



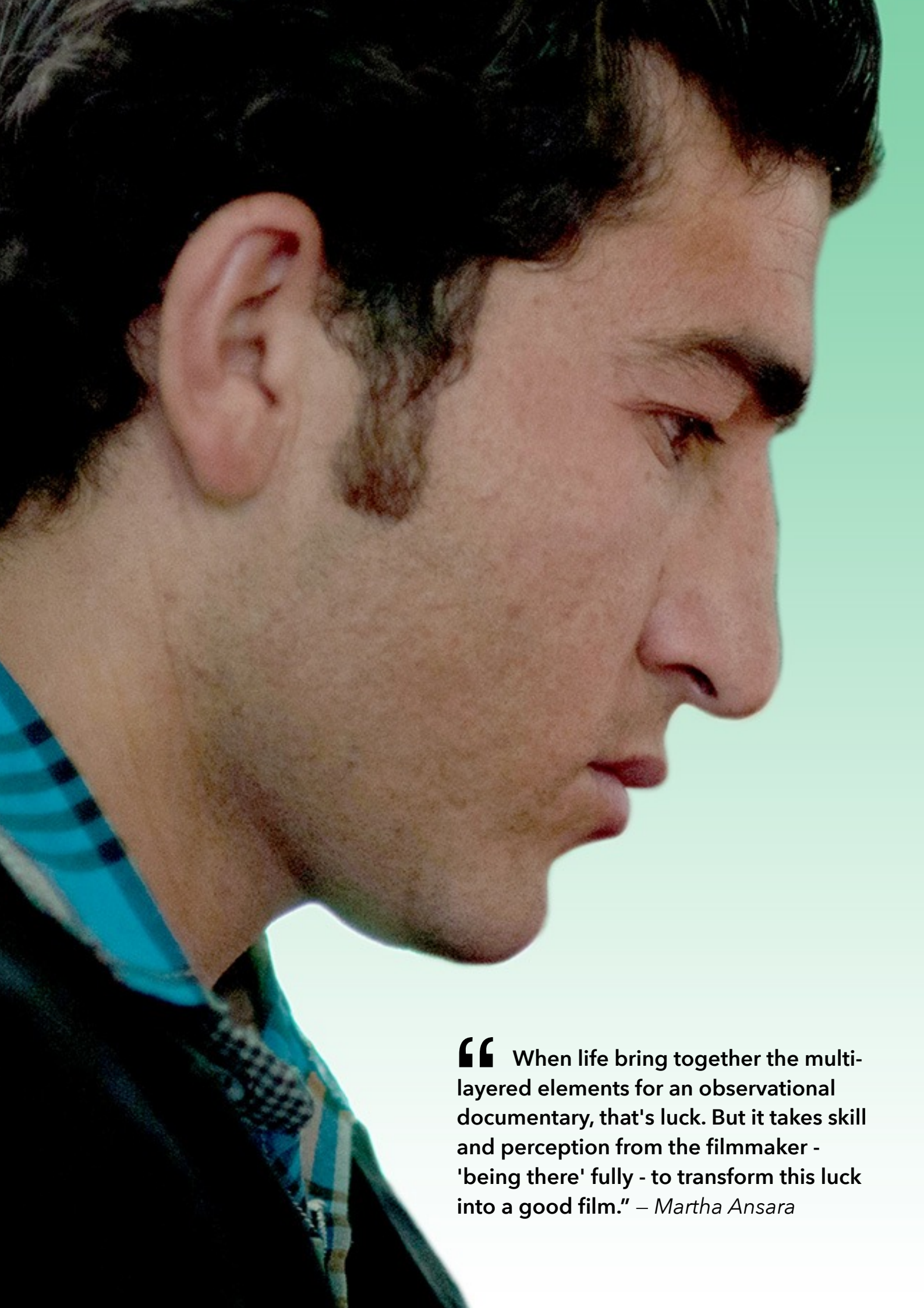
LOVE MARRIAGE IN KABUL

PRESS NOTES

SCREEN AUSTRALIA BOWER BIRD FILMS & PALANGI PRODUCTIONS PRESENT A FILM BY AMIN PALANGI PRODUCER PAT FISKE
CO-PRODUCERS SANAZ FOTOUHI AMIN PALANGI EDITOR BILL RUSSO ASE COMPOSER JOHN GRAY SOUND DESIGN & MIX MICHAEL GISSING

www.LoveMarriageinKabul.com





“ When life bring together the multi-layered elements for an observational documentary, that's luck. But it takes skill and perception from the filmmaker - 'being there' fully - to transform this luck into a good film.” – *Martha Ansara*



THE STORY

Log Line

Follows the extraordinary quest of Afghan-Australia Mahboba Rawi, as she passionately negotiates and challenges old traditions to make a love marriage happen.

