

2023



Hope

Dignity

Annual Report

Commitment



Redefining what is possible

“Shifting the norm” was the motto of 2023, to protect children by raising caregivers’ awareness on the prevention of the unquestioned use of violence, empowering women, bringing people together regardless of gender, ethnic group, or religious background to make a vision come true.

Let us together preserve and protect the progress that has been made over the past 16 years.

The people of isolated regions deserve an opportunity to show their potential so that from within their own country they can play their part to influence and to create a different future for their region and Afghanistan as a whole

A word from the president



Reflecting deeply on the decades of fragile uncertainty of the Afghan context in general, and on the current political situation, I feel truly privileged and grateful today to be sharing the annual report of 2023.

Every year, since founding Nai Qala Association, I am struck by how many apparently overwhelming challenges Afghanistan faces, be they in human, social, education, health or other fields.

When I ask myself how we can tackle them, the task often appears overwhelming. Decades of war and neglect, as well as deep-rooted conservatism, have left many scars behind and many wounds to heal.

At Nai Qala, we remain profoundly committed and focused. We are convinced that every step, every action, even the most modest change counts.

Nai Qala's greatest highlight of 2023 was our project on "reducing violence against children" particularly from their own parents and even in school and within the communities. We chose this project as we want to concentrate on the root of key problems and find ways to make a long-lasting difference.

There is a strong emphasis in international circles on providing emergency aid to Afghanistan, which is understandable. However, in Nai Qala we feel it is important to accompany communities and enable them to find their own way ahead with activities that are essential to opening the path for Afghans to develop on their own and most importantly to move away from dependency.

This is not something we believe can wait. We do not have that luxury. The time to act is now so that these communities become empowered and can take ownership and find solutions themselves.

Nai Qala's vision is to create a space and an environment where children feel safe, protected, and can flourish for a better future in harmony with their parents and other adults.

We therefore undertook an ambitious project to engage all the influential actors in the communities to alter the norms that have been in place for hundreds of years. Violent and destructive practices had become part of "normal" habits that are deeply anchored in the society. These remote communities had been so isolated and ignored and left in deep poverty for so long that these norms developed and were never questioned or challenged.

2023 was a year for deepening our trust and strengthening our communication and dialogue through workshops. We openly discussed difficult topics so that participants can find local tailor-made solutions that communities understand and accept as necessary for their own wellbeing as well as their children's.

This approach requires time and change is only gradual, but these small improvements will lead to greater and more concrete outcomes for future generations. It is this long-term view that Nai Qala is so proud of.

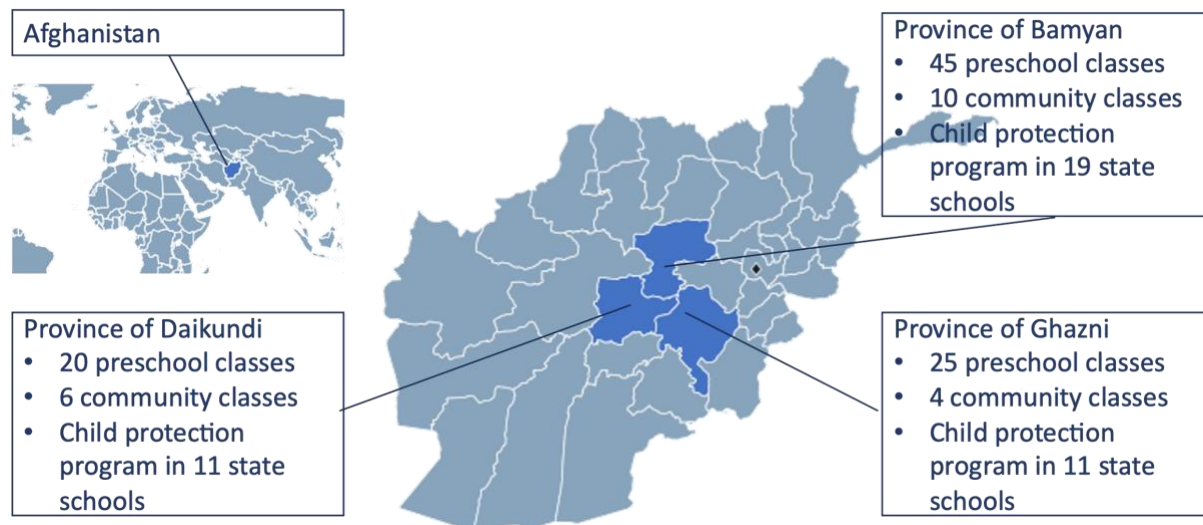
We are extremely thankful to our donors for their support and belief in our goal to ensure sustainable and durable impact within communities. Your continued support standing by these communities and encouraging their active participation will help create positive change driven by the very people it aims to benefit and foster a sense of ownership and pride within the local communities.

