



WELCOME TO

Abaad's Newsletter



A youth-led program under Abaad: Afghan Women Forward

EMPOWERING

Afghan girls through education & career development

EAGT Initiative Update

Empower Afghan Girls Together (EAGT) is a youth led initiative of Abaad: Afghan Women Forward, providing Afghan girls with free, high-quality online courses in English, programming, design, personal and career development. With the support of experienced mentors and educators, EAGT opens pathways to learning, growth, and global opportunity.

Explore the journey. Discover the impact. Be part of the change.

↓ In this newsletter you will find:

Latest programs, partnerships, workshops, and more. Keep Reading Inside!

ABAAD: AFGHAN WOMEN FORWARD

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Mission Statement

Abaad was created to alleviate poverty and hunger by empowering and providing women the resources and skills they need to stand on their own and support their families financially and contribute to their communities' betterment.

Vision Statement

Abaad envisions an Afghanistan where women are recognized as valuable members of their families and communities and have access to resources to contribute to their country's economic, social, and political stability.

Programs Offered by Abaad



Humanitarian Assistance

Providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable women, with a special emphasis on survivors of domestic violence. Additionally, we will design and conduct a mapping project to identify grass-roots humanitarian organizations and resources for women and families at high risk of homelessness and hunger, and connect our beneficiaries to these resources.



EAGT - Empower Afghan Girls Together

Empower Afghan Girls Together (EAGT), a youth-led initiative under ABAAD, provides essential education and empowerment opportunities to Afghan girls, equipping them with the skills, confidence, and visibility needed to succeed in their education and careers.



Human Rights through the Lens of Islam

Empower Afghan Girls Together (EAGT), a youth-led initiative under ABAAD, provides essential education and empowerment opportunities to Afghan girls, equipping them with the skills, confidence, and visibility needed to succeed in their education and careers.

Abaad: Afghan Women Forward was established after the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan in August 2021 by Masuda Sultan, Sunita Viswanath, and Jazmine Shaw. It was founded to respond to the urgent needs of Afghan women and their families, especially survivors of domestic violence.

Since its founding, Abaad has supported over 100 families and continues to provide essential aid, advocacy, and protection. As a nonprofit, its mission is rooted in restoring hope, dignity, and opportunity to Afghan women and their communities.

Today, Abaad remains committed to empowering Afghan women through sustained efforts in education, remote employment, and advocacy. The organization continues to respond to emerging needs by offering structured support, expanding learning opportunities, and enabling women and girls to rebuild their lives with dignity and stability - both inside Afghanistan and beyond.



WELCOME TO

EAGT - Empower Afghan Girls Together

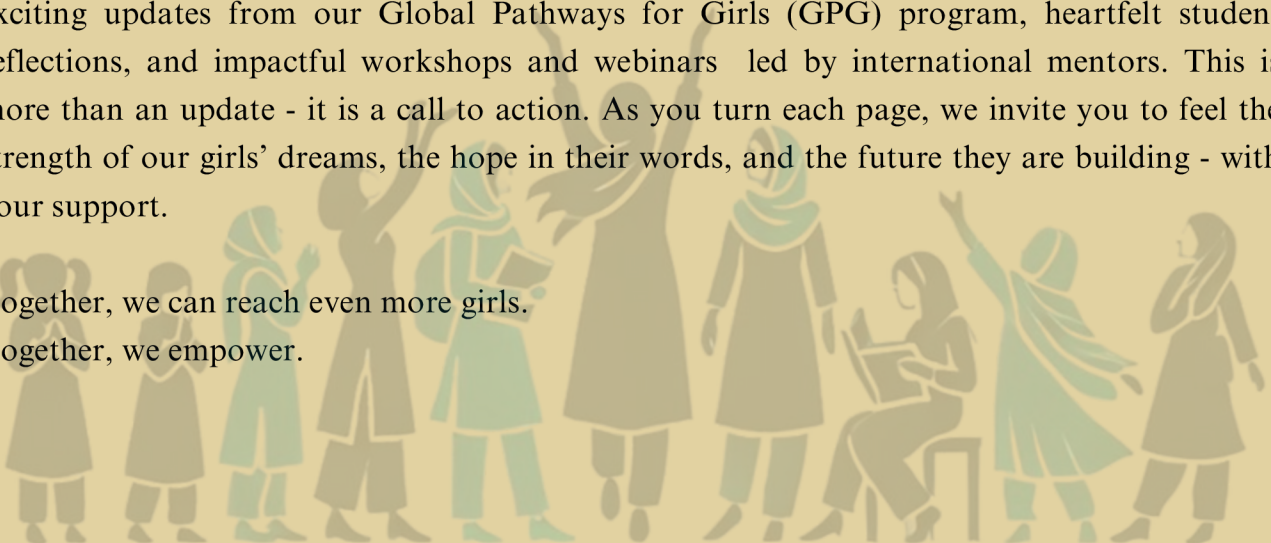
Dear Change Makers,

We are delighted to welcome you to the latest update from Empower Afghan Girls Together (EAGT) a transformative initiative by Abaad: Afghan Women Forward dedicated to educating, inspiring, and empowering Afghan girls through accessible, high quality online learning.

Since our inception, EAGT has grown into a vibrant learning community with 2,000+ enrolled students, supported by a passionate team of teachers, mentors, and global partners. From foundational English and coding courses, to Duolingo preparation, calligraphy, and graphic design — our mission is clear: to ensure Afghan girls can dream boldly and learn freely, no matter where they are.

In this newsletter, you will explore the stories, voices, and visions behind EAGT including exciting updates from our Global Pathways for Girls (GPG) program, heartfelt student reflections, and impactful workshops and webinars led by international mentors. This is more than an update - it is a call to action. As you turn each page, we invite you to feel the strength of our girls' dreams, the hope in their words, and the future they are building - with your support.

Together, we can reach even more girls.
Together, we empower.



Behind each of our programs stands a committed team that brings every detail to life. From planning and coordination to design and communication, our success is driven by teamwork. Behind each of our programs is a team committed to purpose and progress.



Sayed Abdul Karim Haqiq

Program Development Officer at ABAAD
Program Director at EAGT



Zohal M. Kazim

Program Coordinator at ABAAD
Operation Director at EAGT



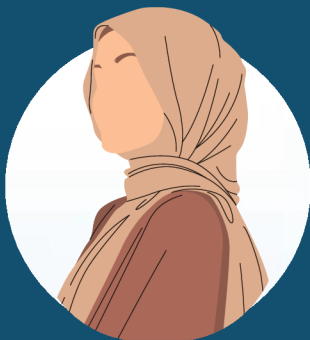
Tamana Jan Mohammad Kazim

Marketing, Communication & Media Coordinator at ABAAD
Public Relation Director at EAGT



Yasna Rarekh

Graphic Designer



Maryam Monib

Administrative Assistant



Fara Ibrahim

Administrative Assistant at EAGT
GPG Moderator

The Program Director leads with vision and strategy, shaping the overall direction of our initiatives and ensuring alignment with our mission. The Operations Director ensures that planning, execution, and internal communication run smoothly across all functions. The Program Assistant supports daily tasks and coordination with precision. Our Public Relations lead helps build trust and visibility through meaningful engagement with our audiences. The Marketing, Communication & Media Coordinator manages outreach and storytelling, while our Graphic Designer brings each visual element to life with professionalism. Together, this team helps shape the impact and integrity of our work.

September 2024 - May 2025

Total Applications Received for EAGT Courses

3600 +

Female Students

Total Number of Students Enrolled EAGT Courses

700 +

Female Students

Total Number of Graduate Students

1500 +

Female Students

Total Number of Employees

31

Employees

15 Local | 16 International

Total Number of Online Courses

18

September 2024 - May 2025

Total Students Enrolled & Benefited by Cisco Networking

720 +

Female Students

Total Students Enrolled & Benefited by DataCamp

250 +

Female Students

Total Students Enrolled & Benefited by Duolingo

150 +

Female Students

Total Students Enrolled & Benefited by Yoodli AI

480 +

Female Students

At the heart of our mission lies the dedication and passion of our instructors. Their commitment to empowering and educating our students, often in challenging environments, is what transforms lives and drives meaningful change.



Bushra Bahar Sattari

English A1



Tawos Nazari

English A2



Mursal Begzad

English B1



Sogol Baloch

English B2



Caitlin Thiede

English C1



Khatera Nazari

Programming - HTML



Farzana Mirzaie

Programming - HTML



Mozhdeh Marvi

Programming - Python



Sonita Rahmani

Graphic Design

Each lesson they teach is more than just knowledge, it is a step toward confidence, opportunity, and hope. Their efforts are the foundation of our community's growth, and we deeply appreciate the role they play in shaping a brighter future for every student who joins us.

English Courses

Our English program, ranging from A1 to C1 levels, is designed to support learners at every stage of their language journey. Whether building foundational grammar or mastering advanced communication skills, students are guided through structured, interactive lessons that promote fluency, confidence, and real-world application. These courses have become a vital tool for personal, academic, and professional growth helping hundreds of Afghan girls expand their opportunities and find their voice in a global context.

