

Report: Musical Care International Network Small Grants Scheme 2024–2025

Recipient: **Serveh Naghshbandi**

Project Status: **In progress**

Report Date: **August 2025**

Main Activities Carried Out with the Support of the Grant

The grant enabled me to travel to Hawrāmān (Kurdistan, Iran) to connect with locals, women practitioners and local intellectuals as part of my ongoing research on women’s indigenous vocal tradition. This work focuses on the role of singing as a form of everyday musical care, sustaining community, identity, and intergenerational ties.

In January 2025, I presented early findings at the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTMD) World Conference (9–15 January 2025, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand), sharing how the tradition functions as a relational practice of care. After my field trip, I presented a more developed version at the Music and Mediation Conference (Elder Conservatorium of Music, University of Adelaide, 9–10 June 2025), which incorporated insights gained from my time in the region. I am happy to share a [video recording](#) of this presentation with the network, in which the financial support of the Musical Care International Network was acknowledged.

The trip allowed me to form meaningful collaborations with local cultural custodians and intellectuals; an unplanned but invaluable outcome that has significantly enriched the project. We are currently working on a jointly authored academic paper (currently in progress, expected submission October 2025) with two key collaborators: one of the region’s most respected authors and poets, an expert in oral traditions and storytelling; and a scientist–musician who is contributing musical analysis of the songs. This collaboration has filled crucial gaps, allowing us to present a more holistic account of the tradition integrating musical, cultural, and social dimensions, and the role of women. We also plan to expand this research into a co-edited book that will invite contributions from additional voices within the region.

Feedback and Outcomes

This project has had both scholarly and personal impacts. From a scholarly perspective, it has:

- Highlighted an underrepresented indigenous musical practice within the framework of everyday musical care.
- Fostered collaborative research partnerships with local cultural actors grounded in mutual respect and care.

- Received positive feedback from scholars attending my sessions at both the ICTMD World Conference and the Music and Mediation Conference, affirming the relevance and originality of the work.
- Opened possibilities for a future creative multimedia ethnomusicology project (integrating audio, video, and storytelling) to document and share this tradition.

From a personal perspective, the work has strengthened my connection to my heritage and roots, and brought me out of the isolation that often comes with being an independent researcher. Collaborating with others in this way has restored a sense of belonging and purpose that is rarely found in today's competitive academic environment.

I also deeply appreciate the "caring" approach of the Musical Care International Network in supporting and recognising marginalised independent scholars who often have limited power and voice in academia. This recognition has been invaluable, and I am grateful for the opportunity to carry out this work with the support.

Looking ahead, I hope to expand this project through further field/indigenous connections, collaborative writing, and the development of a creative multimedia output that can share the tradition with wider audiences while remaining grounded in the perspectives of the community.