Log Line two

Love Marriage in Kabul follows the extraordinary quest of Afghan-Australian woman, Mahboba Rawi, as she passionately negotiates and challenges old traditions to make a love marriage happen between an orphan boy she has supported for years and the girl next door.

Short Synopses

Mahboba Rawi, a strong-willed Afghan-Australian woman, and the founder of Mahboba's Promise, has dedicated her life to helping orphans, widows and schooling girls in Afghanistan. She is the mother figure for thousands of orphans she has rescued.

Abdul, one of these orphans, is in love with Fatemeh, the girl next door. The two have been exchanging romantic letters for over a year and hope to marry one day. But Fatemeh's father has other plans - he has decided to marry her off to anyone who can offer a large sum of money as her dowry. Devastated, Abdul is hoping when Mahboba arrives for her yearly trip to Kabul, that she will help him again. When Mahboba hears the story, she is very concerned about Abdul, and Fatemeh's possible fate in a forced marriage, She is determined to make the marriage happen between Abdul and Fatemah.

However, Fatemeh's father makes demands beyond anyone's expectations. He won't let the marriage happen unless Mahboba pays him \$10,000 or finds a wife for his eldest son to replace Fatemeh's role in the household. With nothing to Abdul's name, the fate of the couple depends entirely on Mahboba's ability to meet or negotiate the father's terms. But she only has one month and limited resources.

Long Synopses

In 1992, almost a decade after her arrival in Australia, Afghan refugee Mahboba Rawi, loses her son in a tragic drowning accident. Instead of letting the grief take over her life, she decides to take her sadness and turn it into a strength to help others. An opportunity arose where she saved the lives of eight orphaned Afghani children stranded in Pakistan. It was the impact of this, which made Mahboba dedicate her life to Mahboba's Promise, an Australian Charity Organization, which has raised millions of dollars in aid for widows and children of Afghanistan and has built orphanages and schools across the country.

Abdul was one of those eight children saved in Pakistan. Mahboba has become like his mother. With ongoing support from Mahboba's Promise, Abdul returned to Afghanistan where he is studying and also now works at the orphanage in Kabul. It was there that he fell in love with Fatemeh, a young girl who lives across the street from the orphanage with her father and three brothers. The two have been exchanging love letters for over a year and secretly communicating through children in the orphanage. Their dream is to get married as soon as possible. But one day, Fatemeh's father feels that his daughter has reached marriageable age and sets out to find a husband for her who will offer a good sum of money for her dowry.

Devastated, Abdul has no one else to turn to but to mother Mahboba. He hopes when Mahboba arrives for her yearly trip to Kabul, that she will help him again. Mahboba knows the tragic consequences of forced marriage, a common practice in Afghanistan, and is determined to save Fatemeh and Abdul's heart from being broken.

On her trip back to Kabul; Mahboba is accompanied by Australian ABC journalist, columnist and feminist, Virginia Haussegger. A controversial figure in Australia, she holds radical views towards women's situation in countries like Afghanistan. After a challenge from Mahboba, Virginia has taken leave and independently come to Afghanistan to investigate the situation for herself. It is with Virginia at her side that Mahboba sets out to make the marriage happen between Abdul and Fatemah.

However, when they arrive in Kabul, Fatemeh's father makes demands that are beyond anyone's expectations. He asks for either a lump sum of \$10,000 as Fatemeh's dowry or for Mahboba to find a suitable wife for his eldest son, who can then replace Fatemeh's role in the household. But Mahboba only has one month and limited resources.

Love Marriage in Kabul follows Mahboba as she attempts, against all odds, to once again save Abdul and see him through to the next stage of his life.



THE CAST



Mahboba

Mahboba Rawi is the founder and director of Mahboba's Promise, an Australian Charity Organization which supports multiple projects in Afghanistan and sends ongoing aid to thousands of widows and orphans across Afghanistan. Mahboba started her charity organization when she lost her own son in the 1990s in a drowning accident in Australia. To overcome the grief, she redirected her energy into helping others. Since she started the charity, she has been recognized by the Australian government and people for her great efforts. In 2010 she was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her achievements.



Seddiq

Seddiq is Mahboba's brother. He manages every aspect of the Hope House in Kabul. He lives six months of the year in Kabul and the rest in Sydney.