“The teacher is very kind and knowledgeable. The courses are great, and the Abaad community helps me continue my education journey.

Mahdeia Amiri
A1 English Student



“I’m truly happy and thankful for this course. Our teacher is kind, supportive, and always helps us improve. I’m also grateful to Abaad for this great opportunity, it’s helping me build my skills and confidence.

Lima Mohammadi
A2 English Student



“This is my first class in Abaad’s EAGT initiative, and I’m already improving thanks to my intelligent teacher, Mursal Begzad. She manages the class so well, and I’m truly proud of her. I deeply thank the Abaad team and my teacher for helping us grow.

Razia Merzayee
B1 English Student



“I strongly encourage Afghan girls to join any class that matches their interest. This is a great opportunity, and the instructors are responsible, dedicated, and truly do their best to support us.

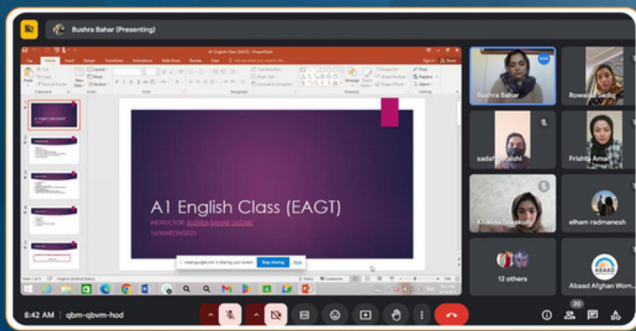
Hadia Haqiq
B2 English Student



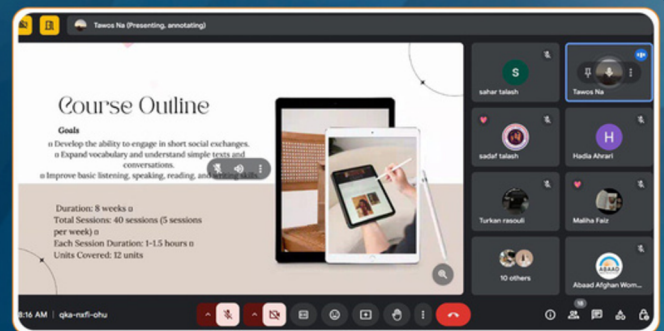
“Joining the C1 English course at ABAAD has been one of the best decisions I’ve made. I’ve learned so much, not only about language, but also about believing in myself. Our teacher has been supportive, patient, and really skilled at explaining everything clearly. Abaad has created a safe and motivating space for girls like me to grow. I’m truly grateful for this opportunity and excited about what’s ahead.

Muzhgan Akbari
C1 English Student

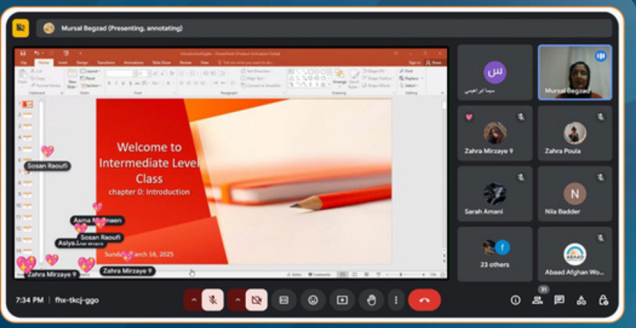




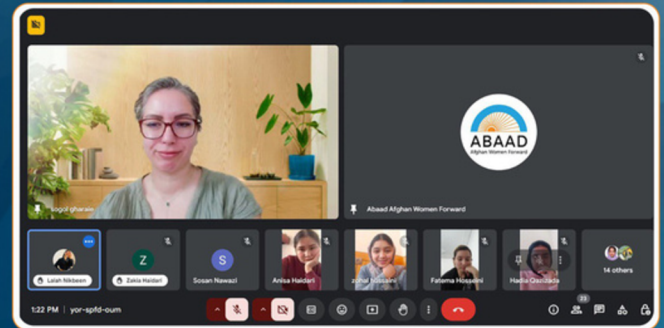
English A1



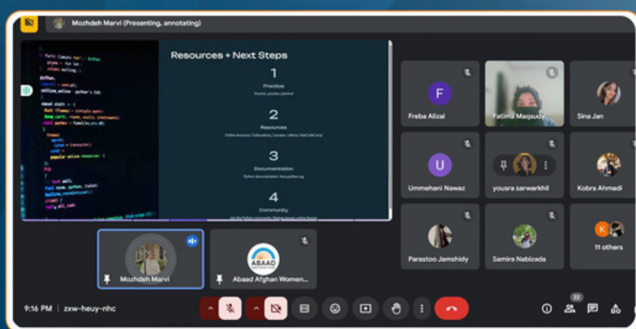
English A2



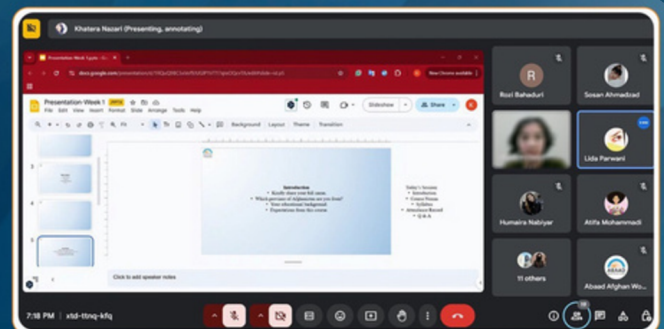
English B1



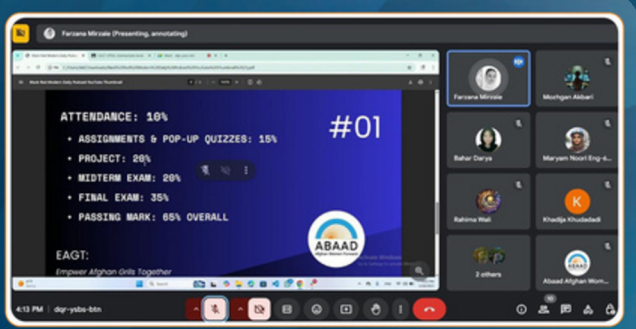
English B2



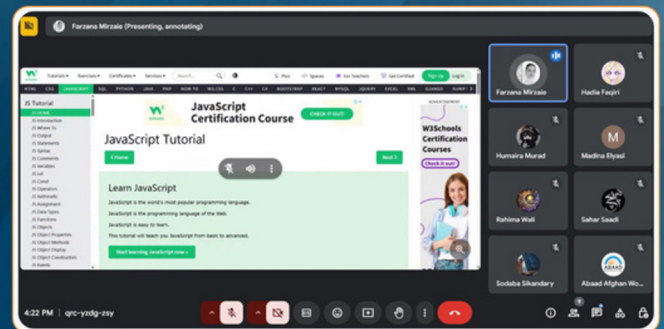
Python Beginner



HTML Beginner




HTML Beginner



HTML Advanced

Programming Courses


Over 150+ girls have enrolled and benefited from our programming courses, covering beginner to advanced levels in HTML and Python. These courses are designed to equip Afghan girls with essential tech skills for the digital world. From building basic web pages to developing functional websites and understanding the logic behind coding, students are introduced to both front-end design and foundational programming concepts. Through structured, hands-on lessons, they gain confidence in problem-solving, creativity, and technical thinking. These courses have opened doors to new career paths and learning opportunities - empowering participants to become creators, not just users, of technology.



“ One of the things I truly appreciated about this course was the teaching style of the instructors. Each teacher had their own unique and effective method of delivering lessons. They always came prepared with complete materials, which they also shared in the class groups (Collesiums), making it easy for us to access and review the content anytime.

I am deeply grateful to the Abaad organization for organizing various valuable courses completely free of charge. This kind of support means a lot, especially for students who are eager to learn but have limited resources.

Bahara Lalzai
Python Student



“ This course was my first step into the world of data, and it gave me a new way to look at information. The teacher was kind, clear, and supportive, which made me feel comfortable and motivated to learn. I really appreciated how everything was explained simply, especially for someone like me with no background in coding. Abaad gave me the opportunity to learn something powerful, and I will always be thankful for their support. This experience made me believe that I can grow and succeed, no matter the challenges. To all the girls who want to join: Don't be afraid. You don't need to be an expert or know everything before you start. Just have the courage to begin. Learning data skills can open new doors for your future, and you are smart and strong enough to do it. Believe in yourself you belong here.

