



Annual Report 2024



Our Vision

Our vision is of a future Afghanistan where children are empowered as key agents of change both within their immediate lives, as well as within a long-term dialogue to generate justice, equity, and dignity for all Afghans.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide a holistic, trauma-centered literacy and numeracy program to every child in Afghanistan that creates opportunities for learners to experience a sense of agency in their daily lives.

A WORD FROM OUR FOUNDER



Dear friends,

Afghanistan's education system is in crisis. More than four years have passed since the ban on girls' secondary education, **a decision that continues to rob millions of Afghan girls of their future.** If this ban remains in place until 2030, more than four million girls will have been deprived of their right to education beyond primary school (*UNICEF*). But the crisis extends beyond girls alone. **Millions of Afghan children, both boys and girls, struggle to access quality education due to school closures, economic hardship, and restrictions on curriculum. This is not just about education; it is about the future of an entire nation.**

Our Mobile Libraries became a quiet response to that crisis, **a living reminder that imagination can survive even in the hardest of places.** Charmaghz began as a dream: that a story could reach a child even when schools could not. And for years, it did. Our chain of 17 Mobile Libraries travelled through Kabul, bringing stories, color, and curiosity to over a million children, **reaching more than 40,000 child visitors each month.** They became safe spaces in a world that often felt unsafe, where children could ask questions and remember what it felt like to simply be a child.

Operating in one of the most challenging contexts in the world, particularly over the past four years under the de facto government, **we continued to bring learning to children while sustaining a team of over 80 staff, 76% of them women.** For seven years, our Mobile Libraries carried not just books but a belief that **learning, laughter, and light could still find their way through the streets of Kabul.**

Letting them go was one of the most difficult decisions we have ever made. **There has been grief in this ending, for the Mobile Libraries that will no longer arrive, for the Librarians who gave their hearts to this work, and for the children who will be waiting for their Libraries and will not find them.**

Yet within this grief, there is also profound gratitude. **We carry immense pride in what we built together, in every smile, every story, and every moment of wonder that took place inside those buses. The spirit of the Libraries does not end here. It lives in the countless minds they touched and in the next chapter we are beginning to write.**

A New Chapter Under The Freshta Foundation

As we move forward under The Freshta Foundation, **we are dreaming again of new ways to reach Afghan children, especially girls who are still denied their right to learn.** Our next program will be an **online education initiative for Afghan girls**, ensuring that we do not turn away from those who need us most. **The form of our work may change, but its soul remains the same: to nurture curiosity, dignity, and hope.**

With this, I am also excited to introduce **Elizabeth Robinson**, who has now officially joined me as **Co-Founder of The Freshta Foundation**. **Liz brings over a decade of experience in international development and education** across the Middle East, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. She first worked in Afghanistan in 2016 and has remained deeply committed to advancing education for Afghan children ever since.

Liz has been by our side over the past three years, including through the difficult closure of the Mobile Libraries. **In that time, her leadership helped us grow stronger, reach more children than ever before, and navigate some of our hardest decisions. None of this would have been possible without her.** Her clarity, commitment, and belief in our mission have been a constant source of strength for me and for our team.

Now, **with Liz by my side and with an incredible team around us, I believe we are ready to build something meaningful together.** Thank you to everyone who has walked beside us, our team, our partners, and every friend of Charmaghz around the world. **You have helped turn a simple idea into something extraordinary.**



As I reflect on the past 7 years of Charmaghz, **I am amazed at what a dream became and how many young lives it touched.** As we release this report, reflecting on the final full year of operation of our Mobile Libraries, **we do so not only to look back but to celebrate what we achieved, the countless lives we touched, and the energy we continue to carry forward: the belief that stories can heal and that learning will always find its way, even in the darkest of times.**

With love and gratitude,

FRESHTA KARIM

FOUNDER, CHARMAGHZ

CO-FOUNDER, THE FRESHTA FOUNDATION

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DISCLAIMER

This report reflects Charmaghz's work and impact throughout 2024, the final full year of our Mobile Library and Book Lending program in Kabul.