Sincerely,

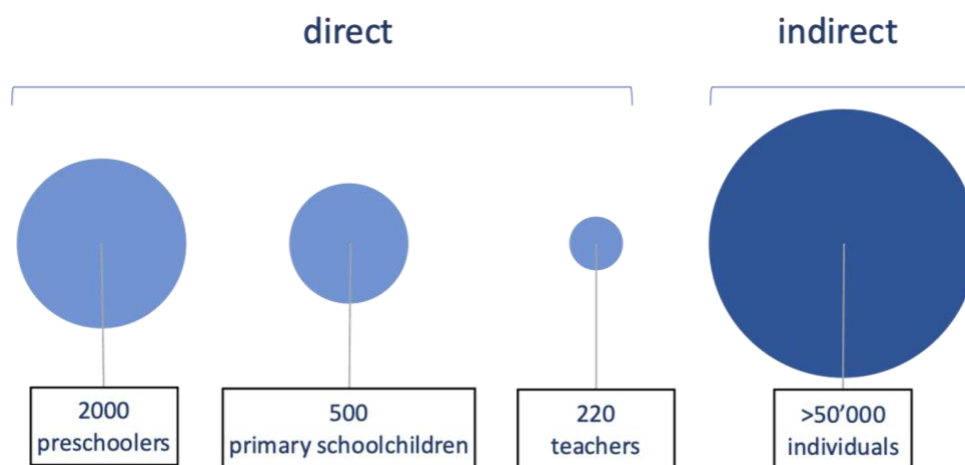
Taiba Rahim

Our operations

Where we work



Our beneficiaries



Our team



100% Afghan nationals, a team of 8 in Kabul, 6 field officers (50% women) and 110 teachers, 106 of them women.

Key achievements in 2023

Nai Qala Association provided pre-school and primary programs to over 2'500 children in remote rural regions of Bamyan, Daikundi and Ghazni provinces; hired and gave pedagogical training to 110 teachers from local communities, and equipped all classrooms with educational, recreational and hygiene materials.

Nai Qala Raised awareness of 220 teachers, from state schools & Nai Qala programs, on prevention of child violence and supported them in developing local solutions to reduce violence occurrences and in turn raise awareness in the communities.

Preschool program



Nai Qala Association's preschool program continued in 2023. We successfully ran 90 classes benefitting more than 2000 children in the provinces of Bamyan, Daikundi and Ghazni.

Nai Qala provided training for the preschool teachers, paid their salaries, and equipped the classrooms to accommodate and teach the children. The association ensured the regular follow-up of classes and evaluated

the project throughout the school year. The program is having a clear impact; thanks to the academic and social skills they acquire, the children are ready to start primary school, and their parents are more inclined to send them to school later.

Leadership and equality

Not only do the teachers pass on reading, writing, counting and basic everyday skills to the children they also create social cohesion. Both the mothers and fathers of the children come to the parents' meetings where they learn to listen to a woman talking and leading. They are made aware of the value of respecting children's and human's rights. The children are taught to respect one another. Girls and boys play together side by side. This is how the teachers raise awareness about gender equality. Children also become ambassadors for long term change.

Health awareness as part of the curriculum

Improvement in water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is an essential part of the education of young children who are particularly vulnerable and often suffer from diarrhea and related illnesses. Through Nai Qala's preschool projects, teachers, parents, children, and the entire community is made aware of the importance of adopting good hygiene practices. Integrating WASH components into Nai Qala's projects increases the proportion of the population using proper sanitation facilities and handwashing correctly and ultimately has a positive impact on the health and well-being of the whole community.

The preschool teachers promote good hygiene and proper nutrition to both the children and the parents. They learn to make the most of the local food available and also learn basic first aid.

