

To

My

Future

Self

**The KAS Scholarship Programme**

**Facilitator for Female Empowerment**





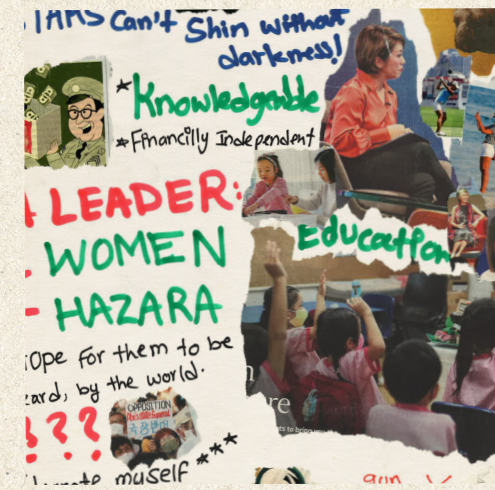
**TO MY FUTURE SELF**











My Hope, Action & Demand Sabrina  
A better tomorrow for Rohingya people

... floating when things goes wrong... Resilience  
Easing the full stop in life by learning how to flow like a Ocean  
Optimistic for Better Tomorrow with Justice & Freedom

Creating conducive environment to address problem of Rohingya Community so world can see, Hear & Help  
Enough For Resilient Life...  
My land is my Identity  
Formal Education For Rohingya Community  
Driving Out Illiteracy with the power of Education  
My land is my Identity  
Formal Education For Rohingya Community  
Driving Out Illiteracy with the power of Education



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*“If you educate a man, you educate an individual.  
But if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.”*

African proverb

**I**n order to build a healthy, inclusive and democratic society, effective participation of all of its members is required. Democratic development cannot take place without the active participation in community life of women and girls in general. For young women and girls to contribute effectively to society, they need to be educated, empowered and have adequate knowledge; most importantly, they need to have equal access to education.

Gender disparity in education has been and still is a contested issue in many societies. Asian countries are no exception to this. Despite much progress in the last few decades, the COVID-19 pandemic caused major setbacks in the provision of education and learning continuity.



# Foreword

**Andreas Klein**

Director,  
Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia



In order to mitigate these setbacks, build on the foundation of all the previous progress and move forward, it is imperative that stakeholders work together for the promotion of women's active participation in the state and society. Women's qualifications and self-confidence are necessities for them to be competitive and to take on leadership roles in politics and the economy.

To support both these requirements, quality education as well as self-confidence in their own skills and abilities, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's (KAS) Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia is providing gifted and talented female students scholarships for their studies at the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Chittagong, Bangladesh.

At AUW, students from twenty countries across Asia and the Middle East study diverse and interdisciplinary courses. The aim of the study programmes at the Asian University for Women is, next to excellent knowledge in the respective fields of study, the empowerment of students to become not only skilled and innovative professionals but also leaders in business and their communities, promoting and contributing to sustainable economic and human development in the region and beyond. In addition to providing for the studies, KAS is supporting the students through

internships with women political leaders on the local or regional level from the students' respective home regions. These internships will provide the students with the opportunity to look behind the scenes and gain first-hand experiences in political leadership. Furthermore, the internship shall enable the students to build their own networks, which can be vital for their future careers and roles in politics and society.

We are pleased to present the journey of our scholars in the Asian University for Women in pictures and their stories in their own words. I would like to thank Hon. Eva Abdulla, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Maldives, and Dr. Syeda Lasna Kabir, University of Dhaka, for their contributions and their kind support.\*

This publication is dedicated to our gifted scholars at the AUW. May their pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, as well as their willingness to serve as leaders for the development of the society, set an example for many young women in Asia and beyond.

Enjoy your read.

\* These appointments were correct as of March 2023. Any changes thereafter have not been reflected.

# Foreword

**Hon. Eva Abdulla**

Deputy Speaker of the Parliament  
of the Republic of Maldives

I often find myself in spaces that are, by default, created for men. Whether they are the parliament or the upper stratum of my own political party, it is evident that these spaces have been socially constructed for men.

It has taken my generation a lifetime to try and redesign these spaces to include us women, and we would all agree it is still in the works, nowhere near complete.

When we walked in, we did not have much ammunition. Our mothers, certainly determined women themselves, barely had the opportunity to occupy these spaces. So, we walked in armed with their well wishes, and an eternal hope that we will make it better for the young girls and women coming with us, and after us. We walked in also knowing it is indeed our responsibility.







I have been impressed by many things but not as much as I have been by the women scholars of the Asian University for Women that I have had the privilege to meet. Each and every single one of them comes with a unique and distinct story; many of them come from unimaginable hardship. As distinct as they are as people, these women scholars are all unified by an incontestable drive to change their communities, their countries and their world for the better.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) scholarship gives these extraordinary women an opportunity and platform that they might not otherwise have had. The scholarships are a chance at an education; and that education will go a long way towards cementing the foundation that previous generations of women fought, and sacrificed, for to obtain whatever we have achieved now on gender equality.

It is my unequivocal belief that the scholars of the Asian University for Women will use their education to redesign their world, so that these spaces and their world become a place where women can be equally regarded as intelligent beings making their decisions freely as individuals.

**We walked in armed with their well wishes, and an eternal hope that we will make it better for the young girls and women coming with us, and after us. We walked in also knowing it is indeed our responsibility.**



## Foreword

**Dr Syeda Lasna Kabir**

Professor of Public Administration at the  
Department of Public Administration,  
University of Dhaka

A nation's success largely depends on how well-educated its people are and when I write about people, I mean both men and women. Bangladesh is one of the most promising developing nations being run by a Prime Minister, an Education Minister and many more who are women, illustrating the dynamic roles women play in this society. With a rising economy, Bangladesh is vitally preparing the workforce for the future by making the right investment in the right sector: education. In Bangladesh there has been a progression in the quality and accessibility of higher education for women and more girls are attending university-level studies, which have allowed many of them to break free from poverty and the backlash of early marriage.