In March 2025, after years of navigating complex operational realities, Charmaghz made the difficult decision to close its Mobile Libraries. At the time we closed our programs, this report was already underway. We have kept much of the original language and framing in honor of our work and the people who made it possible. We are releasing this report now to recognize the legacy of our Mobile Library program and to celebrate what it represented: a belief that learning and imagination could flourish even in the most difficult circumstances.

It captures a moment in time when our Mobile Libraries were still reaching tens of thousands of children each month and continuing to nurture curiosity in one of the most challenging contexts in the world.

While the programs described here have since come to a close, Charmaghz will continue our mission through The Freshta Foundation. We are now developing a new learning program, currently in the ideation phase, focused on online education for Afghan girls. We will share more about this next chapter through our social media channels as it takes shape.

The form of our work may evolve, but our purpose remains unchanged. We will continue to stand beside Afghan children, to create pathways for learning, and to protect the right of every child to dream and imagine a better future. We will never turn away from them.

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OUR IMPACT

**We have
reached
1.1 million
child visitors,
since 2018
including
52% visits
from girls**

6000

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

95%

of our staff are based in Afghanistan and 76% of them are women

90%

children visit our Mobile Libraries more than once

We worked in over
15 DISTRICTS

We worked with
11 PARTNERS

All data reflects cumulative reach as of December 2024, prior to the closure of the Mobile Library and Book Lending programs in March 2025.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - 2024

Developed a Child Safeguarding Policy

To create safer and more accountable learning spaces, we developed our own Child Safeguarding Policy in 2024. All team members, including part-time Librarians, have completed safeguarding training. This policy helps ensure that every child who interacts with Charmaghz does so in a secure, respectful, and protective environment.

Secured New Permissions and Expanded Our Reach

In 2024, we signed a new MoU with the Public Library Directorate in Kabul and received permission to operate in Bamyan, marking an important milestone for expansion beyond the capital. Although these plans could not come to life after our program's closure in early 2025, they reflect the growth and hope that defined our final year.

Strengthened our M&E Capacity

We established a dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) team to better measure our reach, impact, and areas for improvement. By digitizing data collection through tools such as KoBo Toolbox and Looker Studio, and by training our Librarians to use them, we made our data more reliable, accessible, and actionable.

Launched Our Book Lending Program

To meet the growing demand for books, especially among secondary school-aged girls, we introduced our Book Lending Program in 2024. Since its launch in September, more than 6,000 children have borrowed books, 64% of them girls. This initiative allowed children to continue learning at home and nurtured a love of reading beyond the reach of our Mobile Libraries.



3

AWARDS WON



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



Our Founder, **Freshta Karim**, joined the **Forum of Young Global Leaders** in Singapore, an inspiring gathering hosted by the **World Economic Forum** that brought together changemakers from around the globe.

With leaders working across education, AI, climate, and more, the forum sparked powerful conversations and new connections. We're excited to see how these global insights will continue to shape our work at Charmaghz.



Our Director, **Ahmad Siyam Barakati**, was selected as one of the **2024 Asia 21 Next Generation Fellows** by the **Asia Society**, an honor bestowed on 38 outstanding leaders from across the continent who are driving change and shaping a brighter future for Asia and the world.

As part of this recognition, Siyam participated in the Asia 21 Next Generation Fellows Summit held in Singapore. This prestigious platform brought together visionary leaders from diverse fields to exchange insights, share experiences, and explore pathways for collective impact.



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



In October 2024, Charmaghz was honored to be selected as a **2024 Successful Practices Honoree** by the **Library of Congress**. This was a proud moment that placed our work on a global stage.

Our Founder, Freshta Karim, along with team members, traveled to Washington, D.C. to receive the award at a special event hosted by the Library of Congress.