Focus on children with special needs

Nai Qala has an inclusive vision for its education programs and welcomes children with special needs in its preschool classes. Some children attending preschool classes suffer from health conditions such as hearing, speaking or sight impairment, mobility difficulties or are slow learners. The teachers are trained to identify the children with special needs and on ways to help them. They feel responsible to provide every child with support.

Equipping classrooms

Nai Qala has equipped all 90 classrooms with educational, recreational, and hygiene materials. Feedback from teachers is essential, and Nai Qala conducts thorough testing through its own purchasing committee to ensure the selection of appropriate and quality materials, for the children. Our focus is on promoting quality educational programs with low-cost local solutions and testing equipment to complement our purchasing policy highlights the importance of ensuring that the educational materials are suitable for the young beneficiaries of our programs.

In 2023, Nai Qala encouraged teachers to use local materials to guide the first steps in literacy and numeracy of children and to pay more attention to their environment. Children wrote their first letters by drawing in the sand or aligning beans to draw a number.

Child Protection



In 2023 Nai Qala Association ran a special awareness campaign on protecting children from violence. Nai Qala held 20 workshops for over 200 teachers and school directors impacting 41 schools in three provinces. 90% of the participants were female. Local state schools in turn organized information sessions for parents, creating a snowball effect and raising awareness among thousands of families in

the provinces of Bamyan, Daikundi and Ghazni. School and education have the unique potential to act as an important means for spreading the values of non-violence, cooperation, tolerance, and respect, not only among pupils and teaching staff but also beyond, into families and the wider community.

Nai Qala Association's vision encompasses creating a society where both men and women thrive in harmony, sharing equal responsibilities and opportunities. In pursuit of this vision, Nai Qala undertook this project that engaged thousands of men and women, including village chiefs, religious influencers, school directors, teachers, parents, and state authorities. Breaking the cycle of violence begins with children.

For many in the community, the concept of protecting children from violence was a discovery since such behavior was so deeply anchored into local norms and traditions. Violence had not often been a topic for discussion. Teaching the community about protecting children from all forms of violence has not only a far-reaching impact on the children's overall well-being and development but also on the society.

A teacher's first step towards bringing about deep change to society

A female teacher from one of the schools that we support, shared her personal experience about an 8-year-old student in her class who was badly dressed and withdrawn, and she had always considered him to be naughty, but after the workshop she understood that there can be deep causes for children's behavior, and she realized she should be more aware. She said: *"I felt how I had ignored him all these years, denied his feelings and the pain that he was going through. What sort of family environment does he live in? Why was I not interested in him? I learnt all those points in the workshop and how to listen to children's emotions and feelings...Now I support him a lot, equally like all the other children. I am very proud and thank you for helping to open my eyes towards children and their needs."*

At the beginning of the workshop most teachers thought that such changes would be impossible.

Community based education program



During 2023 Nai Qala successfully ran 20 community-based education classes in hard-to-reach localities in Bamyan, Daikundi and Ghazni. The effects of this program have far exceeded our expectations.

Through this program, not only has Nai Qala increased the number of children accessing primary education, created child friendly and inclusive learning environments and increased the quality of

learning for the children but has also had a lasting impact on the development of the communities. All the teachers (16 women, 4 men) were hired locally and have proven to be competent, dedicated and committed.

Hiring local women is a first step towards women's empowerment and gender equality

In villages where teaching is provided by a woman, the communities learn about the importance of women in society, and they see for themselves the capabilities of girls and are committed to education for all. The teachers have learnt that they too have rights and have gained confidence. Women hold key roles as teachers and money earners.

The demand for girls' education is high even in conservative communities

Some villages are so remote that girls never benefitted from any form of education due to tradition and long or unsafe walking distances, but now through Nai Qala's community-based education program the girls have access to education. Some classes were designed to host only girls as boys can still reach a school within a few hours walking distance. Despite a very conservative and traditional culture, the elders welcomed the project, parents were eager to send their daughters to school and the communities accepted the program and provided rooms and heating for the classes. It is often fathers themselves who bring their daughters to the class.