Marjan Habibi
HTML Student

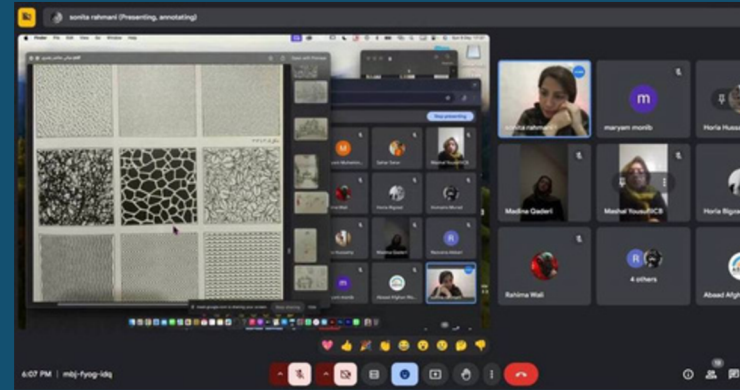
“Graphic design has been a journey of self expression, creativity, and growth. Every pixel tells a story, every shape evokes a feeling, and every color opens a new world. I'm deeply grateful to my amazing teacher, Sonita, for her invaluable guidance and endless support. Thank you to Abaad for creating opportunities like this that empower us to grow and shine.

Horia Begzard
Graphic Design Student



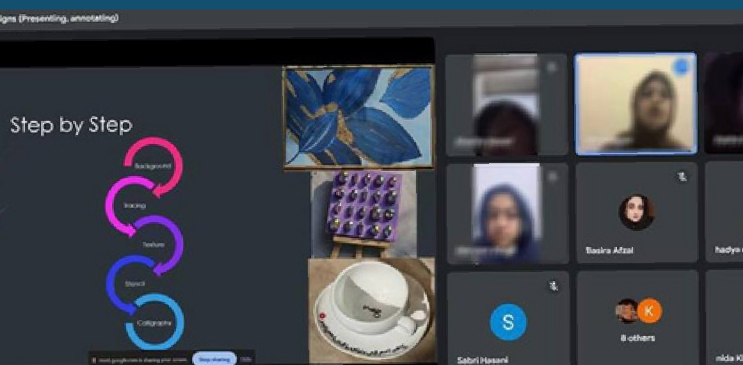
Graphic Design Courses

Our Graphic Design course empowers students to learn digital design skills. They create stunning visuals, from social media posts to posters, building confidence in both creativity and technology. To date, over 250 students have enrolled and grown through this course.



Calligraphy Courses

Our Graphic Design course continues to empower students with valuable digital skills, enabling them to create impactful visuals ranging from social media posts to posters. This course not only enhances creativity but also builds confidence in using modern design tools. With 50+ students enrolled so far, the course has been a remarkable journey of growth and innovation. We are especially proud to recognize the top three students who were awarded prizes for their hard work, creativity, and outstanding performance throughout the course.



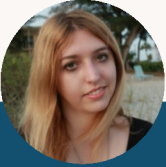
“I'm truly grateful to have been part of the Calligraphy Course through Abaad's EAGT initiative. Miss Dua's inspiring teaching made each class engaging and enjoyable. Her clear guidance and encouraging feedback helped me grow more confident in my skills. This experience has deepened my passion for art, and I look forward to exploring more opportunities in this field.



Husna Nazari
Calligraphy Student

DUOLINGO PREPARATION #14

The Duolingo English Test preparation course has successfully supported over 150 students in its first round. Led by three dedicated instructors Brittany Strelluf, Mila Hover, and Yosr Mehri. The course provided targeted lessons, mock tests, and continuous feedback to help students build the confidence and skills needed to succeed. With the help of special coupon codes, many students were able to take the official Duolingo test free of cost.



“ I had the pleasure of teaching the Duolingo English test preparation course to a group of brilliant, creative, interesting, and kind young women. It is an incredible experience to share culture and language together.

~Brittany Strelluf



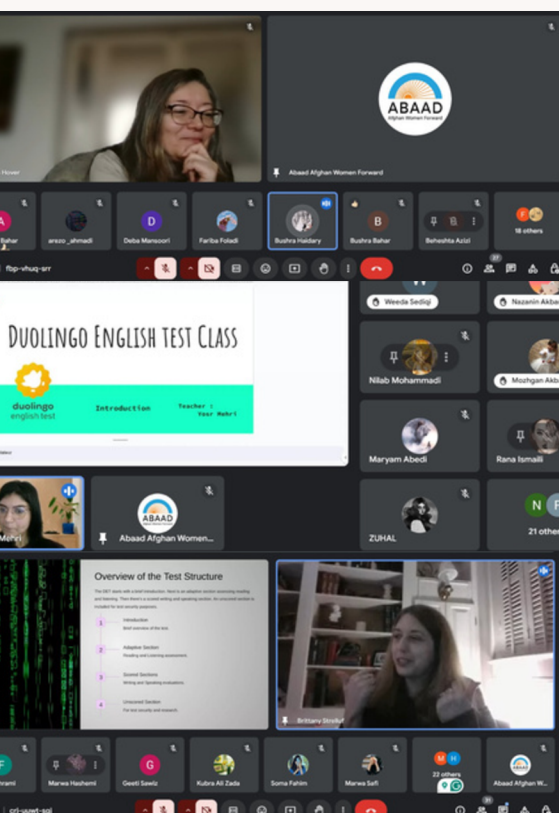
“ I am excited to combine my two passions: teaching and connecting women with opportunities that empower them to reach their potential as vital social and economic forces in their communities. It is my privilege to be an ally for positive change.

~Mila Hover



“ Teaching the Duolingo course with Abaad has been one of the most inspiring experiences I've had. What really stood out was the strength and determination of the Afghan girls I worked with, they brought so much courage and curiosity to every session. One of the highlights was seeing how their confidence grew, especially seeing their results in both the mock test and the actual Duolingo test, where all their hard work truly paid off. I'm really looking forward to supporting more young women on this journey and watching them pursue the opportunities they so deeply deserve.

~ Yosr Mehri



Many of the girls enrolled in our Duolingo preparation course are aspiring to gain admission to universities, where the Duolingo English Test serves as a crucial requirement. Through our valued partnership with Duolingo, more than 150 students from the first round were able to access official test coupons and successfully complete their exams. This initiative has played a vital role in advancing educational access and opportunity for Afghan girls.

Following the success of the initial round, a second cohort comprising 150+ students has commenced under the continued leadership of instructors Ms. Brittany, Ms. Mila, and Ms. Yosr. The program remains committed to providing high-quality instruction, practice assessments, and strategic preparation. As we move forward, we aim to strengthen this initiative further and extend its reach to support even more students in achieving their academic goals.

As a continuation of our Duolingo English Test preparation initiative, this section highlights the remarkable accomplishments of two top-performing students from the first round. Their outstanding scores reflect both their personal dedication and the strength of the program delivered by our committed instructors. Through their testimonials, we share not only their academic success but also the impact of access, support, and quality instruction on the educational journeys of Afghan girls.



“

Preparing for the Duolingo English Test taught me how capable and resilient I truly am. It helped me build confidence in my English skills and opened doors to new academic opportunities I once thought were out of reach. The journey taught me the importance of consistency and self-belief. The support I received from my teacher, the prep course, and Abaad made all the difference in helping me reach my goal.

~ Sidra



“

Taking the Duolingo English Test has been a transformative experience. It helped me recognize my strengths, build confidence in my language skills, and inspired me to aim higher in my academic and professional journey. The preparation process taught me discipline, time management, and the value of consistent practice. I'm deeply grateful to my teacher for their dedication, to the Duolingo preparation course for its structured support, and to Abaad for providing this valuable opportunity.

~ Rabila

While we highlight two of our highest-scoring students, their success is part of a broader achievement many other participants in our Duolingo preparation course also performed remarkably well. Their accomplishments are a testament to the commitment of our students and the supportive environment fostered by our instructors.

Building on this momentum, we are preparing to launch the next round of Duolingo preparation. With the continued support of our dedicated teachers and learning partners, we look forward to empowering a new group of Afghan girls to meet their academic goals and take confident steps toward university admission and beyond.

As part of our Global Pathway for Girls mentorship program, we're proud to introduce the mentors who are opening doors to international education for Afghan girls. Through GPG, students are directly connected with mentors based on their country of interest. From understanding the application process to reviewing personal statements, our mentors are here every step of the way.



Kimberley Lord

Canada



Riya Sirkhell

Canada



Sheerin Ibrahim

Australia



Le' Marqunita Lowe

USA



Maria Gabriela Parraga Espinoza

Germany



Tauri Tomlin

USA



Alice Del Duca

Italy



Mercy Ngala

Italy



Mantasha Riyaz

Germany

These exceptional mentors from seven countries - the UK, USA, Canada, Italy, Australia, Germany, and France, bring a wealth of experience and insight into the world of international education. offer expert guidance on scholarships, university applications, and studying abroad. More than advisors, they are supportive role models, helping Afghan girls navigate their academic journey with confidence.



“ I was inspired by the grit and determination of young Afghan girls and women wanting to advance and break barriers despite going through so many hardships. It was a joy to connect with the students wanting to make a difference in this world through their dedication to pursue higher education. I’m committed to supporting this initiative to provide Afghan girls with opportunities and mentorship for a better future.

~Riya Sirkhell



“ As a volunteer with Afghan Women Forward, I really enjoyed how researching educational scholarships provided women with a roadmap for achieving a financial education in the United States. Many of the women came to the webinars with questions, which helped to guide how the scholarships can benefit their personal journeys. The ABAAD staff was professional, kind, and kept consistent communication. The webinar was organized and led by an efficient moderator.