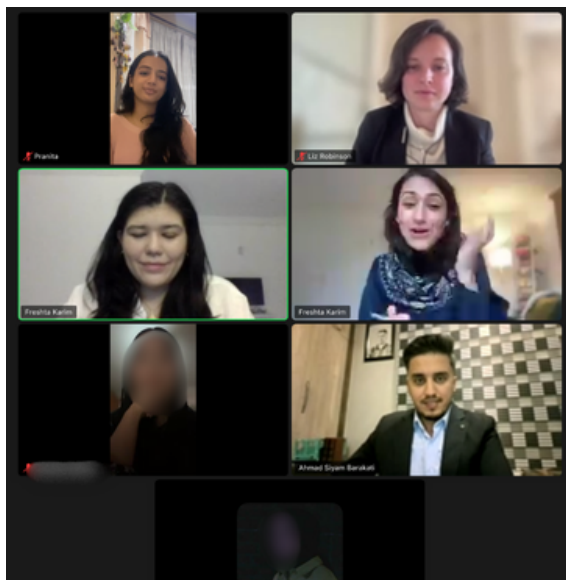


In October, alongside receiving recognition from the Library of Congress, we hosted **one of our first in-person gatherings in Washington, D.C.**, a heartfelt evening that brought together long-time supporters and new friends of Charmaghz.

This event was more than a celebration of the award; it was a space to share stories from the ground in Afghanistan, spotlighting the dedication of our team and the resilience of the children we serve.



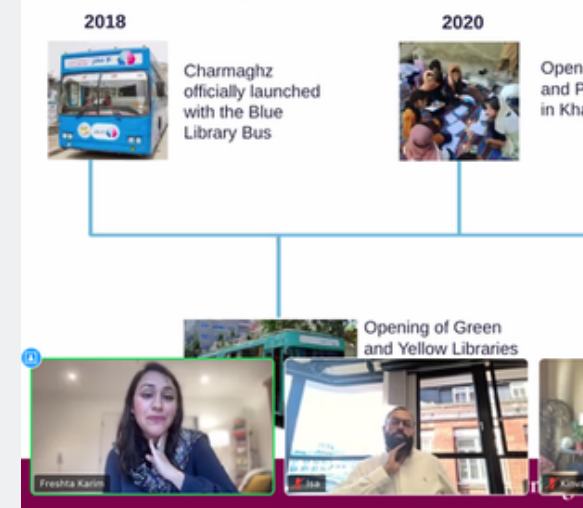
EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



In October 2024, we also hosted a "**Briefing from Kabul**", a **special online event** where we connected directly with our long-time supporters and donors.

During this, our team shared real-time updates from Kabul highlighting the current educational landscape, especially for girls, and how Charmaghz is navigating the ongoing political challenges. It was a meaningful opportunity to offer a transparent look into our work, reflect on our progress, and share our vision for the future.

Our Journey So Far...

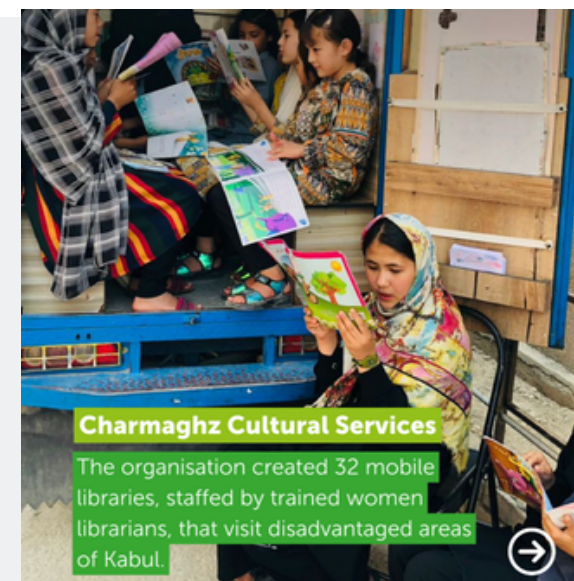


Theirworld

Meet the ten inspiring winners of Theirworld's fourth Education Innovation Awards

Charmaghz was honored as one of the winners of the **4th Education Innovation Awards** by **Theirworld**! This recognition celebrates our continued efforts to transform education for marginalized children in Afghanistan.

