Kishti

Kindle Project’s Afghanistan Fund

Kishti - Kindle Project’s Afghanistan Fund provides support to organizations engaged in freedom of expression initiatives with artists, musicians, activists, and journalists who are at risk inside Afghanistan or have managed to relocate outside of the country.

Kishti means boat in Dari. We feel it is fitting as a new name for this initiative, a raft in these turbulent waters, a buoy for the seekers and speakers, for the culture-makers who foster vitality and health in societies through art and creative expression.

Our goal is to raise $300,000 in 2022.
Please join us.

It has now been over six months since the Taliban closed in on Afghan provincial capitals and then Kabul, ultimately gaining complete control of the country. The months following this development were chaotic and terrifying for many; land borders and airports were overwhelmed with those trying to flee, many were forced into hiding. Afghans who have worked with NGOs, media, human rights organizations, the UN, embassies and government agencies were left in the lurch, scrambling to make sense of this new (yet frustratingly familiar) reality: the Taliban are back in power, bringing with them often harsh and repressive social codes. The Afghans most at risk have been those who fought the hardest to foster tolerance, cultural diversity and richness, human rights, and accountability for the past 20 years. Activists, local journalists and media organizations, human rights workers, and of course women (who disproportionately bore the brunt of suppression the last time the Taliban were in control) have been targeted and persecuted. The country has now also plunged into a humanitarian crisis of catastrophic proportions. There is a dire shortage of food and fuel.

Although media attention on Afghanistan has pivoted, the situation for Afghans remains extremely dire. It is natural and easy to be distracted by ever-shifting news cycles and new crises. However, this ethos of long-term commitment runs deep through our programming, relationships, worldview and how we practice grantmaking. We feel continued commitment is especially pertinent to this particular effort, as the situation for Afghans has not improved and the needs are substantial.

Kishti - Kindle Project’s Afghanistan Fund intent
In the wake of the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan, Kindle Project remains committed to supporting organizations engaged in freedom of expression initiatives with Afghan artists, activists, musicians, and journalists who are at risk inside the country or have managed to relocate outside the country. Through this fund we seek to provide a kishti, a boat, to help Afghans weather this storm.

We are seeking an initial goal of $300,000. We invite you to join us in our commitment.

We know that the people on the ground best know how to use funds, therefore we will offer organizations general operating grants. We anticipate making grants at a minimum of $25,000 to organizations and initiatives inside and outside Afghanistan (depending on total amount of funds raised) that:

- focus on freedom of expression, including artists, musicians, journalists, and activists;
- provide safety and support for high-risk artists, musicians, local citizen journalists, and activists using expression as a means for accountability and change;
- use arts to empower women, girls, and youth;
- operate with smaller budgets than the large mainstream aid agencies, and are likely to be overlooked and underfunded.

We anticipate funds will be used to support Afghan artists, musicians, and journalists with:

- emergency support such as supplies, food and fuel, evacuation and relocation costs such as travel and visas, safe housing;
- safety and lifesaving resources for immediate communities.

Why this focus?
- Artists, activists, journalists, and empowered women are critical to a healthy, vibrant, and stable society.
- These individuals have fought to uplift an open, accountable, tolerant Afghan identity.
- These individuals are under specific threat by the Taliban.
Background of Kindle Project’s Afghanistan Fund
In 2021, with the generous outpouring of support from individuals and foundations, we raised double our initial goal for a total of $500,000 in a matter of months. You can read more about the first round of the fund here. Since the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, we’ve supported 16 organizations inside and outside Afghanistan with minimum grants of $25,000. You can learn more about some of these organizations here. Please note that many organizations must remain confidential, for safety concerns, and are therefore not publicly acknowledged. Should you require more information on these organizations, contact us directly.

Who is Kindle Project?
Kindle Project is a women-founded, women of color-led, agile philanthropic organization. We are invested in democratized, collaborative, and strategic grantmaking that aligns donors and projects for meaningful impact.

The Fund is spearheaded by Nellika Little, Sadaf Rassoul Cameron, and Arianne Shaffer. Nellika has been with Kindle Project for 6 years. In addition to her work with us, she continues to work with international aid agencies. She has spent close to 35 years living and working in Afghanistan, including during years when the country was under Taliban control. She is deeply familiar with the realities on the ground, the organizations that continue to operate, and the nuances of the needs and obstacles for Afghans in crisis. Sadaf co-founded Kindle Project, where she has served as Executive Director for the past 13 years. Born in New Mexico, Sadaf is of Afghan descent on her mother’s side. As a documentary photographer and artist, Sadaf has traveled to, documented, and had two solo shows covering Afghan refugee camps and the 1949 Partition of Pakistan and India. Arianne has been working with Kindle Project for the past 10 years and is currently the Director of Participatory Programs. She is also serving as Interim Director while Sadaf takes a short sabbatical. Arianne was previously Co-Executive Director at EDGE Funders Alliance, and has a background in peacebuilding, interfaith dialogue and documentary film.

We have extensive networks both inside and outside of Afghanistan, as well as firsthand experience with numerous organizations who qualify for funds under this program. This includes the knowledge and experience of close friends and allies of Kindle Project who have their own networks and ground-level understanding of the situation.

Our invitation
We are hoping to raise $300,000 as soon as possible for continuance of this critical assistance. We are seeking donations of $5,000 and above. You can donate online, by check, or by wire. Visit our website for detailed donation information. Please share this with your networks and anyone who may be interested in supporting this effort.

For further information or questions
Please reach out to Arianne at arianne@kindleproject.org or Nellika at grants@kindleproject.org.