~Le' Marqunita



“ Volunteering with Abaad has been an eye-opening experience and it’s incredible that such an organization exists, one that builds a bridge between people from completely different parts of the world and makes connection feel simple and human.

~Alice Del Duca



“ I really appreciate the opportunity to conduct the webinars. it was a great experience, and I'm glad to have been part of it.

~ Sheerin Ibrahim

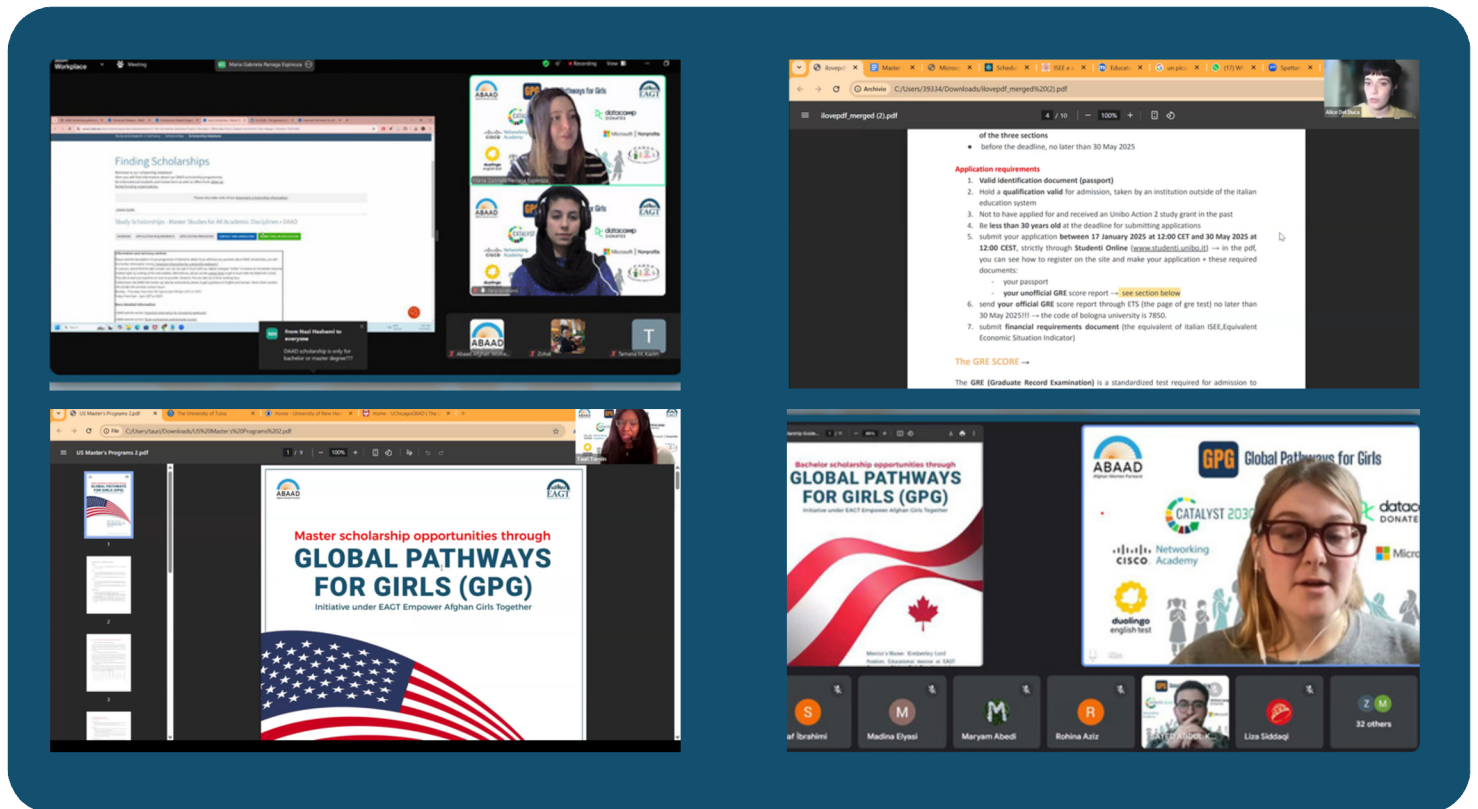


“ Being an educational mentor broadened my horizons to the different experiences of Afghan girls. I loved getting to know them and was motivated by their dedication and drive to achieve their dreams. It was really gratifying to help them gain a bigger picture of the educational system and application process to scholarships and universities and to be able to identify and tackle challenges together.

I want to encourage any prospective or future mentors to engage in this motivating work. Navigating application processes for scholarships and universities is always confusing and overwhelming, and those of us who have undergone it know well how big of a difference a helping hand can make. Think about what you would need to know about the country and application process and don't be afraid to go the extra mile, you'll be happy that you did!

~ Maria Parraga

As part of the Global Pathways for Girls initiative, we organize informative webinars weekly where mentors present international scholarship opportunities to aspiring students. These sessions are recorded and shared on our YouTube channel for wider access. Interested students then go through an internal evaluation process, and those selected are matched with mentors for guidance tailored to their chosen country and university.



“



Being part of the GPG Program as a moderator has been one of the inspiring experiences I've ever had. The webinars focused on scholarship opportunities for Afghan girls to open doors to global education and empowerment. Also, I had the privilege of working with a team of dedicated and knowledgeable educational mentors from ABAAD under the EAGT initiative. Each of them was well-qualified and delivered impactful and engaging webinars. ~ Fara Ibrahimi
Moderator

“



Coordinating the GPG program has required careful planning, consistent communication, and a deep commitment to the goals we set for our students. Supporting Afghan girls in accessing mentorship and academic guidance has been both a responsibility and a privilege. I am proud of the structure we've built and the impact it continues to make. ~ Tamana M. Kazim
GPG Coordinator

EAGT COMPETITION

#19

GUIDING VOICES BEHIND THE STORIES

To celebrate the voices of Afghan girls, we launched a Short Story Writing Competition that invited creativity, courage, and self-expression. The competition began with 50 passionate participants who shared compelling narratives shaped by their dreams and realities. Their stories reflected not only imagination but also the strength and spirit of a generation determined to be heard.

“ BEING A JUDGE FOR THE SHORT STORY WRITING COMPETITION WAS A TRULY UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE. THE STORIES, BEAUTIFULLY WRITTEN BY AFGHAN WOMEN, WERE FILLED WITH STRENGTH, RESILIENCE, AND DEEP EMOTION. IT WAS A TRUE HONOR TO WITNESS THEIR VOICES SHINE SO BRIGHTLY.

~Yosr Mehri
Panelist



“ IT WAS AN ABSOLUTE HONOR TO SERVE AS A JUDGE FOR THE SHORT STORY WRITING COMPETITION. WITNESSING THE CREATIVITY, DEPTH AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE THESE YOUNG WRITERS BROUGHT TO THEIR STORIES WAS TRULY INSPIRING. EACH SUBMISSION REFLECTED A UNIQUE VOICE AND PERSPECTIVE, MAKING THE JUDGING PROCESS BOTH CHALLENGING AND REWARDING. I'M PROUD TO HAVE BEEN PART OF A PLATFORM THAT ENCOURAGES GIRLS TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES THROUGH STORYTELLING AND TO SEE FIRSTHAND THE POWER OF THEIR WORDS IN SHAPING MEANINGFUL NARRATIVES.

~Nida Khan
Panelist



“ IT WAS A JOY TO JUDGE THE SHORT STORY WRITING CONTEST. THE STUDENTS ALL CRAFTED MAGICAL STORIES THAT REFLECTED THEIR UNIQUE EXPERIENCES. I WAS ESPECIALLY MOVED BY THEIR TAKES ON THE THEMES OF NATURE AND THE BEAUTY WE FIND THERE.

~Brittany Strelluf
Panelist



“ I WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE SENSITIVITY TOWARD AND AWARENESS OF NATURE DEMONSTRATED BY THE WRITERS.

BRAVO TO THESE YOUNG LADIESTHEY HAVE TACKLED VERY DIFFICULT TOPICS WITH SUCH FEARLESSNESS! AS ALWAYS, I HAVE BEEN HUMBLLED!

~Mila Hover
Panelist



“ COORDINATING THE COMPETITION WAS A REWARDING EXPERIENCE. I'M PROUD TO HAVE HELPED CREATE A SPACE WHERE YOUNG WRITERS COULD EXPRESS THEIR CREATIVITY AND BE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR TALENT.

~Tamana M. Kazim
Competition Coordinator



“ HOLDING WORKSHOPS IS A BIG PART OF MY CAREER AS A WRITER. THIS ONE IS VERY SPECIAL TO ME - THE PARTICIPANTS WERE HIGHLY INTERACTIVE, BOTH WITH THEIR WRITING PROMPTS AND THE MEMOIR-WRITING EXERCISE. THE PIECES THEY SHARED WITH ME IN THE CHAT GAVE ME A UNIQUE GLIMPSE INTO THEIR WORLD.