Abdul Fattah

Abdul Fattah was one of the first children saved by Mahboba. When he was a small boy, his mother sent him to Pakistan to avoid the war. There, he lived in the refugee camp with some other boys. The conditions were harsh. One cold winter they were almost freezing to death. They were saved when the first money that Mahboba collected and sent to them bought them a tent. When Mahboba's Promise was established, Abdul went to Kabul to the Hope House. There, he was educated, taught himself to memorize the entire Quran, learned English and French from visitors, and now teaches at the Hope House as a teacher.



Virginia

Virginia is a columnist, an author, and an ABC journalist. She is a feminist who writes about women's issues. When she met Mahboba at an event, she invited Virginia to come along to Afghanistan and see the situation of the people for herself. Despite difficulties she put her work on hold and traveled with Mahboba to gain a more informed perspective on the country.



Fatemeh

Fatemeh lived across the Hope House with her father and three brothers. When she lost her mother at a young age, she was forced to be the caretaker of the family. When she reached an age her father thought she was ready to marry, he was willing to marry her off to anyone who agreed to take her hand. She was attending school at the Hope House where she met Abdul.



Nik Mohammad

Nik Mohammad is Fatemeh's father. During the Taliban he was imprisoned for several years. When he returned, he was faced with his wife's death and the responsibility to take care of four children. Because of this, he suffers great mental and emotional pain. He wants to ensure the best possible future, the way he sees it for his children.

THE CREW

Amin Palangi | Director and co-producer

Amin is an Iranian born Australian filmmaker who has been making documentaries and fictional films in Australia, Afghanistan and Iran. He spends his days dramatizing the human experience, teaching at a number of film schools and running the Persian International Film Festival in Australia.

Amin holds a PhD from Australian National University, a Masters from Australian Film Television and Radio School, and a BA with Honours from the ANU.

Sanaz Fotouhi | Co-producer, still and sound

Sanaz is an Iranian-Australia writer, and a producer at Palangi Productions. She has worked on documentaries in Iran and Afghanistan including on the award winning Hidden Generation: Story of women self-immolation in Afghanistan. Sanaz holds a BA and MPhil from the University of Hong Kong and a PhD in English Literature from the University of New South Wales. Her book The Literature of the Iranian Diaspora: Meaning and Identity since the Islamic Revolution is forthcoming in 2014. Currently, Sanaz is working towards writing a book that complements Love Marriage in Kabul. It will highlight the experience and process of the way the film was created.

John Gray | Composer

John is a multi-award winning film composer. Winner of the European Union Film Award 2005, his achievements include APRA/AGSC Screen Music, and Tropfest awards. A graduate of the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS), his features include the AFI-nominated 'Kokoda', 'Coffin Rock', the AFI-nominated documentary 'I am Girl', and 'The Bet', which was in competition at the Sydney Film Festival that year. He also composed for the Emmy award winning SBS documentary series "Go Back to Where You Came From" (2011 and 2012) and the critically-acclaimed ABC documentary series "Great Southern Land" (2013).

For more information please visit John's web www.stillpointmusic.com

Pat Fiske | Producer

Pat is an experienced director and producer. She is recognised as a prominent member of Australia's independent filmmaking community. In 2001 she was awarded the prestigious Stanley Hawes Award for her outstanding contribution to the documentary industry in Australia at AIDC. Pat was Co-Head of the Documentary Department at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School from 2002-2008 and worked as the Documentary Consultant at SBS Independent for eighteen months in 2000-2001.

Bill Russo | Editor

After a false start studying Chartered Accountancy Bill worked as a professional surf photographer and in advertising before discovering editing. With nearly forty years experience as an editor he has worked on a range of projects though most of his career has been with documentaries and drama. While Head of Editing at AFTRS (2000-2009) Bill made regular trips back into industry often taking his students to work alongside him.

Michael Gissing | Sound Design & Mix

With over 38 years in the industry, Michael has worked as a telecine operator, location sound recordist, post sound mixer and picture grader on many documentaries. In 2007 he was the recipient of the Stanley Hawes Award for services to the documentary industry, an award rarely given to technicians rather than film makers. He has been nominated five times for AFI best sound awards and has won twice. Since locating from Sydney to rural Tasmania six years ago, Michael continues to work on many interstate feature length docos as well as shorts, feature films and comedies for local film makers. He is also providing mentoring for up and coming film makers through supporting the Raw Nerve initiative.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It was in early 2006 when my wife Sanaz Fotouhi and I embarked on a journey to make a film in Afghanistan. I was an Honours student at the Australian National University then and determined to make a documentary in Iran or Afghanistan. As a migrant, I was going through a stage where I wanted to understand my background and represent different aspects of it to the world where I was living. Filming in Iran was not as easy as I imagined. To get permission to film there meant months of paper work, which I did not have. As luck would have it, my father-in-law had recently been appointed to establish a bank in Kabul. This made my choice a lot easier.

