pulvermüller - Member, US Board

Rachel Hinton - Member, US Board

Sarah Ryder - Secretary, US Board

Susan Ayari - Member, US Board



Charmaghz's celebration event with our Kabul team in February 2025

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in defending girls' education in the most
challenging context on Earth

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