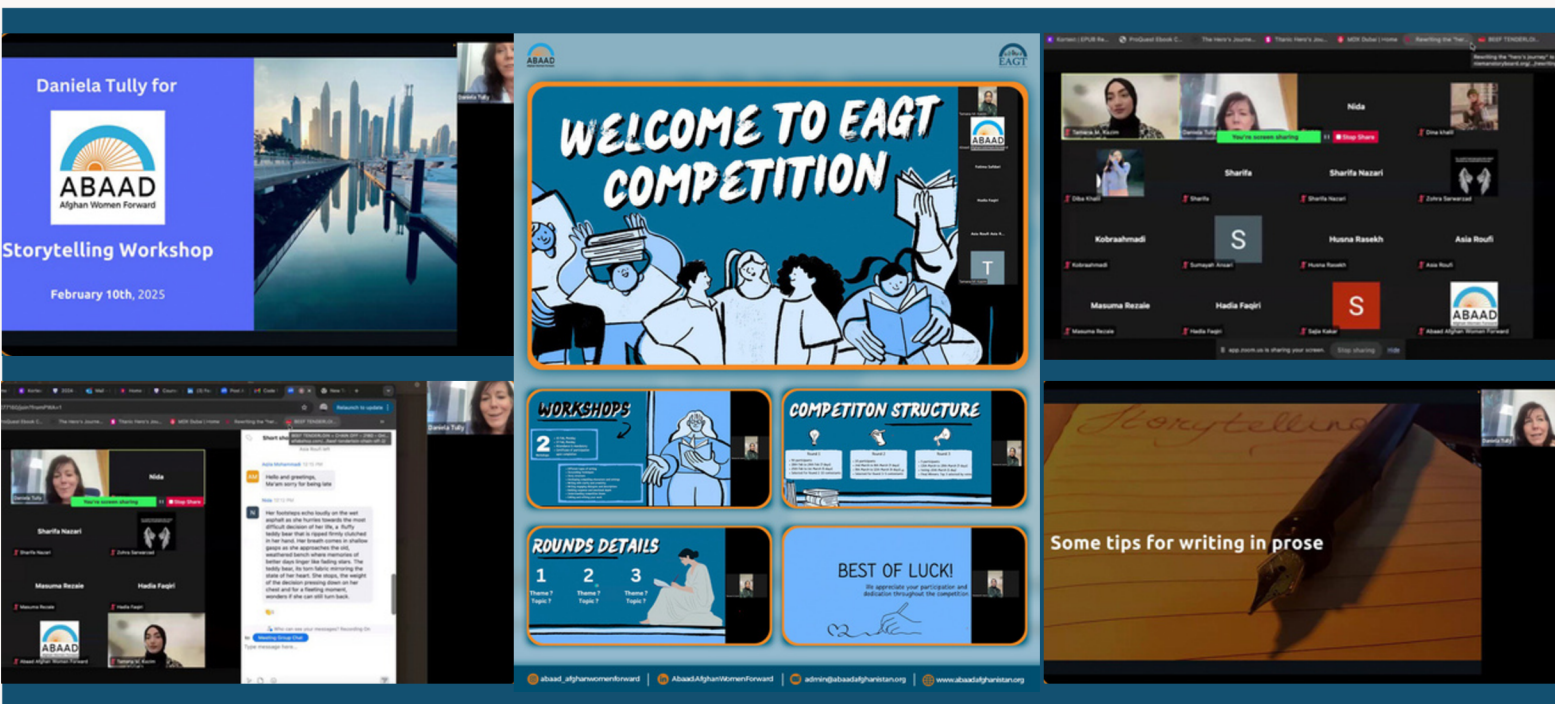
~Daniela Tully
Workshop Mentor



The Short Story Writing Competition brought together talented young writers in both fiction and nonfiction categories across three rounds of evaluation. With guidance from mentor Professor Daniela Tully and the careful review of a four-member judging panel, the competition highlighted originality, voice, and narrative depth. The competition was thoughtfully organized and led by Tamana M. Kazim, whose efforts ensured a smooth and inspiring experience for all involved.

As part of our Short Story Writing Competition, a storytelling workshop was conducted under the guidance of Professor Daniela Tully, an accomplished author and filmmaker. The session provided participants with valuable insights into narrative structure, character development, and more, setting a strong foundation for their writing journey.

Throughout the workshop, participants explored key elements of effective storytelling, including narrative structure, pacing, and character development. Professor Tully offered practical strategies and examples to help refine the writers' approach, encouraging them to think critically about how to craft compelling and meaningful narratives.



“WE ALWAYS LEARN IN SUCH PROGRAMS, BUT THIS PROGRAM WAS DIFFERENT. WE WERE CHALLENGED TO SHOWCASE OUR TALENTS AND WRITING ABILITIES. THE NICE POINT WAS THIS ALTHOUGH I WAS DOING MY BEST FOR THE COMPETITION, BUT THERE WAS SOMEONE WHO DID MORE, AND YOU CAN LEARN A LOT OF NEW THINGS AS YOU WERE READING THEIR STORIES. ABAAD DID A GREAT JOB BY CREATING SUCH AN INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY. I'VE BEEN ALWAYS EXCITED SEEING SUCH A COOL ENVIRONMENT IN ALL ABAAD LEARNING PLATFORMS AND THE WORKSHOPS WERE REALLY USEFUL. EACH OF WORKSHOP WAS LIKE A PATHWAY FOR ME EXPLAINING THE STORYTELLING CLEARLY.

~Fatima Safdari
Competition Participant

The workshop also created space for interactive dialogue, allowing participants to ask questions, share ideas, and receive direct feedback. This engagement with an industry professional offered valuable perspective and helped build confidence among the writers as they prepared their submissions.

By the end of the session, participants left not only with enhanced technical knowledge but also with a renewed sense of purpose in their writing. The workshop served as both a skill-building opportunity and a motivational boost, contributing to the strong and thoughtful entries seen throughout the competition.

EAGT COMPETITION

#21

SHORT STORY WRITING COMPETITION WINNERS

We are delighted to highlight the top three winners of our Short Story Writing Competition. Chosen from over 50 talented participants, their stories captured the judges' attention through originality, compelling narratives, and emotional depth. These winning pieces reflect the voices, dreams, and resilience of Afghan youth, and we look forward to sharing them with our community.



“ THIS COMPETITION WAS A TRULY AMAZING OPPORTUNITY FOR ME. IT ALLOWED ME TO EXPERIENCE WHAT IT'S LIKE TO WRITE IN DIFFERENT THEMES, WHICH I HADN'T REALLY EXPLORED BEFORE. I ENJOYED CHALLENGING MYSELF IN NEW CREATIVE WAYS AND LEARNED A LOT THROUGH THE PROCESS. I'M REALLY THANKFUL FOR THE CHANCE TO BE PART OF IT.

SAJIA KAKAR

1st
Place



“ I THINK A BIG PART OF MY ACHIEVEMENT GOES TO MISS TAMANA. IF IT WAS NOT HER ENCOURAGEMENT, I WOULD NOT EVEN SUBMIT MY LAST STORY. HER ENCOURAGEMENT MEANS MORE TO ME THAN EVERYTHING. EVEN THE SMALL GESTURES DO WONDERS TO ONE'S LIFE.

SUMAYAH ANSARI

2nd
Place



“ I GAINED A LOT OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WRITING AND EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION. DANIELA'S WORKSHOP WAS AMIABLE AND MOTIVATING. I SINCERELY APPRECIATE THE ABAAD TEAM PROVIDING US WITH THIS CHANCE.

HADIA FAQIRI

3rd
Place

THE PRICE OF BEING A GIRL

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY ENCOURAGEMENT IN SHAPING A GIRL'S DREAM

Sajia Kakar



We stepped out of the school gate into the empty lively streets of Kabul, where life thrived in every corner. There was laughter all over filled the air, and for a moment deep down it felt like the whole city was purely smiling with us. I turned to Bahar, clapping my hands. "Girl! You did it again! You got the first position!" I said, with a very pleasant voice almost jumping in the air. She looked at me with that big, bright smile of hers, the kind that made everything feel so fresh and new, just like her name. "Yeah... one step closer to becoming a doctor," she said it in a very soft voice. The bright of spark in her eyes and the gentle calm smile on her face revealed she was already imagining herself in a white coat.

I laughed, swinging my bag over my shoulder. The street was so full of students, all moving around and talking to each other.

However, in that moment, nothing else mattered to us. We walked home, talking so sweet about our dreams, the lives we longed for, and the future we believed is waiting for us. It was our final day of 10th grade, the last day of the year, but we had no clue that it would be the last time we would talk about our futures together. It was the first day of the new school year. I went to Bahar's house, knocking on the door, eager to walk to school together. But she didn't come. Instead, her mom opened the door with a sorrow on her face. She hesitated before saying, "Bahar isn't going to school today. She's sick."