**Women empowerment, we understand, means giving power & authority to women to be entitled to choose how they wish to live their lives in the face of many societal issues. With the rising status of women through education, a sense of empowerment is produced when you believe you have the right to make your own decisions.**

Whether it be a developing country or not, it has been proven that educating girls will, over time, strengthen a nation's economy, stabilise societies, and reduce inequality and this is because women are being empowered. Women empowerment, we understand, means giving power and authority to women so that they are entitled to choose how they wish to live their lives in the face of many societal issues. With the rising status of women through education, a sense of empowerment is produced when you believe you have the right to make your own decisions. Besides education, there are other ways women in Bangladesh are enabled towards women empowerment through training, awareness building, and literacy campaigns.

Praises for institutions like Asian University for Women, which strives to give a medium to those who hope to dream of a better tomorrow but who cannot otherwise

turn their dreams into reality due to social and economic challenges. With contributions from the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), there have been effects on women's chances of getting a tertiary-level education in Bangladesh. Such foundations keep giving to those who would otherwise not be able to access such a profound opportunity for higher education.

Regardless of gender, every person who lives in poverty dreams of breaking free of the cycle of poverty, and most believe there could be no better medium than "education" to turn the dream into reality. Women in Bangladesh who have graduated from university-level education are more likely to lead healthy productive lives, earn salaries, be more empowered to make their own decisions, and help in creating a better future for not only themselves but also for others surrounding them.







The students not only learn but also live on campus.







The university has its own shuttle transport service to ensure the students' safety. Female empowerment is also the top priority in this sector as most drivers at AUW are women.







Education as the Facilitator for Female Empowerment

## The Contribution of the KAS Scholarship Programme

**T**rust in democracy and the freedom of choice: These are the goals for the provision of scholarships to exceptional female students of the Asian University for Women in Chittagong, Bangladesh. Since 2019, the Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung supports women, including women from marginalised communities, from all over Asia with their undergraduate studies at AUW. So far, with this contribution KAS has supported the growth of 25 women from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar and Nepal. All KAS-AUW scholars are academically exceptional and extraordinarily committed to their community engagement for equal

rights and the upliftment of women. The scholarship programme consists of several aspects for continuous development: First, the undergraduate studies at AUW. Second, the funding and organisational support for internships, which aim to prepare the scholars for their careers after they have graduated. They have chosen to intern with female Members of Parliament, with political institutions, such as embassies and International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) South Asia, with non-governmental organisations like UNICEF as well as community organisations in Myanmar and in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. Third, resembling the extensive scholarship programme of the

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Germany, the scholarship programme in Asia also empowers through training opportunities and seminars on career development or public speaking, among others. Additionally, the scholars are connected with female politicians from the region, who serve as role models of women empowerment and responsible political leadership.

We are excited about the future for the KAS-AUW scholars and are confident that the students from AUW can positively impact female leadership in Asia.





KAS-AUW Scholars met with female Members of Parliaments and Researchers from Asia to discuss the KAS publication on “Substantive Representation of Women by Parliamentarians in Asia”.



**Journeys of Change**  
by  
**Scholarship Holders**  
and **Alumni**

KAS-AUW Scholars listen to the facilitator of their leadership training workshop in Singapore.





for future me.

Hi, how are you?  
I hope you're doing well.  
I hope you can achieve what you're dream about and help others around you in the way to achieve those dream.

WORLD BANK

Build a facilitate

Community Support

To build a community where old people can live a comfortable life and enjoy their old life.

untari

I want to complete my master's degree and a PhD degree as well with scholarship.

I want to see myself in an administrative or managerial post where I will have opportunities to help the underprivileged people and thereby contribute to my society.



I hope that women will have all basic opportunities, especially education; and most importantly they will have decision making power. I hope all street children of my society will lead a modest human life covering their basic rights like foods, clothes, house and especially education.



First, I will try to find a good job in order that I become economically independent. Then, I will look for the gaps in our community where I have scopes to work. Accordingly I will try to give back those that I received while studying to those that need assistance either economically or in another form. If I am in a managerial position of any development organization, I will employ myself fully towards these people who need us to come forward.



Jannatul Mawa



Sara Razi shares her story in front of female Members of Parliaments and Researchers from Asia.





## Sabrina



I am a Rohingya. In my community in the Maungdaw Rakhine State, girls are married off to be homemakers as soon as they have their first period. This means no education, no future outside the home. But my father was one of a kind: He was liberal-minded, and he believed that women like me deserved to live life to the fullest.

In the 80s, my father was hunted down by the Burmese government because of his activism. He, along with his brothers, had to flee to Bangladesh, leaving all their possessions behind. He always told me, "Everything else can be snatched away from you, but not your education." He saw the light in me, and he told me no one should take it away from me. When he died, his relatives forced me to marry. I was 17.

It shattered my dreams of pursuing higher education. Thankfully, my husband supported my wish to finish college. It was my father's spirit keeping the fire of activism alive in me. While I was exploring ways to get to college, I started my own organisation, the Mushroom Foundation, where I self-studied about entrepreneurship and trained other underprivileged women on how to spawn mushrooms for a living. If I were just sitting at home, doing what women are expected to do in our community, I would not be able to reach out and help others in my own way.

**I want to tell the world: "You can give us food, give us shelter, but please invest in education. Don't make us beg for it. Give women a chance to find their own voice."**

I was lucky to secure a scholarship at the Asian University for Women. While I had to scale back my projects, it gave me more time to improve myself. If I can help 200 women now, imagine how many more I can help given my training at the university. I met other women who share my mission, and it gives me hope to pursue my advocacy to uplift the lives of the women in my community, and to end child marriages and intimate domestic violence.

I will devote my whole life to understanding my society and to bringing hope to girls who think their childhood can easily be snatched away by people who have outdated views of the world. I want to tell the world: "You can give us food, give us shelter, but please invest in education. Don't make us beg for it. Give women a chance to find their own voice."

**My Hope, Action & Demand**  
A better tomorrow for Rohingya people  
Sabrina

Keeps afloat when things go wrong. Being Resilient

Erasing the full stop in life by learning how to flow like a Ocean

Optimistic for Better Tomorrow with Justice & Freedom

Creating Conducive environment to address problem of Rohingya Community So World can See, Hear & Help

Enough For Refugee Life...

Need Democracy Immediately...

My land is My Identity

Formal Education For Rohingya Community

Driving Out Illiteracy with the Power of Education

End Child Marriage in Rohingya Community

Let's allow Rohingya child to enjoy their childhood.