We're proud to be among 10 outstanding learning projects selected for their inspiring and impactful work in reimagining the future of education. This award fuels our commitment to reaching even more children with creative, community-driven learning solutions.



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



This year, our staff participated in several retreats and team-building activities designed to strengthen collaboration, enhance communication, and foster a positive work culture. These initiatives have played a vital role in reinforcing our shared values and boosting team morale.

Our team also traveled to Bamyan to explore opportunities for expansion and partnership. The visit reflected our spirit of curiosity, collaboration, and belief in reaching new communities with learning opportunities.



During the holy month of Ramadan, we hosted a special event to bring our team together in reflection and celebration. The gathering was an opportunity to recognize the dedication and hard work of our staff, while also marking our 7th anniversary.

It was a heartfelt moment that brought the entire team together, reinforcing our sense of community and shared purpose as we look ahead to the future.



MOBILE LIBRARY PROGRAM

Charmaghz began with a simple yet powerful idea: bringing books and learning opportunities to children in Afghanistan. In 2018, we transformed an old public bus into the country's first Mobile Library, a vibrant blue space filled with books, creativity, and hope. At a time when educational spaces were shrinking, this library on wheels became a symbol of possibility for Kabul's children.

By 2024, our impact had grown significantly. What began as a single bus had expanded into 17 Mobile Libraries that brought books and learning to children across Kabul. Our Bus Libraries provided safe spaces for reading and creativity, primarily serving the city's most disadvantaged children, while the Van Libraries extended this reach to remote and hard-to-access parts of the city, ensuring that even the most isolated communities could experience the joy of learning.

Reach



1,500 children accessed a safe and inspiring reading space every day



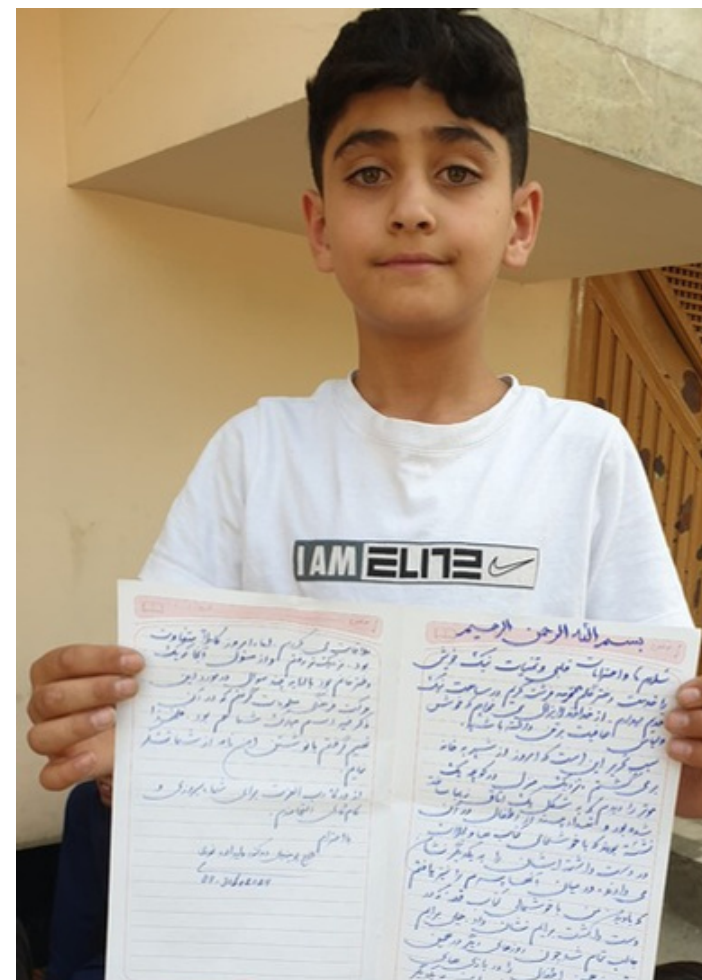
We operated **17 Mobile Libraries** across
15 districts in Kabul



57 Afghan women employed as part-time Librarians

MOBILE LIBRARY PROGRAM

We focused on some of Kabul's most disadvantaged neighborhoods, including urban slums where children faced extreme poverty and discrimination. Despite these challenges, the community's response was overwhelming. Families eagerly sent their children to our Mobile Libraries, and every day, we witnessed the transformative power of a simple idea: that learning should be accessible to every child, no matter where they live.