Shifting the norm

Male community-based education teacher: *"I grew up in a village in which war was part of our daily lives. The little education that was available was only for boys. I am a graduate of 6th grade. Girls' education is a new phenomenon for me and for me to teach them is also new. Now I realize and see these girls learning and it makes me think every day. I see they are motivated, and they are learning. Why can't girls learn like boys? This is a start and a seed that has been planted in the minds of parents and the community. Parents come every day and walk around the class and feel happy".*

Nai Qala Association's presence on site plays a key role on the impact of the program. Throughout the project, the Nai Qala team visits the classes and sees how this is a reassuring and motivating factor for the local people and the teachers. They are inspired and respond by showing willingness to participate and make their own contribution to help the community. Nai Qala has learnt that being present is key to impacting these communities positively and to influence and inspire them to be actively engaged.

Nai Qala Association takes pride in its efforts to support communities in remote and isolated regions, offering hope and opportunities for a better future. By doing so, it contributes to achieving a balance between rural and urban development, ensuring that children in rural areas have access to quality education in an inclusive manner. Despite initial perceptions of limited prospects for meaningful development in extremely poor villages, Nai Qala has been inspired by the voices, energy, and determination of the children in these communities. This serves as a powerful reminder of the potential for positive change and progress, motivating Nai Qala to continue its valuable work in these areas.

Reassured and convinced parents

Mother and Nai Qala pre-school teacher whose child attended preschool and now attends the community-based education class: *"This class is very important. We feel reassured to send our children to a class that is nearby. The state school is too far and there are too many risks to cross rivers or walk for hours in the heat. This discourages the children from attending school."*

Another mother: *"The state school is far off. My older son went to school far away and never fully attended because of the distance. He was often tired walking and took pauses on his way so by the time he arrived it was already lunch time... But now, my second son is going to the village class and his life is completely different. He is focused, learning, and concentrating. As compared to his brother I observe that he reads, writes and is happier. I wish that Nai Qala could also enroll my older son."*

Training Teachers

This year in all three provinces of Bamyan, Daikundi and Ghazni, Nai Qala provided training to 110 teachers as part of the preschool and community-based education programs. During their induction training and refresher seminars, Nai Qala teachers acquired skills in health, nutrition and hygiene and improved their teaching skills. They received training on the rights of the child and on child development and psychology and on



achieving better classroom management without resorting to violence or verbal abuse. Raising parents' awareness of these issues is an integral part of the teachers' job description.

Women's empowerment

Nai Qala takes immense pride in paving the way for empowerment in the remote and overlooked mountainous region of central Afghanistan. In this area, where residents face harsh natural conditions and a lack of essential infrastructure like roads, education, and healthcare facilities, communities have long been constrained by geographical boundaries, leading to restricted perspectives.

Traditionally, societal norms have relegated women to household roles, while men have assumed positions of power and authority. Unfortunately, this imbalance often translates into oppression rather than collaboration, limiting the progress and well-being of women in these communities.

In this historical context, Nai Qala seeks ways of empowering men to recognize the value of working alongside women as equals to foster harmony and create an inclusive environment where both women and men can thrive. By emphasizing the importance of mutual respect and cooperation, Nai Qala Association aims to mobilize the power of men to uplift and empower women within their communities.

Through initiatives such as engaging Nai Qala teachers and mothers in community meetings, positive changes are taking root. Women are displaying leadership qualities that inspire men to support and participate in these transformative efforts, leading to a reduction in family violence and a brighter future for children.

Ms. Madhya, a dedicated Nai Qala teacher: *"I am filled with great pride as a teacher, as I carry within me important messages to share with parents and the wider community. To many, I was simply seen as an ordinary girl, someone they have watched grow up before their eyes, evolving from a young girl causing mischief to a young lady without much prospect in life.*

Initially, when I called upon parents for a first meeting as a teacher, I encountered hesitancy and skepticism. Who was this person stepping into the role of educator? Wasn't she the same little girl who once roamed the village? I persevered through these doubts, commencing my meetings with just a few hesitant parents. Over time, word spread through the village about the substance of my message, and gradually more parents, including men, started attending my sessions. Today, I stand before the community with an unprecedented level of respect from both men and women.

In these gatherings, I have found my voice, and they listen intently as I raise new topics, inviting them to share their experiences and feedback—a form of homework that enriches our collective growth. Through my role in NQA and the nurturing environment it fosters, I have begun to recognize the importance of my role as a human being. I feel a newfound sense of leadership and empowerment, a realization that my efforts in shaping the future through education hold value.

I have learned a deep lesson—that excellence and dedication are the path to respect. The gratitude I hold for this experience is immeasurable, knowing that I have the ability to inspire and empower those around me".