Sabrina's "Mushroom Foundation" already empowered 200 women since 2018 through training & development. Publish paper selected (SVRI) Mexico Serial Violence Research Institute

Sabrina already gives speeches in VOA (Voice of America) radio regarding child marriage, domestic violence, Education opportunity (Formal)

Suggestion: Network with world leader to help her & get Media involved to grow her work in a larger scale.

Mai Soli → Never Alone  
Mentor → Learn how to stop child marriage

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## Naw Laura Htway



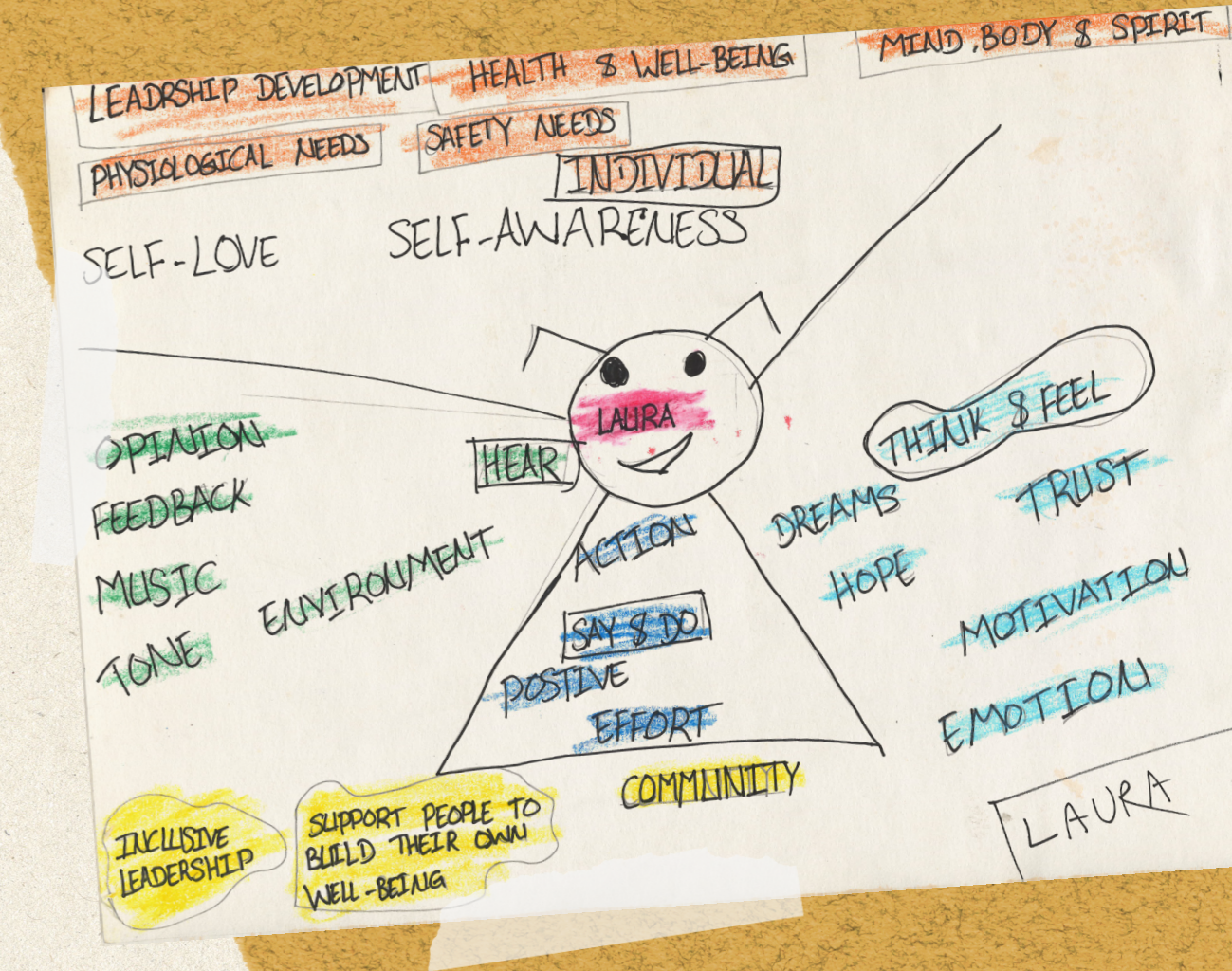
I was born in Myanmar. Because of the conflict there, my family had to move to a refugee camp in Thailand when I was ten years old. When my father died, we were struggling a lot because we did not have support from others. Being a refugee means you do not have a chance to go outside by yourself and there are no job opportunities for you, especially if you are a woman. It was really difficult for us, and for me especially because I wanted to pursue further education.

When I was in high school, I watched a South Korean drama in which the protagonist went abroad to study and had a nice life where she could move about freely, unlike me. That was when I told myself I had to go to university even if I did not have a strong educational background. It was difficult for me to pursue higher education because in our community, you need to have connections to go to school. My mom, who encouraged me to study, helped me find a connection.

While my English improved in school, it was not enough to get me to university because applying for scholarships can be highly competitive. I got rejected multiple times, and I cried almost every day. I really wanted to give up but I did not, because I really believe that if there is a will, there is a way.

I worked at a local non-governmental organisation where I was an educator and a football coach. It was unheard of in our community because for them, the home, not football, is the only place for women. While working there, I discovered the Asian University for Women. I am now finishing my degree in politics, philosophy and economics with a minor in gender studies at age 24.

When people talk about education, they usually say it is to help them get a good job or to earn money, but for me, it is a way to improve my critical thinking skills so that I can steer myself to a better future. The people in my community have this saying that whether you are educated or not, you will get to eat a meal either way. They think education is not important. I want to work on that. I want to go back to my community and change that.



**When people talk about education, they usually say it's to help them get a good job or to earn money but for me, it's a way to improve my critical thinking skills so I can steer myself to a better future.**



After losing all hopes of higher education when I got to start my university <sup>education again</sup> <sup>state</sup> hoping for a better future where I see my own NGO and a social business. I want to help millions of other women like me to get free education and access to affordable sanitary products. I will use my NGO, Oroya Foundation to provide free education and my social business to provide employment and affordable sanitary products for underprivileged women.