We received a letter in *Nastaliq* (a traditional Persian script used for writing Dari and Urdu) from a father in Kabul that touched our hearts deeply. During his visit to our Libraries, he discovered his son, Sayed, immersed in books instead of roaming the potentially dangerous streets. He expressed his gratitude for our efforts in creating these Libraries. This heartfelt moment underscores the impact of safe spaces we strive to create.

MENTAL HEALTH AT CHARMAGHZ



At Charmaghz, we understood that nurturing both the intellectual and emotional well-being of children was crucial. Our Mobile Libraries provided safe, supportive spaces where they could process emotions, build resilience, and develop emotional intelligence. Through play-based activities and a caring environment, children were encouraged to express themselves, focus on what they could control, and navigate challenges in healthy ways.

In 2024, we appointed a psychologist to better integrate mental health support into our programs. One of their key contributions was designing play-based activities that helped children identify personal goals, strengthen emotional intelligence, and build resilience.



One of the most memorable activities introduced that year was Future-Seeing Glasses. Each child created a pair of paper glasses and wore them to imagine what their future might look like. With their glasses on, they described or drew what they envisioned. The activity helped children articulate aspirations they already held while creating a joyful space to discover new ones. It encouraged them to shape and express their dreams, reminding them that their futures are worth imagining and reaching for.

Future-Seeing Glasses was just one of many creative activities in our Mobile Libraries. Each one was designed to spark curiosity, critical thinking, and emotional growth. Through storytelling, problem-solving, and role-playing, children explored their potential, expressed themselves freely, and kept their dreams alive because every child deserves to dream and to believe those dreams can come true.



Hear from Our Librarians

“One memory that will always stay with me is of Setara, a six-year-old girl who hadn’t spoken in over a year. Her mother said doctors couldn’t find a reason for her silence.

Over time, Setara grew fond of the library, especially storytelling and coloring. One day, she brought a cake but didn’t eat it. When it was time to leave, I called, ‘Setara, you forgot your cake.’

To everyone’s surprise, she spoke for the first time in 18 months: ‘Teacher, I brought that cake for you. If you tell me a story tomorrow, I’ll bring another.’

We’ll never know why she stopped speaking, but that moment will stay with all of us forever.”



BOOK-LENDING PROGRAM

Following the pilot phase of our Book Lending Program, which received overwhelmingly positive feedback from children and families, we officially launched the initiative in early 2024. This program addressed a critical gap, especially for Afghan girls who had been banned from attending school. By allowing children to take books home, the program promoted continued learning beyond the Mobile Libraries, nurturing a love for reading and supporting independent education.



Designed particularly for older children and those unable to participate in on-site library activities, the Book Lending Program ensured access to books and learning materials from the comfort of their homes. It also proved essential during temporary pauses in our operations due to extreme summer or winter conditions, helping children continue their reading journeys throughout the year.

Our Librarians observed enthusiastic participation, with both children and parents actively engaging in borrowing books, reflecting the deep desire for learning that continues to exist across the communities we served.

Reach

By the end of the year, **more than 6,000** children had borrowed books through the program, with **64% of borrowers being girls.**



FUTURE PATHWAY

In 2024, we expanded our Book Lending Program across all 17 Mobile Libraries, including both buses and vans, ensuring children in every corner of Kabul had access to books they could take home. We had also prepared to extend our Libraries to Bamyan, aiming to reach even more underserved and remote communities so that every child could have the opportunity to read, learn, and dream.

Looking ahead at that time, we envisioned expanding the program further by introducing book clubs for teenage girls. These clubs would allow girls to connect over stories, build leadership skills, and strengthen their relationship with literature. With the closure of our Mobile Libraries, running these book clubs through the buses and vans was no longer possible. However, in 2025 we launched online book clubs, and this program will continue going forward.