Participations, collaborations, and partnerships

2023 was a particularly active year for Nai Qala in terms of collaborations with other non-governmental organizations. Coordination with other NGOs provided an opportunity for advocacy and to discuss and find solutions for the common issues and challenges faced as well as potential partnerships.

Winterization Assistance

This year Nai Qala Association was honored to work with the *International Rescue Committee* (IRC) on the distribution of winterization kits.

Winter in Yakawlang District, province of Bamyan, is harsh and unforgiving. The district is in the central highlands of Afghanistan, at an altitude of over 3,000 meters above sea level. The temperature drops to as low as -20°C, and heavy snowfall blocks roads and disrupts daily life. Most of the population in Yakawlang District relies on agriculture and animal husbandry for their livelihoods, and the severe winter weather poses a significant threat to their survival.

In response to this challenge, the winterization assistance project was implemented in close collaboration with the *International Rescue Committee* to provide support to vulnerable households in Yakawlang District. The project's aim was to reduce the impact of winter by providing essential items such as warm clothing and blankets to the families in need. Nai Qala ensured the kits were distributed to the poorest and most needy families in several villages in different zones to be sure the aid had as wide a distribution as possible.

Education collaborations

Nai Qala Association is a member of the *Education Cluster* and a member of the *Education in Emergencies Working Group*; these entities aim to provide access to quality education for emergencies affected children in a safe and protective environment reaching internally displaced people, returnees and out of school vulnerable and marginalized communities in hard-to-reach and remote areas.

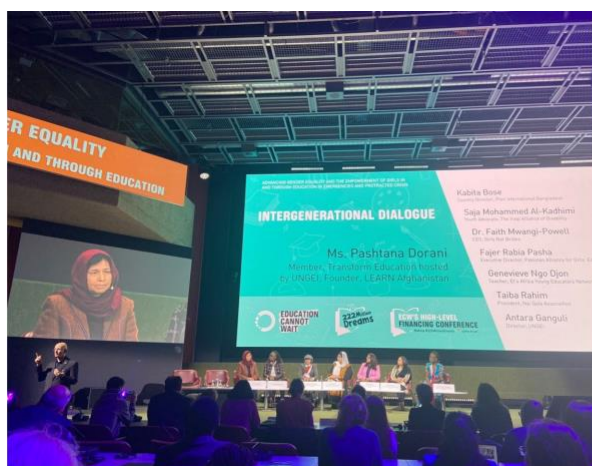
Nai Qala is very proud of its working partnership with *AFRANE* and of the goodwill it has generated. *AFRANE* provided some thirty educational kits with games and activities to vary learning methods. These boxes were given to several schools participating in the violence prevention program. In exchange, Nai Qala committed to supporting *AFRANE* in the development of distance learning for teachers.

Nai Qala is also very honored by the support of the *Aga Khan Foundation* which provided training and training material for the preparation of the violence prevention program. Through such support the capacities of the Nai Qala team were enhanced to pass on knowledge during the workshops with teachers.

Thanks to the donation of *Boum Books*, a children's literature publisher, Nai Qala made hundreds of children happy with story and activity books.

Conferences

Participation in conferences is a valuable opportunity to share insights and experiences on localization, resilience, and humanitarian action, and to network with other stakeholders working in related areas. In 2023 Nai Qala Association took part in several conferences and meetings, e.g.:



Clockwise:

- The Education Cannot Wait Conference which included a talk by Nai Qala Associations' president and an interview at one of the plenary sessions, Geneva, February 2023.
- Ms. Rahim also attended the ICVA conference on "Supporting Local Actors Across the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus", Geneva, March 2023.
- Nai Qala Association was invited to meet with Ms. Amina Mohammed Deputy secretary general, UN office, Kabul, January 2023.
- Ms. Rahim at the European Humanitarian Forum, Brussels, March 2023.

The Team in Afghanistan

Nai Qala Association considers itself extremely lucky to have such a committed and loyal team working in Kabul and in the provinces.

Each member of staff feels a strong sense of responsibility and gives their full support to Nai Qala's mission, collaborates closely with other employees and gives each other support when needed. They work hard and despite the ever-changing political situation they persevere and stay motivated to continue to bring hope to isolated communities in Central Afghanistan.