Abiha  
23/11/2022



\* I hope I can love myself for what I am than trying to be perfectionist and people pleasing

\* I hope I can be strong & confident when I am down and unsuccessful.

\* I hope I can rise again when I fall.

\* I hope I can love & help others without expecting any return from them

\* I hope I can be voice of the people who are unheard & voiceless

\* I hope my community can have the attitude of giving rather than taking

\* I hope my community can be fair & righteous, than being injustice

\* I hope my community can respect different identity & background.

\* I need to set my goal and be motivated instead of being procrastinating

\* I need to take good care of my health.

\* I need to love myself but should not be selfish.

\* I need to learn and gather more knowledge & experience in my related/interested field.

\* I need to stop wasting my time on social media.

Nisa Maya  
Tamang



scope of EU's greenwashing  
own s

"Thought's of mine"

"Love yourself" or 'loving yourself' these words are too easy to say but whenever it comes to maintaining is too hard and which is I'm facing. With my other family I always have to think about what my relatives are thinking. I always hopes when i'll be able to live my life is like a free bird. I've got the freedom but didn't get that one where I'll be totally have my own sky to fly.

"Community" where I'm staying full of jealousy and always blame each other. If someone starts doing good for community the critiques actually that young minds are receiving, killing her/his strength. That's why young minds are afraid to take steps. So, My HOPES for my "community people" should stand for each other and do raise voice to break the stereotype.

I have the strength, courage to raise my voice which I'll use to help others, also will encourage others to stand for development of a community. My experience, failure, works which through these things not only will develop me but also will encourage others as well.

Ornika

Ornika Jaman Akhai

"The world" was a smaller place when I was young. I had never owned a mobile phone or a computer and my idea of the entire world was just my village. I remember that I was five years old when my concept of the world suddenly grew bigger. Abba had to move far, far away, taking on a job as a labourer in Malaysia to make ends meet for the family. I did not know then, but it would be seven years before I would see him again.

The next few years were hard as Abba could not find employment and had to take on a loan to set up a farm. Our struggles deepened when Abba and Amma got sick and had to sell our farm to pay off the medical expenses. I took on ad-hoc work and gave tuition in order to help make ends meet for the family. The struggle was real and I could see it in Abba's eyes, in the precious few moments whenever we sat together as a family.

The experiences that I gained from AUW have changed my concept of "the world". From a small village in Bangladesh, I now see the world as an entire globe of possibility, one without impediments and limitations for a girl with a dream and the courage to chase it.

I was glad when Amma supported me in going to the Asian University for Women despite strong family objections and criticisms for investing in my education. I took them all in stride and have not looked back since. The experiences that I gained from AUW have changed my concept of "the world". From a small village in Bangladesh, I now see the world as an entire globe of possibility, one without impediments and limitations for a girl with a dream and the courage to chase it.

It is my greatest ambition to one day establish my own organisation to provide support and educational guidance to women in challenging environments from all over the world, to help them to rewrite the stereotypes and to never give up on their dreams.





• I hope to visit my MOM and sister someday!  
 • I want to Educate myself in development politics to support my country to raise up again.  
 • I hope I can get financially independent!

## Sara Razi



I come from a family of eight. My father was strict, my mother is supportive, and my siblings were hardworking, fun and rowdy.

When we were kids, we lived in a community where people had low regard for women. Once, one of my sisters sneaked out with my brother's bicycle because she wanted to buy bread and cycled to town, an activity girls were not allowed to do where we come from. The next day, we found the bike smashed into pieces.

At an early age, we understood that education was our ticket out of Afghanistan, where women are just expected to bear children and serve their families. My elder sisters secured scholarships in India, and later on went to New Zealand and the United States, while I got to study at the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh.

Gender inequality has always been a real-life nightmare for me and my sisters, but it became worse in 2020.

That year, our father died due to complications from COVID-19. About a year after, my elder brother was killed in a car explosion after the Taliban occupied Logar province in 2021.

• I hope that Afghan women can Access to basic Education and Human right and Freedom!

I hold on to hope that one day, I can fly back to Afghanistan at a time when there is more space for women and for peace. Even if there is none, one day, I have to go back. It is my country; it is my land.

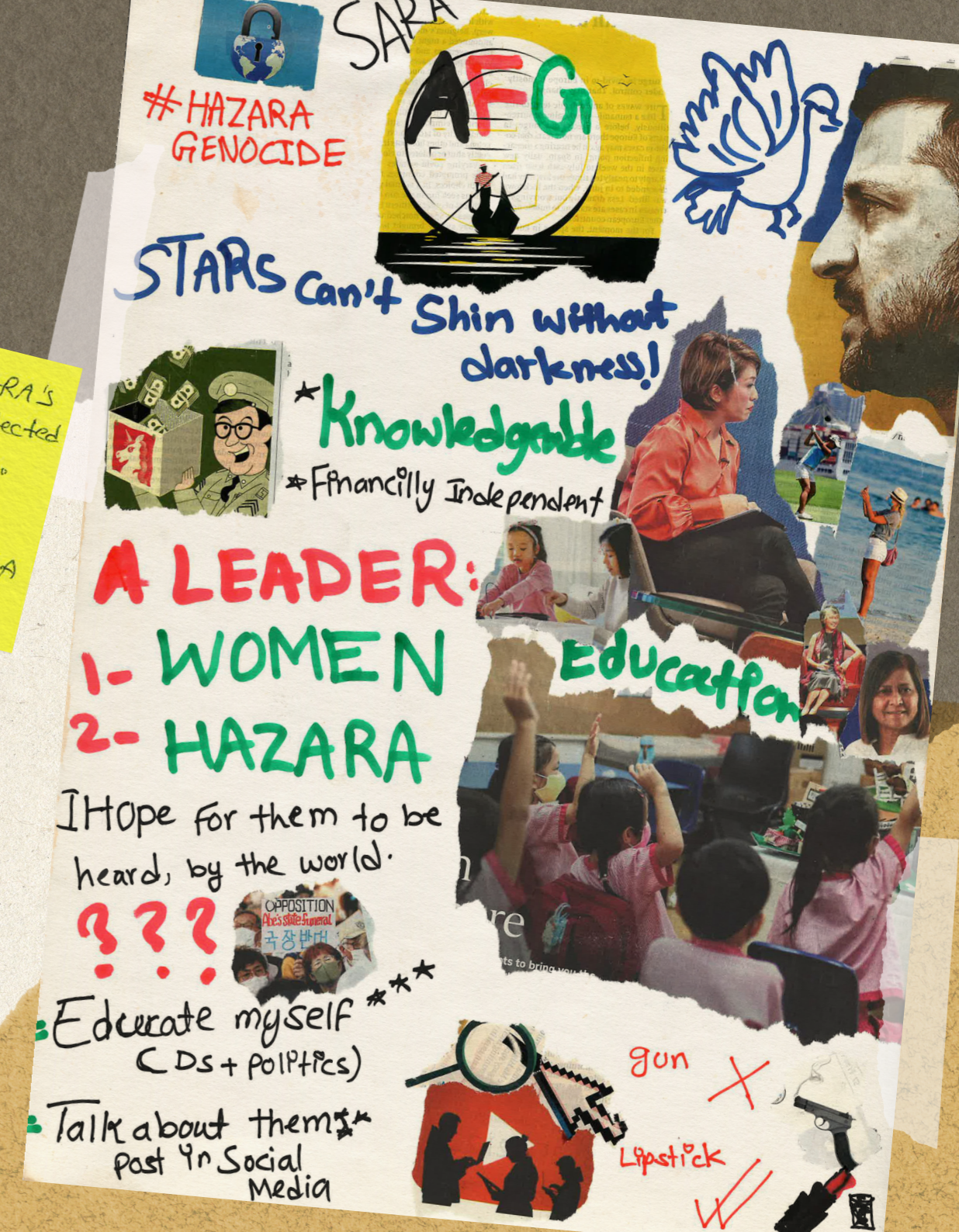
I wish for a peaceful & develop Afghanistan.