While our dreams of expanding the Libraries and their services were cut short, our vision of providing critical literacy support is taking shape in new dreams. While we close the chapter of our Libraries, we welcome in a new beginning that we cannot wait to share.



Zainab is 9 years old and in 4th grade. One day, she walked into our Mobile Library with her first storybook—one she had written herself, creating the characters, storyline, and illustrations. In a country where few female authors have had the chance to share their stories, Zainab dreams of becoming an author. However, her path is not easy. In two years, she will complete primary school, but she won't be allowed to continue her education. Girls in Afghanistan are banned from attending school beyond grade six.

Will Zainab's dream come true? Will we ever see her book published?





Hear from Our Librarians

“ Salam is 13 years-old and in 4th grade. He is a child who works on the streets. Despite being a street child and facing hardships, he brings joy to others and radiates happiness himself, despite the challenges he endures in his own life.

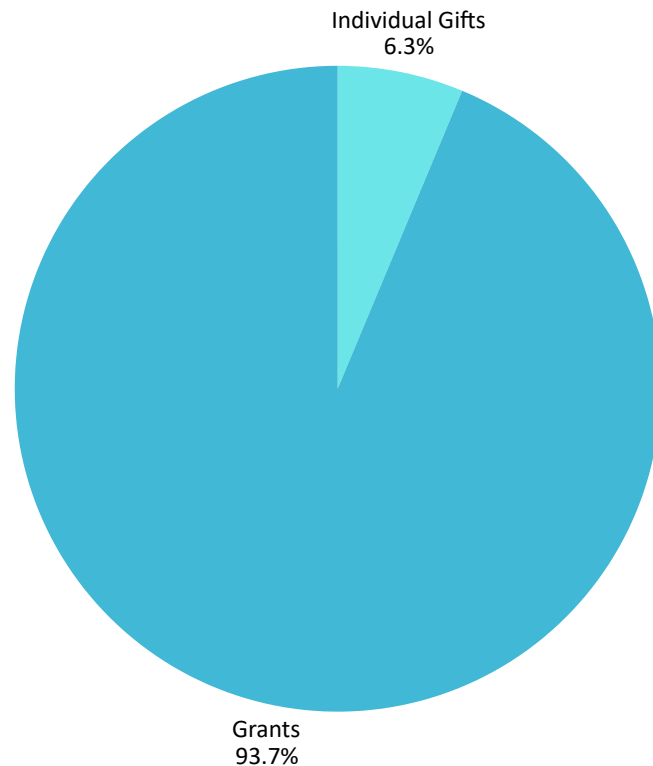
One thing about him is that he always remembers the names of the story's characters and also rehearses parts of the tale in the Library. He becomes the source of motivation for other children to read the story which was just rehearsed. ”

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

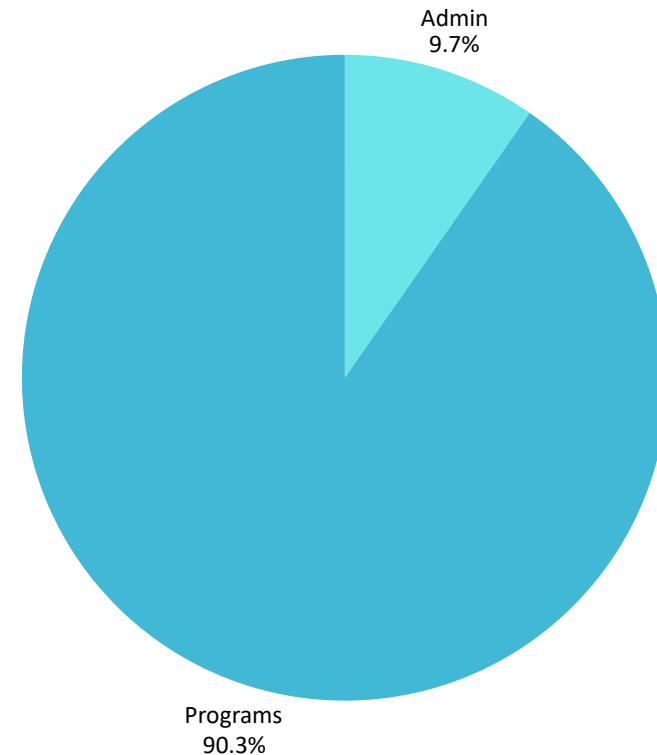
Charmaghz is committed to transparency and accountability in managing our financial resources. We sustain our programs through a diverse funding base, with support from foundations, institutional donors, and individual contributors.