"In spite of the political challenging environment, 2023 was my best professional experience. I felt that my achievements were even bigger than previous years. First and mostly, I felt a strong support from NQA team to create a possible environment for me to be able to work despite restrictions on females working. Such support gave me the space to shine and flourish more than ever. It made me even more responsible and challenged me to do my best." **Khatera, education trainer and coordinator**

"I am grateful for the supportive and collaborative environment Nai Qala Association fosters, which has allowed me to thrive and excel in my role." **Ehsas, project manager, head of office**

"I am grateful to the team and our President for their unwavering support, which has helped me overcome all the challenges I faced in 2023. The encouragement and guidance have been instrumental in my growth and development as a professional." **Zakaria Reza, procurement and liaison officer**

"I have been able to create a strong link and positive relation between Nai Qala teachers and state teachers. Through joint trainings, the state school directors and teacher, discovered that the preschool is a good base for school. Secondly, all teachers, directors, parent and entire community got awareness regarding reducing violence against children. This made me very happy to see some changes in their behaviour". **Samira, education trainer and coordinator**

Capacity building

In 2023 the Nai Qala team attended many training courses and workshops thanks to the generous support from various institutions. These courses contribute to the continuous improvement of Nai Qala's organizational, technical and soft skills.

Nai Qala staff strengthened its capacities in child development and education, which are key components for supporting teachers in their daily practice. Nai Qala staff attended workshops provided by the *International Committee of the Red Cross* on children with disabilities, brain development and slow-learning children; the staff also benefited from the experience of a female professor in pedagogy from the university of Kabul who provided coaching and guidance for improving the curriculum of education projects and designing the content of workshops for teachers. Nai Qala team had also the privilege to attend a tailor-made course on pedagogy and child protection provided by the *Aga Khan Foundation*.

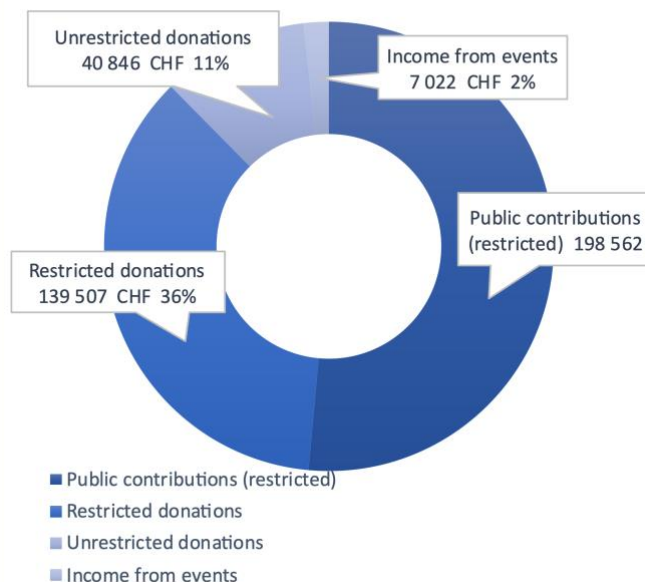
As part of its 2023 campaign to reduce violence against children, Nai Qala staff attended a course on child protection provided by *UNICEF*, a safeguarding training and workshops on gender equality and social inclusion, safety and security provided by *Save the Children*.

Thanks to such courses Nai Qala continued to develop its policies and processes. This included, developing its gender and safeguarding policies and Nai Qala provided workshops for 100s of teachers (men and women) to ensure the community understands and respects the ideas these policies are based on.

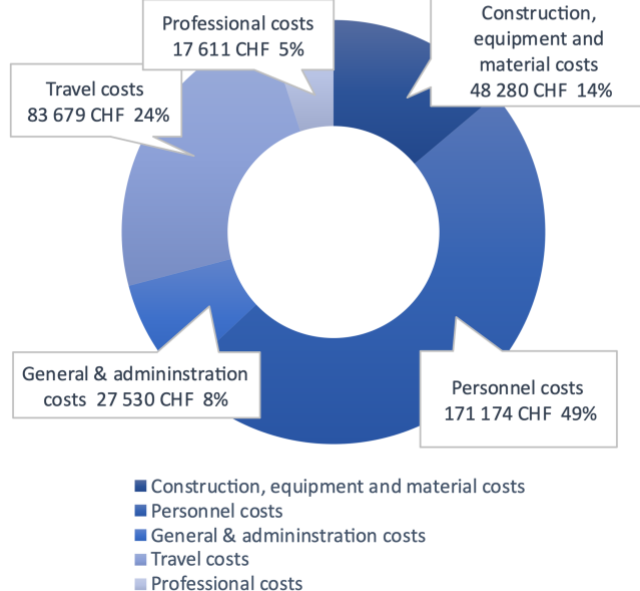
The team also continues to improve its organizational capacity, and attended numerous courses on human resources, finance, procurement, assessment, advocacy and communication, and management provided by various organizations and partners.