I hope HAZARA'S Should be protected in Afghanistan. I hope world Recognize HAZARA genocide!

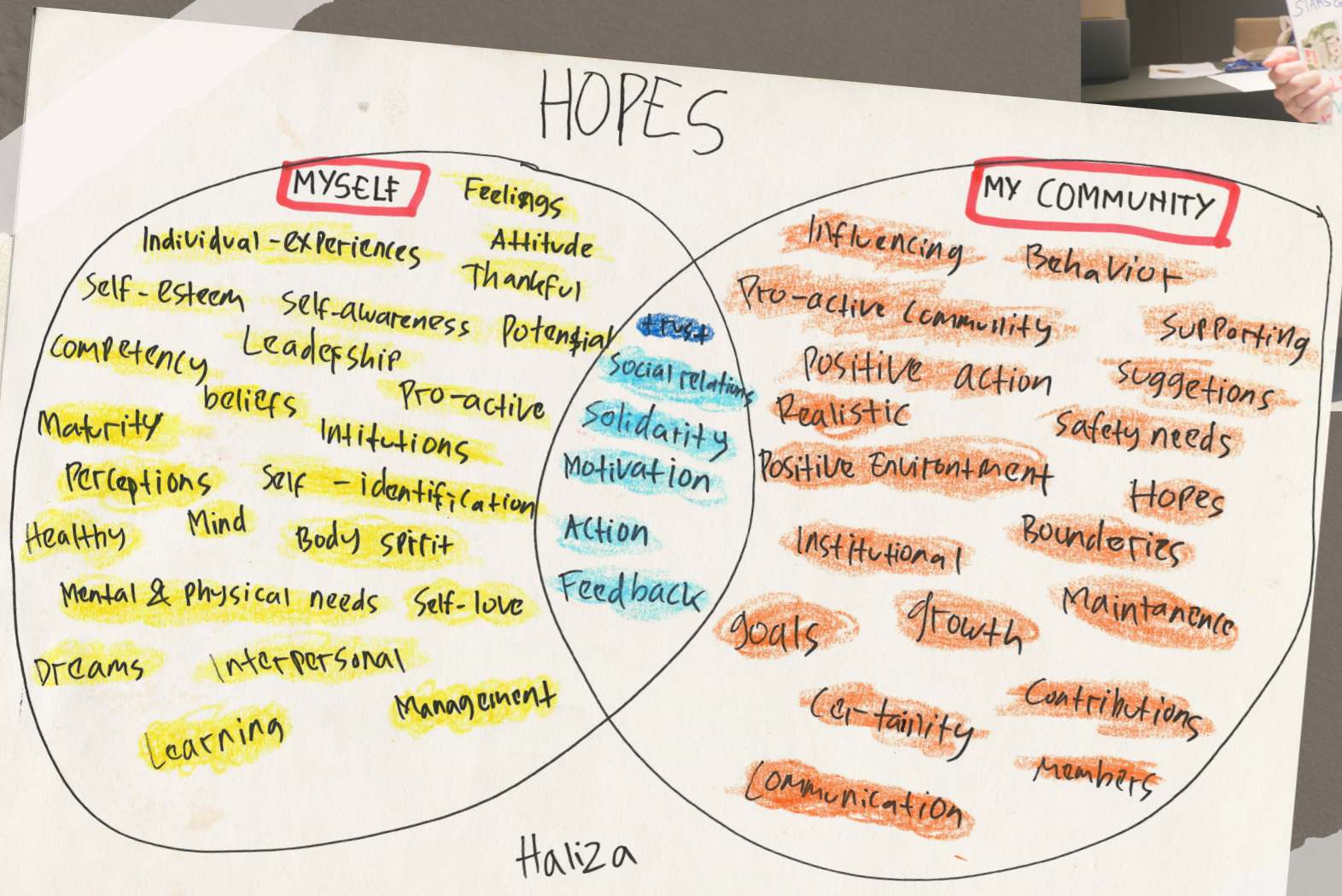
Despite all these, I am grateful that I still have the privilege to study. Other girls from our old neighbourhood never learned how to read and write.

But next year, my passport will expire and I cannot fly back to Afghanistan to have it renewed because of the unrest and violence. I am on the brink of becoming a refugee.