Since 2021, we have shifted towards a mix of restricted and unrestricted funding, with the majority now coming from foundations. Past audits can be accessed on our website.

2024 Revenue - \$354,321



2024 Expenditure - \$347,357



LOOKING AHEAD

As we reflect on all that was achieved in 2024, we also look towards what lies ahead for our mission. The years of running our Mobile Libraries have taught us that while spaces may close, **ideas and imagination continue to move forward.**

Charmaghz will now continue under **The Freshta Foundation**, where we are exploring new and creative ways to reach Afghan children, especially **girls who have been denied access to formal education.** We are in the early stages of developing an **online education initiative for Afghan girls**, shaped by the lessons and spirit of our work through Charmaghz.

To prepare for this, we have already held **16 initial conversations with peer organizations**, including groups working in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Kenya, and around the world. **Our aim is to be ready to launch the program in Spring 2026.** We will share updates and progress along the way through our social media platforms, and we invite you to follow us there to stay connected.

This new program builds on our **legacy of bringing learning to children in creative and accessible ways.** Our goal is to create a **safe and innovative online platform** that provides quality learning opportunities for girls across Afghanistan. Through this initiative, we hope to ensure that girls can continue to learn, grow, and imagine their futures, even in the face of restrictions.

While the form of our work is evolving, our purpose remains unchanged. We will continue to **stand beside Afghan children, to protect their right to learn, and to keep imagination alive.** Our commitment to **ensuring a peaceful and equitable future for all Afghans** remains at the heart of all that we do.

The past few months have been deeply bittersweet for our team. We have grieved, reflected, reminisced, and honored our work in many ways, big and small.

We've also started planning for what's next - and yes, there absolutely will be a 'next'. Despite the uncertainty, loss, and hesitation that have cut through so many of our recent conversations, the one thing we have **never** questioned is that we will continue our mission to serve and accompany Afghan children in their lifelong pursuit of learning.

Right now, that pursuit is exceptionally difficult - if not literally impossible - for millions of girls and boys in Kabul, Balkh, Kandahar, Uruzgan, and in each of Afghanistan's 30 other provinces.

We are actively designing a new education program that will directly address these challenges, focusing on the 2.2 million Afghan girls who have been cut off from learning, and from the future they had envisioned for themselves.

We'll have much more to share in the coming months. In the meantime, I can't help but linger on the words of Octavia Butler, which feel particularly apt for both the challenges faced by Afghan girls, and for the moment we find ourselves in, as an organization: "There's no single answer that will solve all of our future problems. There's no magic bullet. Instead there are thousands of answers, at least. You can be one of them if you choose to be."

Charmaghz has chosen to be an answer.



— Liz Robinson
Co-founder, The Freshta Foundation

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Donors

E V C A
FOUNDATION



GROUNDBREAKER



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AWARDS**
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OF CONGRESS

Theirworld



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MALALA FUND

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omprakash



Boum-e-Dana



and many individuals who have
supported Charmaghz

OUR 2024 TEAM



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Liz Robinson (Co-founder, The Freshta Foundation)
Rachel Hinton
Susan Ayeri
Atiq Sahibzada
Sarah Ryder

Our team brought together 88 dedicated members, 95% of whom were Afghan and 76% women. Their passion, creativity, and resilience defined Charmaghz and continue to inspire our work today.

Donate to support
our work

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our progress

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