

Bringing Hope with “Huma Quşu”

Everything in our lives starts with a story. The “Huma Quşu” Educational Support Fund was born out of love and the belief that even the deepest loss can be transformed into hope for others. The fund opens doors for young people, giving them a chance to learn, dream, and shape a brighter future with education. In this interview with NARGIS Magazine, Shahla Vazirova, Founder and President of the “Huma Quşu” Educational Support Fund, shares the history behind the fund, reflects on the past projects, and reveals future plans.



Mission to the South African Republic, Bambari, where Humay served as a Delegate for the International Committee of the Red Cross



Humay and her coworkers in Colombia



Humay and her coworkers
in Colombia

What inspired the creation of the “Huma Quşu” Educational Support Fund, and what are its goals?

In March 2021, our family faced an unimaginable tragedy. We lost our daughter Humay. At the time, she was working for the International Committee of the Red Cross as the group leader for the Protection of the Civilian Population in Medellín. She was an extraordinary young woman – a curious adventurer with a strong sense of justice. In her memory, we decided to continue the work she believed in so passionately. That’s how the idea of establishing a charitable fund was born. As an initial donation, we used Humay’s salary, which she didn’t use much and was accumulated in her bank account. Inspired by her love of learning, we chose to focus the fund’s mission on education. Our goal is to support talented, hardworking young people from underprivileged backgrounds by giving them access to education both in Azerbaijan and abroad. The fund serves all youth who meet our core criteria: financial need, intellectual ability, and a commitment to their studies.

What projects has the fund implemented so far?

The fund has been operating for nearly three years now. In that time, we’ve launched nine distinct programmes. Our first initiative supported veterans of the Second Karabakh War by funding their IT education. We recognised the importance of digital skills in today’s world and saw this as a pathway for young people who have returned from the frontlines.

Another direction of our work has been our multi-level education support programme for talented youth. For example, we run a programme that assists Azerbaijani youth pursuing degrees at ADA University. As part of this, we launched an initiative called “Humayın Təhsil ADA-sı” (Humay’s Island of Knowledge), through which three young women received scholarships of 5,000 AZN each to pursue their master’s degree.

One of our most meaningful programs is Humay’s “Courage Grant.” It’s awarded to students who have demonstrated exceptional bravery in overcoming hardship in pursuit of education.

This year, with financial support from Azercell, we launched a new initiative: “Girls’ Advancement in STEM” programme. The programme aims to encourage young women to pursue careers in mathematics, science, and information technology – fields that are still, unfortunately, male-dominated in Azerbaijan. Initially, we planned to award five scholarships, but the sheer talent of the applicants moved

us deeply. We doubled the number of recipients, ultimately awarding grants of 2,500 AZN to 10 young women. Both Azercell and the Fund contributed equally, bringing the total to 25,000 AZN.

Who applies for the scholarships and why?

Our doors are open to Azerbaijani citizens between the ages of 16 and 35. Strong academic performance is essential, but just as important is financial need. Applicants must come from households where the average monthly income per family member does not exceed 500 AZN. We receive applications from young people pursuing or planning to pursue bachelor’s, master’s, or PhD degrees. Their needs vary widely: some require assistance with tuition fees; others need help covering living expenses, purchasing a new computer, paying for courses or certification exams, or even submitting applications to universities abroad. For PhD students, support often goes toward attending academic conferences or covering the costs of publishing articles and theses.

How do you choose project partners?

Since the core mission of the fund is focused on supporting education, we prioritise collaboration with universities. Our first event was held at ADA University. Over time, we hosted presentations at other universities, including Khazar University, the Azerbaijan State University of Economics, the Pedagogical University, and the Slavic University.

Our partnership with Azercell began by chance. One day, I came across an announcement for their programme titled “Empowering lives: women’s support program.” It immediately caught our attention; we reached out to Azercell and proposed a collaboration, and thankfully, our project was selected.

What are the fund’s plans for the near future?

In September, we plan a presentation at the Azerbaijan Medical University. On November 1, we will announce the autumn call for the “From Dream to Reality” competition. On November 16, on the eve of Humay’s birthday, we will host a charity gala at the Opera Studio of the Baku Music Academy, hosting renowned Azerbaijani artists. I’d like to emphasise that our artists participate in these events without any compensation. Their generosity makes a meaningful contribution to the development of education. I also invite readers of NARGIS Magazine to our upcoming event.