It seems hopeless now, but I hold on to hope that one day, I can fly back to Afghanistan at a time when there is more space for women and for peace. Even if there is none, one day, I have to go back. It is my country; it is my land.

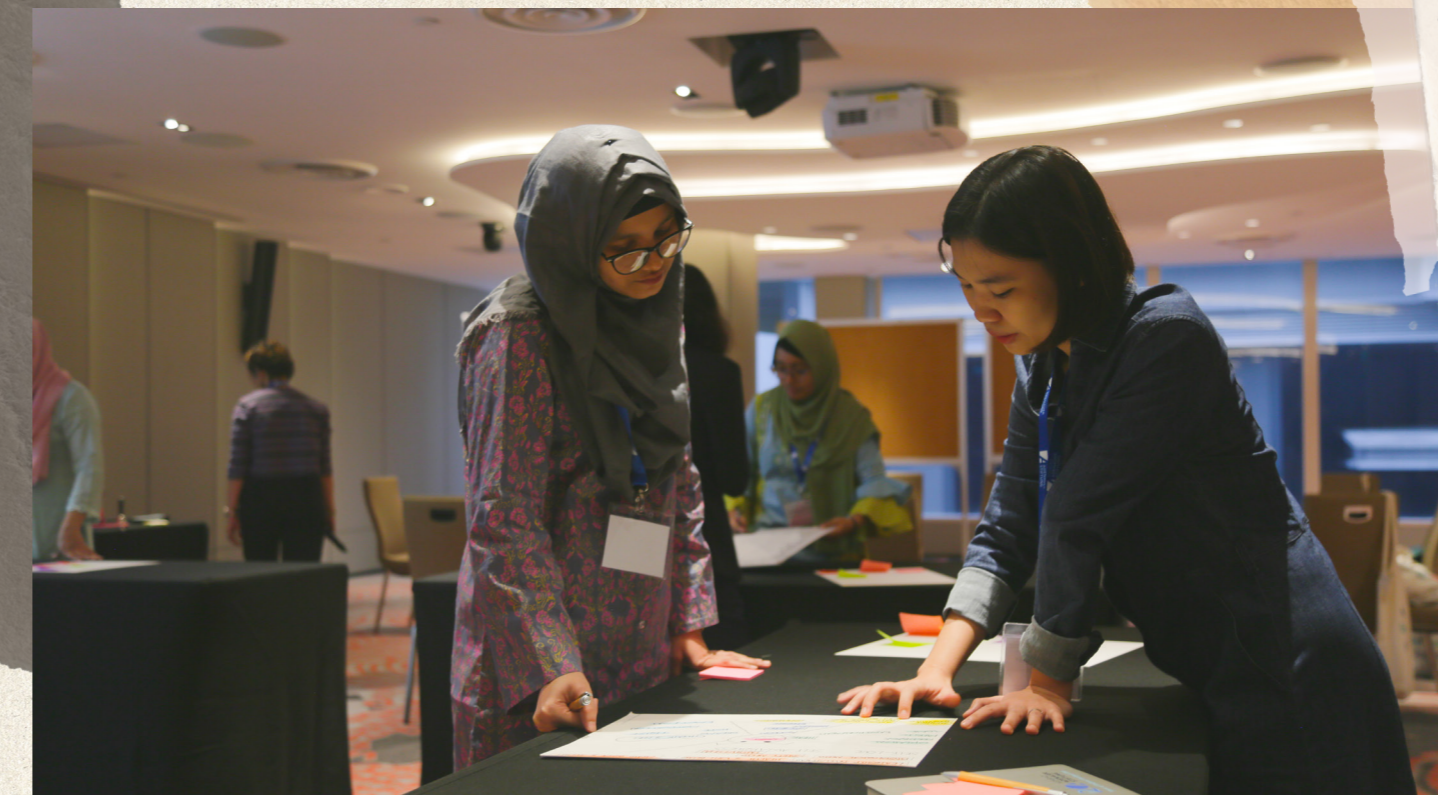






• I hope I am strong and confident enough to take initiative and risk in life.  
 • I hope to become a change maker for my community  
 • I hope for the social and community development in my community.  
 • I hope my community have a better and recognized education system.  
 • I hope youths from my community have an opportunity to explore the outside world.  
 • I can become a part of NGO to work for the community changes and development.  
 • Bring improvement of education, health and wellbeing etc to not only to my community but to other places

Nant Soe Nandar  
Thein





# ✉ A LETTER TO MY GROWING SELF

(from Riya to Riya)

I know your journey of life has not been easy.

Being a religious and linguistic minority,

It made it even more challenging!

But hey, do you remember the promises you made?

You promised to make a transformation for the better,  
By believing in your capabilities and improving yourself each day.

Failures, problems and sadness are all along the journey;

But you rise up; stand tall and look out for opportunities!

After nurturing yourself for years along the journey;

You find yourself in a station.....

(Oh wow! You've become an Indigenous right activist)

But wait, this is not your last station!

Your becoming brings transformation to others as well;

And when they hop on to the journey with you,

It finally makes your journey of life MEANINGFUL!

## Riya Chakma

**M**y father died when I was ten years old. He was run over by a military truck while cycling home from work. My mom tried to ask the military for a job to support me, but instead got an offer to become a commander's mistress.

My mom worked in an orphanage instead, while I wrote for a local paper as a youth journalist to save enough money to send myself to school. Studying in the capital was great, if only my peers did not hurl slurs at me or break some of my religious belongings just because I was part of the Chakma indigenous tribe.

I still consider myself lucky. While I no longer have my dad, I still have my mom. Other Chakma girls were orphaned and forced into marriages with complete strangers. While I was bullied in school, other Chakma girls were raped in the villages they once called home.

With the help of the Asian University for Women, I am now pursuing a degree in politics, philosophy and economics because I dream of speaking before the United Nations General Assembly about the abuses in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region. But for now, I will settle for what I learned when I was young: Write stories about the abuses Bangladeshi girls have to endure just because they were born as Chakmas.

