

Chairmans address at AGM on 6 October 2024



Madam President Zerbanoo Gifford, Past Chairperson Darayus Motivala
members of the board of WZO ladies and gentleman.

There is no point in my repeating what has been said in the annual report. We have had a semi successful year in receiving donations and parting with the funds to individuals who are in need of them.

Our chapter in USA is functioning well as it raises a considerable amount from individuals who want to support various causes in India or elsewhere. Our thanks to Kayomars Mehta for heading this chapter. WZO trust in India continues its charitable works and receives substantial donations from all over the world to assist the unfortunate. Our thanks to Dinshaw and Bacchi Tamboly for their hard work and dedication to build the World Zoroastrian Trust Funds to become one of the major Zoroastrian charities in India.

Our other Chapters are also working hard to alleviate poverty and provide medical and educational assistance in the way required, in their regions.

In or about 1980 WZO was set up by the then ZTFE committee as Farhang Mehr approached the then committee warning them of the hardship that the Zoroastrian population were starting to face in Iran following the revolution in 1979. Earlier, Farhang had tried hard to get BPP to set up the World body but they did not want to take up the task. He then approached USA and nobody there wanted to do this. Eventually, he then approached the committee of ZTFE of which Shirinbanoo Kutar, Shahpur Captain and Bailey Irani were members. WZO was formed with the committee members of ZTFE plus people like Farhang Mehr, Mehraban Zarthoshty and several other prominent members abroad. The Organisation was formed to assist our people who wanted to settle

in Europe, UK, USA and Australia. The first chairperson was Shirinbanoo and Bailey Irani was appointed as a president. The first committee of WZO asked Shahpur Captain to spearhead this initiative and he wrote numerous letters and attended tribunals with Shahroakh Shahroakh to assist the refugees. They were ably assisted by Shahriar Bekhradnia who was able to verify whether the people we were assisting were genuine cases. Shahriar and his wife Laal were very energetic and welcomed all Iranian Zoroastrians to their home in Chiswick. Thanks to them that WZO were able to assist several people to settle in the country of their choice. We still do this work when the need arises. I would like to say a big thank you to their daughter Shahin Bekhradnia for continuing with this important work.

After several years we were told that there was extreme poverty among Zoroastrians living in India. We then asked Cashmera Bhaya to research the situation. I recall that the report in those days cost WZO a total sum of £2000. £1000 was donated by the late Mehraban Zarthoshty and the balance was raised by from the board members. In the report Cashmera stated that 35% of our Zoroastrians were living in abject poverty and that their annual income was \$100. This was not what the then board members wanted to hear. We at that time decided that we should do something to alleviate the poverty that existed. After a great deal of discussions, the then board decided to approach Dinshaw to find out if we could help these people with the tools that they needed to get out of poverty. We started in 1991 with one family by sending funds from UK to Dinshaw who set up the WZO Trust in India and the rest is history. In the early days of WZOT, most of the financial support given in India was from the funds sent by WZO in UK. I personally am extremely pleased that as one of the board members in those days we were able to start this. We accidentally fell into charitable work which we are doing satisfactorily now.

The reason I am recapping this is because I am getting on in age and I don't want people to forget why WZO was set up and why we started doing charitable work.

Over the years WZO has evolved into many additional areas of help such as the Medical Benevolent Fund inspired by Noshirwan Cowasjee and the Gujarat Fund which started the work in India. Our thanks to past chair persons Shirinbanoo Kutar, Ruby Contractor, Shahpur Captain, Sammy Bhiwandiwalla and Darayus Motivala who were each able to imprint their own special abilities on promoting and inspiring WZO.

Since the sudden passing of Shahpur and Sammy in quick succession in December 2020 I was co-erced into taking the Chair again. I am happy to inform you that we now have a hardworking International Board with participation from India, Dubai, USA and Canada. We have sub committees for Medical, Education, Finance health and safety and social events.

A big thank you to all the donors as none of the work we are doing would have been possible without your generosity. Please keep donating in order that we can help others who are less fortunate. How ever we are still struggling to fund raise and I would strongly urge each member to find ways, however large or small to inspire ways to increase fundraising events.

It is encouraging that we have some new young members on our board now and I am sure their input will be of great advantage as we look to the future.

Finally, I would like to say a big Thankyou to all our board members who have helped me whilst I have been in the chair. It is now time for a new person to take this Organisation to new heights and wish them all the best for the future.

Thank you.