A heavy disappointment craved in my chest. This day was supposed to be ours, a moment we had dreamed of. But I kept going to school alone, and this time it felt strange, like a piece of me missing. Without Bahar by my side, the excitement of the new year lost its warmth. A few days passed, but the feeling that something was wrong wouldn't leave me. She was on my mind every single minute.

Bahar never missed school, and the sadness in her mother's face stayed in my mind. I was unable to ignore it any longer, I decided to visit her.

When I stepped into her house, my heart sank. The girl who once carried the brightest smile, lighting up every room, looked like a shadow of herself. Dark circles framed her red, tired eyes, and her pale face made her seem as if she had aged overnight. "Bahar... my dear, what happened to you?" I asked. She looked down, fingers nervously twisting the edge of her scarf. "I have to get married," she said it in a very gentle, calm and broken voice.

For a moment, I couldn't breathe. "But... you're only 15, Bahar! That's not right! What about your dream of becoming a doctor?"

What about making your family proud?" She let out a bitter laugh, her eyes hollow. "Proud?" she repeated. "Ghazal, how can I make them proud? Baba says only if I were a boy, my talents and hard work would matter. But I'm not. I'm just a burden for them in this family. They're going to give me away whether I want it or not. I have no choice." I felt anger rising inside me. I refused to accept this. "You can't let them do this to you, Bahar!" I burst out. But she just sat there, staring at the floor, lost in silence. It was the first time I was feeling so disappointed in my entire life.

I couldn't bear it any longer. Without thinking, I turned and rushed out of her house. A few days later, I heard the news. Bahar had gone to her village to get married. I never got to say goodbye. I couldn't bring myself to attend her wedding. How could I watch my best friend's dreams crumble before my eyes? That day, as she became someone's wife, I cried harder than I ever had in my life.

Her absence left a hole in my heart, but it also planted something heavier, doubt. I began questioning my own worth as a girl. If a strong and brilliant girl like Bahar, had no choice, what hope did I have? Would I share the same fate? Studying lost its meaning. My books felt pointless. My dreams felt pointless. But Padar jaan noticed. One night, he sat beside me, his voice gentle. "I wish we could have helped Bahar," he said. "But you, Ghazal, you still have your dreams. Chase them. Don't give up! You have to follow your dreams and be strong like a rock! You have to make me proud, I have always got your back jaan padar don't worry. Then lift others up. Don't let this be the story of more girls." He placed his hand on my head. "I know your worth, jaan padar. Never forget it." His words stayed with me, slowly rekindling the strength I thought I'd lost. Then came the day, the Kankor results were announced.

My heart raced as I scanned the list. Years of hard work had led to this moment. And there it was, my name. I had been accepted to medical university. I was going to be a doctor. Everyone was proud. I should have been the happiest person in the world. But a part of me felt empty.

It was Bahar. She was all I could think about. I wished she were here, sharing the same joy, dreaming of her future. But instead, she was far away, nine months pregnant, waiting to bring a life into this world while her own dreams faded away so easy. As I stood there, lost in thought, my little brother came running toward me. I assumed he was excited about my results, but the worry in his eyes told a different story.

"I'm sorry, Ghazal," he whispered, his voice trembling. My heart clenched. "What happened?" I asked. He hesitated, then spoke the words that broke me. "Bahar and her baby... they're gone." The world around me blurred. My chest tightened. My legs buckled beneath me and everything faded into darkness. When I opened my eyes, I was in a hospital bed.

After that day, I stood before the mirror, my white coat draped over my shoulders. Every time I looked at my reflection, I saw Bahar's face staring back, her smile, her dreams, her life that could have been. I whispered to myself, How unfair is this world, where the family we can't even choose holds the power to silence our dreams before they ever get the chance to bloom? And in that moment, I vowed to fight, with every girl I helped, with every dream I protected. As long as I wore this white coat, Bahar's dreams would live on.

THE BORDER BETWEEN TWO NAMES

THE EXPERIENCE OF A WOMAN BEING DISPLACED PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY, OR CULTURALLY DUE TO WAR

Sumayyah Ansari 

Those footsteps again.

It had been months since they first haunted the art gallery, but now, they were the rhythm of her nightmares. His gaze pierced through her paintings as if peeling back layers to uncover the woman beneath. Every time he passed one of her works, his head tilted slightly, mocking her with silent accusation: I will find your secret. She cursed the day she met him.

It had been at an auction where one of her pieces was displayed. Needing air, she'd stepped outside, only to freeze at the sound of a car backfiring. The world blurred. Her lungs locked. The past played behind her eyelids like a film reel stuck on the worst scene.

She hadn't noticed him following her. But when her scream tore through the night, he was there, gripping her wrists, pulling her against him. His voice, low and steady, cut through her panic:

"Just breathe."

When she came back to herself, the humiliation burned worse than the fear. She yanked free, forcing a laugh. But his eyes—James's eyes—missed nothing.

Back inside the gallery, he asked, "Where did you learn to paint?" Her mind flashed to Kabul, to her father's hands guiding hers over canvases. But her lips, trained by survival, answered, "YouTube tutorials."

He smirked. Murmured, almost to himself: "You paint like someone who's running from something." Jasmina's fingers found her bracelet—the one with her real name hidden beneath its surface. Four years of pretending, and yet this man saw straight through her. After that night, she felt him everywhere. Every gallery, every exhibit.

Tonight, alone in her apartment, she dug out the one box she allowed herself—the one holding the last fragments of who she really was. A faded passport. A photograph of her parents. And a painting, her father's gift, signed with the name she could no longer speak aloud.

She closed her eyes. For a moment, she was a girl again—her father's laughter warm in her ears, her mother's bracelet cool on her wrist. Then the memory twisted in a second for her. Her eyes flew open. Paris was supposed to be her fresh start. But now, with James circling like a wolf, she wondered if she'd ever outrun the past.

She still remembered her first day in Paris. The city had whispered it everywhere—in the way pigeons were saying to her, "You don't belong here." So she sold the gold. Her mother's bangles, her father's necklace—"For your wedding, azizam"—became rent for a room that smelled of mildew. Money did solve problems. It just cost pieces of her soul.

For two months, she locked herself inside, rehearsing French until her throat ached. She dyed her hair—black to brown—and scrubbed Kabul from her vowels. Her father had loved her accent, called it "the song of home." Now she choked it to silence. When she emerged, she was Jasmina. A name plucked from her mother's garden, where Yasmin flowers once bloomed. James told himself it was professional. A journalist's job was to dig, and Jasmina was a puzzle wrapped in paintings that screamed secrets. That day at the auction, when a car backfired and she shattered like glass, he'd felt it—the crack in her facade.

Now he tracked her like a man possessed. Curiosity, he insisted, scribbling notes. Not obsession. Certainly not love. But then he'd catch her laughing with a gallery owner, sunlight catching the gold in her hair, and his chest would tighten. Why do I want to chase you? The salt air stung Jasmina's cheeks as she walked along the shore, her bare feet sinking into the damp sand. For once, she was just breathing.

And then she heard it.

Dari.

A burst of laughter, the familiar lilt of her mother tongue. A group of Afghans—tourists, maybe refugees—stood a little ways off. She froze. Her chest tightened. She hadn't heard that accent in years. She didn't realize she was staring until one of them turned and smiled. "Excuse me, do you know where the nearest café is?" the woman asked in accented French. Jasmina's lips parted. And then, without thinking, she answered—in Dari.

"Azinja samte chap." Just left from here.

The moment the words left her mouth, horror flooded her veins. The woman's eyes widened in recognition. "You're Afghan?" Jasmina's pulse roared in her ears. No no no—She turned to run—And her bracelet caught. The delicate chain snagged on the woman's ring, yanking hard. A sharp snap. The bracelet fell. Jasmina didn't stop to pick it up. She ran. James had been watching from a distance, unnoticed, a shadow trailing her every move. He saw the way her entire body had stilled at the sound of Dari. Saw the longing in her eyes before the terror swallowed it whole.

And then—the slip. The word in a language she shouldn't know. The bracelet.

He waited until the Afghan tourists had moved on, then approached the spot where Jasmina had stood. The sand was disturbed, her footprints frantic. And there, half-buried near a broken shell—The bracelet. He picked it up, turning it over in his fingers. The clasp was broken, the chain fragile. And then—A crack in the metal.

He pressed his thumb against it. And beneath it—A name.

Yasmin.

THE BORDER BETWEEN TWO NAMES

THE EXPERIENCE OF A WOMAN BEING DISPLACED PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY, OR CULTURALLY DUE TO WAR

Sumayah Ansari

His breath left him in a rush. A puzzle piece. A secret. A truth. His mind raced. Afghan. Hiding. Running. And now—he had her name. For two days, she didn't leave her apartment. She paced. She burned her old sketches—the ones with too much lapis blue, the ones where the skies looked like Kabul's. She scrubbed her skin raw in the shower, as if she could wash away the memory of that Afghan woman's knowing eyes, the way her own tongue had betrayed her.

But survival was an old habit.