**I am now pursuing a degree in politics, philosophy and economics because I dream of speaking before the United Nations General Assembly about the abuses in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region.**



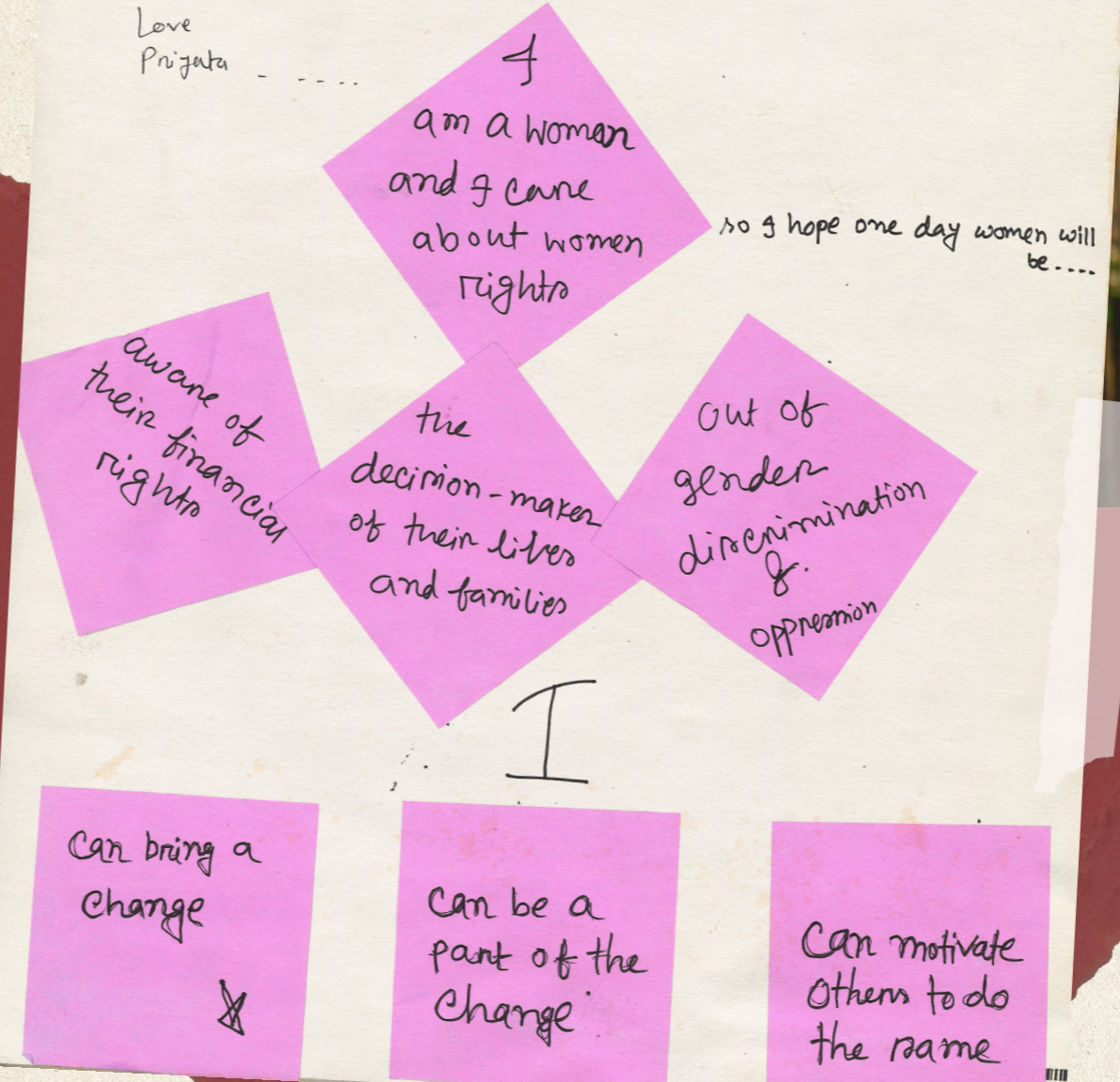




Dean Prizata,

I know you love yourself. Hence, you must know how to learn from the mistakes and negative events of life. Do you think not getting privileged like others made your life harder? So, would you be here today if everything was reserved to you?? I hope you find the correct answer and we look at your story as your inspiration but not an excuse.

Love Prizata





KAS-AUW Scholars present letters to their future selves at the end of a successful workshop.







# About the Asian University for Women (AUW)

**F**ounded in 2008 by Kamal Ahmad, and chartered by the Parliament of Bangladesh, Asian University for Women (AUW) exists to educate and empower a rising network of women leaders from across Asia and the Middle East. Through its distinctive liberal arts and sciences curriculum, AUW educates changemakers and innovative thinkers who address social, political, and economic issues and promote gender equality in their home countries and around the world.

1400 students from 18 countries currently attend AUW: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Syria, Timor-Leste, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, and Yemen. AUW students live and study together, expanding their worldviews and embracing cross-cultural diversity as a strength—not a cause for division or strife.

More than 85 percent of AUW students are on full or near-full scholarships funded by government and foundation grants, corporate sponsors, and individual donors.





## **I. Recruitment of Students**

The AUW model creates a new paradigm in improving access, equity, and quality education for women in difficult circumstances, including those resulting from displacement, conflict, and poverty. Our student population includes: garment factory workers, daughters of landless farmers and tea leaf pickers, women from highly trafficked areas, daughters of microfinance borrowers, refugees, and those banned from education in Afghanistan.

AUW seeks out women who show significant academic achievement and potential, demonstrate courage and a sense of outrage at injustice, and are empathic to the woes of other people.

## **II. Curriculum & Academic Programs**

AUW fosters in its students a sense of social tolerance, critical thinking, the ability to frame and develop debates, and the inspiration to envision large-scale change and take contemplated action towards achieving that change. All classes are taught in English and most women study at AUW for five years, spending two years in the pre-undergraduate programme before embarking on their bachelor's degree programme.

The pre-undergraduate programme prepares students to pass college-level standardised requirements, with intensive English classes, additional academic instruction in mathematics, science and information technology, and mental health support.

Taught by a highly qualified international faculty, the AUW undergraduate programme provides a strong liberal arts and sciences education as well as skills and expertise within six optional majors: Bioinformatics; Economics; Environmental Sciences; Politics, Philosophy and Economics; Public Health, and Computer Science.