Financial Report 2023

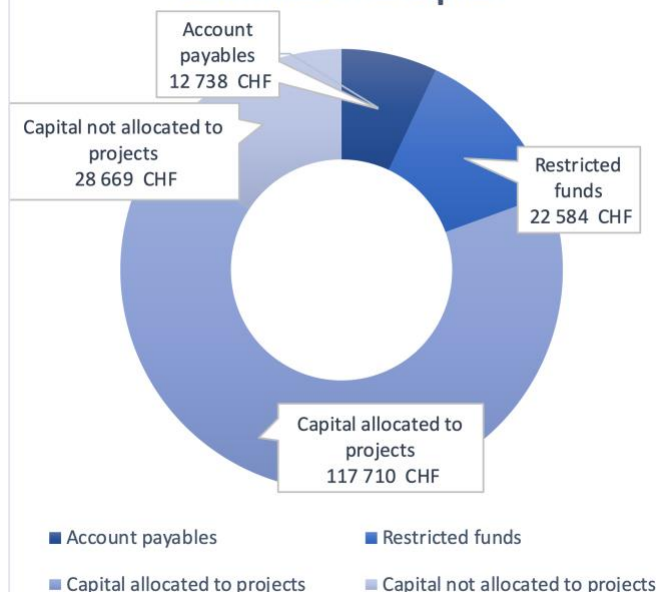
Income



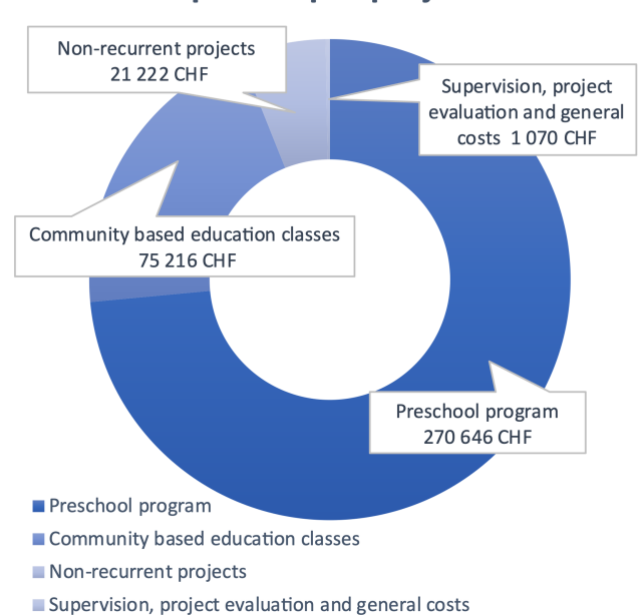
Operating expenses



Liabilities and capital



Expenses per project



These are final figures based on accounting books, as of December 31, 2023.

All donations are tax deductible in Switzerland.

Our Actions towards the Sustainable Development Goals agenda

Nai Qala Association's initiatives contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development goals.



SDG 4 Education: We believe that is the foundation on which all the other SDGs depend.

Nai Qala's preschools and community-based education classes increase access to education. Additionally, attending a preschool program increases attendance in the formal education system. Community based education classes help provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all.



SDG 1 No Poverty: In 2023, Nai Qala provided teaching positions to over 100 teachers from remote communities, as part of its preschool and CBE projects. Their salary increases the economical means of hundreds of individuals in deprived communities.



SDG 5 Gender: Women and girls suffer discrimination in all parts of Afghanistan. The literacy rate for young women is still only 57 percent of that of young men. School attendance indices also show unequivocal gender disparities, which decrease with the level of education. In rural areas these figures are even more alarming. Improving access to education contribute to reducing the gap.