By the third day, she returned to the galleries, to the world of clinking champagne glasses and hollow praise. No one noticed the way her left wrist felt naked. No one saw the way her gaze flickered to every shadowed corner, searching for—Him.

James.

That infuriating man, the one who looked at her like she was a riddle he'd die to solve. She hated how she missed it. In Afghanistan, men's eyes had been careful, respectful. But James? He devoured her. And the worst part? She'd started to hunger for it.

The bracelet never left his hand.

He traced the cracked name—Yasmin—with his thumb, over and over. He'd spent nights discovering secrets. But this? This was different. He'd spent his life chasing secrets, but hers was messing with his heart. He should've slammed the bracelet on her desk and demanded the truth. Instead, he found himself outside her apartment at 3 AM, the bracelet clutched in his fist, staring at her darkened window.

What are you so afraid of, Yasmin?

And why did the thought of her fear make him want to burn the world?

The Window

The night was too still. Too quiet.

Jasmina hadn't slept in days. And now, as she stared out the window, the shadow standing there made her breath catch.

Him.

The Street

She didn't remember moving. One moment, she was at the window. The next, her bare feet were on the cold pavement, the night air biting through her thin shirt. He didn't smile. Didn't flinch. Just said three words.

"Who are you?"

His voice was low. Not angry. Not even curious. Just... empty. And that terrified her more than any accusation. She could lie. Could laugh and say, "Jasmina, of course. You know that."

But his eyes—God, his eyes—were already stripping her bare. So she did the one thing she'd sworn never to do. She told the truth.

"Yasmin," she whispered.

The moment the name left her lips, something in his expression cracked. His breath was warm against her ear, his voice so low it was almost lost in the night.

"I have never been indecisive about my reports—not once in my whole life—until I realized I was addicted to your eyes."

Jasmina—Yasmin—stopped breathing.

"The innocence in them," he continued, "and the way you try to hide it from me. I knew my curiosity would lead me to you. But now, for the first time, I don't want to turn the truth into a headline. I want to keep it for myself."

A pause. The world held its breath.

"Will you let me?"

She should run. Should snatch the bracelet back and disappear into the dark. But his fingers brushed hers as he pressed the broken chain into her palm, his touch lingering just a second too long. And in that moment, she understood—He wasn't giving her back a piece of jewelry. He was giving her back her name.

The Answer

She didn't speak.

Instead, she curled her fingers around the bracelet—and around his hand.

And when she finally looked up at him, her lips parted, not to lie, but to say the one thing she'd sworn she never would:

"Yes."

THE RIVER THAT FLOWED AGAIN

OUR BOND WITH NATURE

Hadia Fagiri



Water had always been more than just a natural element to me since I was a little child. Every time it rained, I would sit by the window and watch the raindrops fall on the glass because I had always like the sound of running water. But our town's water was my favourite feature. For me, the river was more than simply a source of water; it was a confidant and a friend. I would appreciate its soft touch when I dipped my feet in its refreshing waters on sweltering summer days. I used to stand beside it in the winter and observe the thin ice layers that developed on its surface. Every spring, I had the impression that the river itself had come to life, joining in with nature's celebration as the trees surrounding it blossomed. The day my father swam into the shallow river waters with me on his shoulders is one of my favourite childhood memories. That moment seemed to be the most beautiful in the world as my laughing mingled with the calming sound of the water flowing. I always believed that this river would never stop flowing and would always exist. However, something occurred one year that permanently altered my relationship with the river. The heat was worse than ever that summer. The heat burned ruthlessly, and even the trees' shade had lost its customary cooling effect. Initially, I didn't pay much attention to the river's dropping water levels. I assumed it would pass quickly and that everything would be alright once the rain arrived. However, the water level decreased steadily every day.

I went to the river one day as usual, but what I saw there broke my heart: the water had dried up totally. Deep fissures and dry soil that soared into the air with the slightest breeze had replaced the bed's once crystal-clear water. As though it were my final touch, I knelt beside the riverbed and put my hand on the broken ground. My eyes filled with tears. The loss of the river, which had always been a part of my life, seemed unbelievable to me. I felt as though I had lost a close friend or something else inside of me. It seemed as though the natural world had abandoned us.

Life was tough after the river dried up. Farmers no looked blankly at their desolate fields, which they had depended on the river to irrigate. The once-green gardens gradually transformed into deserts as the animals became thirsty. Our home was also affected by the drought. Access to water had become difficult. We had to utilise water carefully and wisely whenever we needed it. Days would occasionally go by without there being enough water to wash our clothes or even to irrigate the little plants in our home. To make sure we had enough for our basic necessities, my mother meticulously rationed every drop.

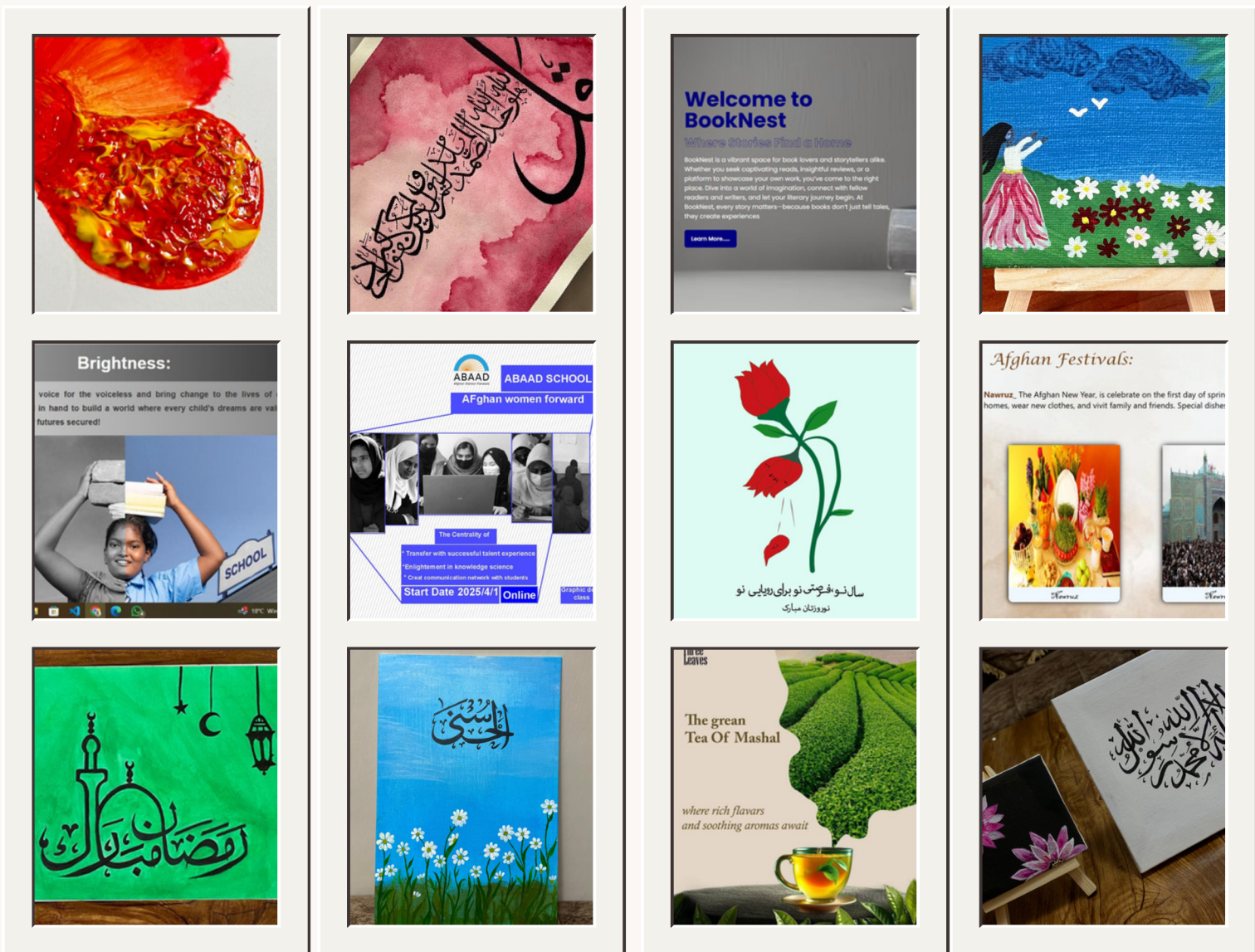
It was no longer easy to discuss the future. Water, the dried-up wells, the uncertainty, the desire for rain was the topic of conversation everywhere. "God willing, the water will return when winter comes," my father used to say. However, I secretly harboured suspicions. What would happen if the river never returned? What if I never again heard the calming sound of water flowing? I was afraid of these thoughts. I used to sit beside the dry riverbed every day and gaze at the fractured ground. I would occasionally toss a little rock onto the parched earth and hope the water would come back. I would dream at night of rain and the soft murmurs of the river once more, but every morning I awoke to the same solitude and dryness. An elderly man who frequently sat by the river approached me one day. He was among the oldest people living in the village. "Nature always finds its way," he replied, grinning with years of experience. The day you've been waiting for will arrive, so have patience. I felt a tiny spark of optimism ignited by his remarks. Maybe nature only needed time, and it wasn't really dead. The first snowfall made everyone happy. It seemed like a hopeful sign. Then came more rain and snow. After being dry for months, our thirsty land finally got some water. I woke up one morning to a sound that I had been longing to hear. The sound of water! My heart pounded. After quickly putting on my coat, I dashed in the direction of the river.