## **III. The Impact**

Over the last 15 years, AUW has created a model that works. Stories of alumnae success and statistics of student performance show that an AUW education yields social returns well beyond the impact of one young woman's education. The transformative power of AUW enables the nurturing of a new generation with strategies for tackling regional challenges of corruption, violence, inadequate healthcare, and discrimination.

AUW has graduated over 1200 remarkable women to date, the majority of whom were the first in their family to enter university. All of them have gone on to achieve great academic and professional success. Around 20 per cent of alumnae pursue higher education at top international institutions, including New York University, Stanford University, London School of Economics, University of Cambridge, Harvard University, and Johns Hopkins University; while other graduates go on to secure competitive employment in the public, private and non-governmental organisation sectors, including United Nations, Ralph Lauren, World Bank, Standard Chartered, World Health Organisation, Ministry of Health, Citibank, and L'Oréal.













## Working with Underserved Communities

*“An A UW Education offers Rohingya women a rare liberty to dream and acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to realise that dream of living as equal citizens in their home country and contribute to its development. The A UW community brings together women from across Myanmar in a demonstration of how all citizens of Myanmar, irrespective of their ethnic or religious differences, can live and work together in pursuit of their common hopes for a better life.”*

**Kamal Ahmad, A UW Founder**

### Rohingya

#### Background

Today, over 1 million Rohingya people live in refugee camps in the Cox’s Bazar region of Bangladesh – the largest group of refugee camps in the world – with few prospects for employment, education, or the opportunity to contribute to society. The Rohingya are a Muslim ethnic minority group that has been living primarily in Myanmar’s Rakhine State since at least the 19th century. The Government of Myanmar considers them illegal immigrants and stripped

them of citizenship in 1982 and they have faced a history of neglect and human rights violations.

The largest exodus came in 2017 following mass violence by the Myanmar military in northern Rakhine State when whole villages were torched, and hundreds of thousands were forced to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. An overwhelming percentage of these new arrivals were under the age of 18. Poverty, discrimination, threats of violence, and limited resources make it difficult for the Rohingya to continue with any form of education or training.

Rohingya women and girls face a particularly acute set of hardships, including insecurity, violence, limited mobility, malnutrition, and very early arranged marriage and motherhood.

#### A UW’s Rohingya Support

A UW strongly believes that remedial education for Rohingya women is an important step towards solving the Rohingya problem. Myriad studies have shown the multiplied socio-economic return on investment in women’s education. When this humanitarian crisis hopefully recedes in the near future, A UW foresees the paramount role of educated Rohingya women at the forefront of reconstruction efforts in refugee communities.

In 2016, A UW launched an outreach programme for potential students in Cox’s Bazar in response to the rapidly growing refugee crisis. Since then, the Rohingya cohort at A UW has steadily increased. There are currently almost 250 Rohingya women studying at the university, and we have

graduated a total of 51 Rohingya alumnae. A UW’s Rohingya Recruitment Team, made up of Bangladeshi staff and some senior A UW Rohingya students, works in tandem with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the broader Rohingya community at the university to identify candidates for recruitment and carry out admissions across Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Moving forward, A UW has committed to scaling up recruitment to enrol 400 students from Rohingya refugee camps. The recruitment team will work with international NGOs to prepare candidates for admission tests. Dedicated A UW graduates will then conduct admission testing and interviews and carry out the selection process on an accelerated, rolling basis. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has already approached A UW to assist in conducting training of teachers who might be ultimately deployed to run learning centres in the refugee camps.

A UW Rohingya graduates will become leading advocates for their community and skilled in developing solutions to humanitarian challenges.

#### Creating a New Generation of Humanitarian Leaders

Our students are taught from their very first day that they are expected to be ethical, innovative leaders, and that such leaders do not turn away from struggle, sacrifice, or human suffering. Their life experience and knowledge have propelled over 60 A UW graduates to the forefront of emergency relief efforts in Cox’s Bazar. Our alumnae work



as organisational staff at UNHCR, World Food Programme, Translators without Borders, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the International Organisation for Migration, among others. Their work includes response to sexual and gender-based violence, translation services, protection of refugee rights, health and hygiene maintenance, and nutritional support.



## Afghanistan

For more than 10 years, AUW has committed to recruiting and supporting young women from Afghanistan. Today, Afghan students make up the second-largest portion of the student population, many of whom belong to the Hazara ethnic minority community, a population that has historically faced mass persecution, discrimination, and violence.

In the wake of the Taliban's capture of Kabul in 2021, AUW worked rapidly to coordinate an evacuation of its Afghan students and alumnae. After several failed attempts, on August 28, 2021, we were able to secure a U.S. military plane that transferred 148 students to a U.S. military base in Wisconsin. Shortly after their arrival, we secured scholarship placements for them into U.S. universities, including Brown University, Cornell University, Suffolk University, and

Arizona State University. Students have successfully embarked on their courses and have taken up work in roles such as research assistants. Mayer Brown instrumentalized a dozen law firms across the nation to represent the students for their asylum cases.

Committed to serving the needs of more Afghan women now banned from education after age 12, AUW made a commitment to enrol, and provide scholarships for 1000 new students from Afghanistan. Within weeks of the evacuation effort, we ran a campaign across all 34 provinces to identify and test hundreds of aspiring students out of an applicant pool of over 17,000. So far, 480 Afghan women have arrived on campus, with the remaining new students expected to arrive in the coming months.

### Daisy Nicholas

Assistant Director,  
European Outreach,  
AUW Support Foundation











Graduation at AUW -  
A life-changing moment.



From garment factory worker to university graduate -  
a dream come true for Sabina Yeasmin.



A better future lies ahead of the students,  
yet still uncertain for many of them.





# Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia

For over 20 years, KAS Political Dialogue Asia facilitates exchange among Asian countries and between Asia and Europe in the areas of political cooperation, regional integration, security, the sustainable development goals and digitalisation. Through our international conferences, training programmes, workshops and publications we aim to connect various stakeholders from political parties and parliaments, civil society groups, non-governmental organisations as well as policy makers and think tank representatives.

With its international activities and projects, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung contributes to international cooperation and cultural understanding. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is one of the political foundations of the Federal Republic of Germany, associated with the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU). Freedom, justice and solidarity are the basic principles underlying the work of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, which is named after the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr Konrad Adenauer.

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