Inclusive education has the best chance to achieve cultural change, whereby boys develop a better understanding of the role and contribution of girls in society and support the interests of women and girls.



SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being: Nai Qala's preschool program has proven efficient in improving hygiene conditions of children and their families. Children learn to wash their hands, their teeth and to use latrines; their new habits drive changes in the whole community.



SDG 2 No Hunger: preschool group discussions with parents raise their awareness about the importance of feeding children and slowly change the habit of feeding children last or sending them to bed on an empty stomach.



SDG 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against children: Nai Qala Association promotes a violence free culture and raises awareness in the communities on the rights of children.

Looking forward

The situation remains complex as Afghanistan continues to face ongoing political, social, economic and humanitarian challenges. In these turbulent times it is increasingly difficult to carry out humanitarian and development activities, but such an environment is not a new situation for the country.

Nai Qala Association with its grassroots experience and its good local knowledge and cooperation, can respond quickly and efficiently to a changing environment. Thanks to its deep understanding of the area and the trusting relationships built through years of collaborative work, Nai Qala has been able to sustain its activities effectively. This approach enables the organization to overcome challenges and continue its initiatives with a strong network of support and cooperation.

Despite the reduced development assistance, Nai Qala Association has successfully navigated the financial management challenges of 2023 by exploring various solutions and has managed to maintain cash flows and continue uninterrupted with all salary payments.



School girls, province of Bamyān, August 2023

Thanks to our donors

We are extremely grateful to all our donors for their support in aiding neglected communities in Afghanistan. We are proud that they placed their trust in Nai Qala. Each donation makes an impact, helps us to remain actively engaged and brings hope to these remote regions during a critical time.

This year we are especially grateful for the generous contributions of:

Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency	Association Most	Private Foundations, small and middle size companies, not for profit organizations,
Service de la Solidarité Internationale, Canton de Genève	Fondation Pierre Henri Ducret Fondation Irene S. Staehlin	and the dozens of individual private donors and families

We deeply appreciate all donors who have been remarkable partners in support of Nai Qala's activities since 2007.

Nai Qala organized a fundraising dinner in Switzerland, which was a wonderful opportunity to showcase its projects to many of its individual donors and long-time supporters. Nai Qala was also very privileged to be the guest of honor of a wonderful gala evening organized by the Rotary Clubs of Geneva and Nyon.

About Nai Qala

Nai Qala Association's statutes established it as a Swiss-based non-for-profit organization that is formally registered with the Ministry of Economy in Afghanistan. Nai Qala Association's board is made up of experts in humanitarian and development activities. The dedicated in-country team of Afghan staff with specific skills runs the organization's office in Kabul and oversees the daily activities both in Kabul and in the field. The President, Mrs. Taiba Rahim, a trained teacher has a hands-on approach and implements and monitors closely all the projects

Since 2007, Nai Qala Association has been active in the development and delivery of quality basic education to under-served remote communities in rural Afghanistan. All Nai Qala's projects focus on community participation, and together, we have worked to build twelve schools for over 10,000 children, facilitated tutoring programs and established 100 preschool and community-based classes in the provinces of Ghazni, Bamyan and Daikundi.

Our Mission

Nai Qala Association's engagement is based on the determination to strengthen the dignity, self-confidence, and sense of initiative of the populations in remote regions of Afghanistan and of women in particular. Improved access to education and health is a fundamental human right and crucial to move beyond poverty, exclusion, humiliation and discrimination.

Our Vision

An educated, healthy, and balanced society in which women and men lead social, cultural, and economic changes in an inclusive manner that enables their children – boys and girls – to thrive, focusing on neglected parts of Afghanistan.

Hope for a dignified future



*Preschool girl
Province of Ghazni – November 2023*

Let us together preserve and protect the progress that has been made over the past 16 years.

The people of isolated regions deserve an opportunity to show their potential so that from within their own country they can play their part to influence and to create a different future for their region and Afghanistan as a whole.

Join us for an educated, healthy, and balanced society for rural Afghanistan

Support our mission with a donation:

By bank transfer: Association Nai Qala, CH 1266 Duillier,
UBS Switzerland SA, 1260 Nyon
IBAN: CH66 0022 8228 5702 1701 N (for donations in CHF)
IBAN: CH78 0022 8228 5702 1761 F (for donations in USD)
SWIFT/BIC: UBSWCHZH80A

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