I began researching for a topic online and by contacting different NGO organisations. One of the issues that continuously came up was the increase in women's self-immolation as a form of suicide. I was intrigued and horrified by records showing a massive increase of cases of self-immolation since the fall of the Taliban in 2004.

This formed the central question for my film and after travelling to Kabul twice that year I managed to make a 15-minute documentary on the reasons behind this issue. The film was screened in Australia and internationally, and won a few awards. It was generally received well by audiences. I was happy about this, since after meeting and filming a lot of the young girls in the burn units that have attempted suicide, I had a great sense of responsibility to tell the world their stories.

However, after one of my screening in Australia, I overheard a conversation between two audience members. "It's Afghanistan, this sort of shit happens there!" This was like a knockout punch to my face. I was hoping that after watching the film people would to identify with the situation of these young girls. But instead it seemed that like many other outsiders, I had only added to the exiting stereotypes of the western world.

Concerned by this idea, I felt compelled to make another film in Afghanistan. It was around this time that I was introduced to Mahboba Rawi. She was a strong-willed, enthusiastic Afghan-Australian woman who, through her charity organisation, Mahboba's Promise, has been raising money to provide support and education to more than two thousands orphans and widows in Afghanistan.

I was greatly curious about her work and her huge ambitions. Her own life story I found incredible. She was a woman who had to escaped Kabul at the age of fourteen, lived in refugee camps of Pakistan, and eventually married and came to Australia. But her life was turned upside down when she lost her small son in a drowning accident. However, instead of letting all these struggles consume her, she had made a promise with her God to save all orphans of Afghanistan. Through her charity organization called Mahboba's Promise she has been able to help thousands of orphans and widows in Afghanistan. If her presence and quirky attitude did not capture me, her story and what she was



told me that she was going back to Afghanistan to attend to her projects, one of which was about a marriage between one of the orphans and a girl who lived next to the orphanage. After many months of search, this seemed to be it. This was the story I wanted to tell. The fact that it was potentially a love story with a happy ending meant that the western audience could relate to it, but it could also showcase how Mahboba's work for these orphans does not finish with providing food and shelter. Her engagement with these kids was an ongoing investment in changing the future of a country.

To make this story, we self-funded the trip with our own savings as a two member team and headed to Kabul with Mahboba. I would do the camera work and Sanaz, the sound.

Having been to Afghanistan previously, I was very familiar with the challenges of shooting a film there. I had been arrested and put in prison, slapped at the border crossing by security guards and generally been under constant surveillance by the secret police there. Added to this was being worried about my wife Sanaz who, to be honest, seemed a lot more courageous than me. With all this in mind we embarked on our journey.

On the plane on our way there, I remember the only thing I was asking the universe for was more DRAMA and good God, didn't the universe just deliver!



doing most certainly had me hooked in.

It was during our first meetings that Mahboba asked me to make a film about her. I soon realised that she would ask this pretty much of anyone who has ever held a camera. She knew the importance of media and wanted to spread the word about her work. I felt that making a film about this courageous Afghan women, was my chance to repay my debt to Afghanistan.

Of course this was not easy, I wanted to find a story that was not merely showcasing a charity worker or a welfare corporate video to help Mahboba's Promise. I wanted to tell a human story that shows the great ripple effect Mahboba's work is having in Afghanistan.

I kept in touch with her and looked for ideas for over two years. It was in early 2009 that Mahboba



LOVE MARRIAGE IN KABUL

Documentary - 84 minutes

Director: **Amin Palangi**

Producer: **Pat Fiske**

Co-Producers: **Sanaz Fotouhi & Amin Palangi**

Bower Bird Films & Palangi Productions

www.bowerbirdfilms.com

www.palangiproductions.com

For more information please contact Pat Fiske

M: +61 (0) 407 813 255

E: pat@bowerbirdfilms.com

PO Box 7402 Bondi Beach NSW Australia 2026

ISAN 0000-0003-C5D5-0000-M-0000-0000-8



www.LoveMarriageinKabul.com



facebook.com/LoveMarriageinKabul



[@LMIKmovie](https://twitter.com/LMIKmovie)