I woke up one morning to a sound that I had been longing to hear. The sound of water! My heart pounded. After quickly putting on my coat, I dashed in the direction of the river. My feet froze on the dry, chilly ground when I got there. My eyes were incredible! The water was running again, fresh and clean. The river seemed to have woken up from a deep slumber. People gathered in celebration. While some grinned and muttered prayers of thanks, others extended their hands to touch the water. Children's laughter filled the air as they rushed along the riverbank. I grinned as I knelt down and dipped my hands in the water. My tears blended with the rush of the river. Both the water and I seemed to have resurrected. I took away a valuable lesson from that experience: despite all of nature's ups and downs, it always finds a way to return and heal. I experienced an odd sensation when the water started to flow once more, as though every drop represented a promise of a better future and a message of rebirth. I heard nature's whispers that day, telling me that "even in the driest, darkest days, there is always a chance for rebirth," in addition to the sound of flowing water. As I stood by the river, I came to the realisation that life is like a stream that flows; it can be serene and soothing at times, tumultuous and wild at others, but it never goes away entirely. I realised that every adversity and every trying time is fleeting as I thought back on my early years—the times I spent playing by the river carefree. Everything reverts to its natural state with time and patience. I became acutely aware of the connection between nature and people at that very moment, as I watched the fresh water flow again. I discovered that hope is what ultimately illuminates the path, thus one must cling to it even during the most trying moments and the darkest nights. My heart was stoked by that moment, which served as a reminder of the strength of endurance, patience, and faith in fresh starts. I now keep in mind this important lesson whenever I stand by the river and observe its flowing water: there are always fresh starts instead of a real end. I learnt from nature that beauty and life may reappear even in the most severe droughts. All we have to do is have faith and give change an opportunity. In addition to bringing me joy, this experience strengthened me and prepared me to confront life's obstacles with the knowledge that hope is the most exquisite beacon of light, even in the darkest moments.



Abaad's students continue to demonstrate skill, creativity, and dedication through their work in programming, calligraphy, graphic design, and more. This section highlights a selection of their effort each created during their course journey. From coding simple websites to designing thoughtful visuals and practicing elegant calligraphy, these pieces reflect steady growth and hands-on learning.

WE PROUDLY PRESENT THEIR WORK AS A REFLECTION OF WHAT CONSISTENT EFFORT AND OPPORTUNITY CAN ACHIEVE.



Creative Corner is a space to appreciate and recognize the achievements of our learners, who continue to grow and improve with every task and challenge they take on.

At EAGT, impact is not just about numbers. It's about transformation. Every class opened, every message from a mentor, every story written by a girl in our programs echoes one thing: hope.

Girls who once had no access to education are now learning to code, preparing for international exams, expressing themselves through art, and dreaming beyond borders.



“MY NAME IS NAZANIN AHMADI, AND I AM A GIRL FROM AFGHANISTAN. LIKE MANY GIRLS, I ALWAYS DREAMED OF STUDYING ABROAD, BUT MOST UNIVERSITIES REQUIRED A LANGUAGE CERTIFICATE, WHICH WAS HARD FOR ME TO GET.

One day, I heard about Abaad, a wonderful organization that supports girls. I was lucky to be one of the girls they helped. They enrolled me in a Duolingo preparation class with a kind teacher named Yosr.

With her support, I completed the course successfully. At the end, I received a Duolingo exam coupon as a reward for my efforts. I took the test and got a good score.

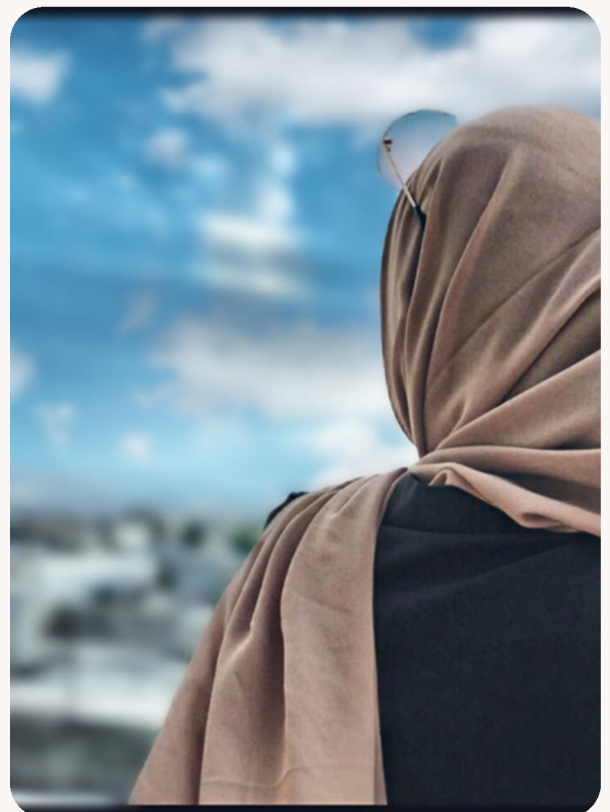
Thanks to Abaad, I was accepted into the University of Bologna in Italy. I'm very grateful for their support and encouragement. They helped me take a big step toward my dreams.

“I WASN’T SURE
WHAT TO
EXPECT. I JUST
KNEW I HAD A
SPARK

One of the most rewarding parts of this journey was working on real group projects. I met classmates who later became friends, people who helped me when I got stuck and celebrated with me when I made progress. We shared ideas, argued over designs, fixed each other’s bugs, and laughed over silly typos. Through these experiences, I learned how to truly collaborate, listen, and lead. That’s something no textbook could’ve taught me. Of course, I can’t talk about this journey without mentioning Ms. Farzana Mirzaei, our amazing teacher. Her energy, kindness, and skill created an environment where I felt safe to make mistakes and grow from them. She didn’t just teach us code, she taught us how to believe in ourselves. That’s a rare gift.

Mozhgan Akbari
Programming Course

When I first heard about the ABAAD programming classes, I wasn’t sure what to expect. I just knew I had a spark, an interest in websites and a deep curiosity for how things work behind the screen. I didn’t come in with confidence or experience, but I came with hope. Looking back now, I realize that joining ABAAD wasn’t just about learning code, it was about discovering a new version of myself. In the beginning, HTML felt like learning a new language, and CSS was a canvas where I could express beauty through code. As I reached JavaScript, I began to see the logic and magic that make websites come alive. But the lessons didn’t stop at code. I learned patience, problem solving, and how to turn frustration into focus.



“Today, I can build webpages from scratch, add style, and even make them interactive, but more importantly, I’ve discovered my love for technology. I’m now dreaming bigger: I want to go deeper into Back-End Development, explore databases, and one day become a Full Stack Developer who creates meaningful solutions for real people.

As we look ahead, we aim to welcome a new group of motivated learners into the upcoming round of Duolingo preparation. With continued guidance, resources, and encouragement, we are confident that more Afghan girls will rise to the challenge and achieve their academic goals.



duolingo english test

Through free coupons and preparatory resources, 150+ students have prepared and taken the test for the Duolingo English Test, helping them unlock scholarships and educational opportunities abroad.



AI powered speech coach

More than 480+ students are enhancing their English speaking confidence and fluency with Yoodli's interactive and AI-based public speaking tools.



datacamp
DONATES

250+ students are currently enrolled in DataCamp courses, gaining hands-on experience in Python, data visualization, and data science skills that are increasingly in demand globally.



Our team uses Canva to design class visuals, event posters, social media content, and learning materials making education more engaging and accessible.



Through our partnership with Cisco, over 720+ students have accessed courses in networking, cybersecurity, and digital skills laying the groundwork for future careers in tech.

Join Our Mission

If you represent an organization committed to digital learning, gender equity, or youth empowerment - we welcome you to partner with us. Your tools, platforms, or mentorship could help reach more girls and transform more lives.

Contact us today to explore partnership opportunities.

As we conclude this newsletter, we extend our deepest gratitude to all who have supported and engaged with our work. Each story and initiative shared is a reflection of our ongoing dedication to advancing education, opportunity, and empowerment for Afghan girls.

The achievements highlighted here are the result of collective effort, thoughtful planning, and a strong belief in the power of community. We are inspired every day by the resilience and talent of the young women we serve.

We encourage you to remain involved. Whether through mentorship, collaboration, or amplifying our mission, your continued support is essential. Let us move forward with purpose and unity as we strive to build a more equitable and hopeful future for all.





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Abaad: Afghan Women Forward



[abaad_afghanwomenforward](https://www.instagram.com/abaad_afghanwomenforward)



[AbaadAfghan WomenForward](https://www.youtube.com/AbaadAfghanWomenForward)

