



Newsletter

Autumn 2022

FRIENDS OF KHASDOBIR, BANGLADESH, Registered Charity No: 1185262

New three-year funding agreement for the Khasdobir Project

Following the success of the project over the past three years under the management of the Sylhet Jubo Academy the trustees of Friends of Khasdobir agreed to funding for a further three years until June 2025. The new programme, which has now been agreed with the authorities in Bangladesh, began on 1st July 2022.

Certainty about three years of funding enables the project to operate with stability and plan for the future. It is only possible because several past supporters left legacies to Friends of Khasdobir in their wills. These gifts have been used to enable us to make longer term commitments to the project and to construct shelters that have hugely improved the facilities available for teaching and enabled the schools to operate even when it is raining, a frequent occurrence in Bangladesh.

There are some developments included in plans for the next three years. The main one is that we will now be running eleven schools as we recently constructed a new shelter on the Malnichara Tea Estate, the oldest tea garden in the Indian sub-continent serving families earning just £1.50 per day. We will also be working with the schools to form centre management committees from parents and members of their local community. The new committees will raise funds to provide activities at the schools and to save for the future when it may not be possible for Friends of Khasdobir to provide the current level of support from the UK.

In the next three years there will be an additional member of staff for the outreach team. The three workers visit people living in the area served by the project and ensure that those in most need access the services we provide and know about services provided by other organisations and the Government. The team have led on helping families to get birth certificates for their children and follow up if children are not attending school or if the teachers have other concerns about the children and their families.

A new training course in embroidery has been introduced for the next three years. This year there are two groups, each of ten students, meeting twice a week. The students all live on the tea gardens and in the part of Sylhet City served by the Project. Some have children attending our pre-primary schools and some previously completed sewing training with the project. They hope to earn some income from embroidery once the training is complete.



Christmas Puppet Show and Songs

**Saturday 17th December
9.30am – 10.30am by zoom**

Following the success of our previous Christmas puppet shows we will be holding another show from our school at Chowkidekhi on Saturday 17th December. The story this year will be about the Heron and the Crane. The children will also show some of their artwork and sing songs.

We are inviting our supporters, their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren to join the project by zoom to watch the puppet show and take part in some fun activities with the children of one of our pre-schools.

To book your places please email khasdobir@btinternet.com before Thursday 15th December and we will send you the link to join. Please note places are limited and will be allocated to those who book earliest.

The event is free, but we do encourage donations at: <https://www.peoplesfundraising.com/fundraising/khasdobir-christmas-puppet-show> or by sending a cheque made payable to Friends of Khasdobir to our treasurer Phil Watson, April Cottage, 12 Church Street, Rothley, Leicestershire. LE7 7PD.

We hope you can join us and support the project this Christmas.

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Treasurer
Newsletter Editor
Patrons:
Web Site

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The Rt. Hon the Baroness Morgan of Cotes; Rt. Hon Sir Kevin Barron
www.khasdobir.org.uk

The Big Tea Party – update

We are asking our supporters to organise tea parties in their homes to raise funds for the widows' allowances provided by the project.

Thanks to those supporters who have already done this. To date we have raised about £1,500. It is not too late to organise a tea party and increase the overall amount raised.

We have video clips that can be used at events that are available on the face book page we have set up for organisers. Donations can be made at:

<https://www.peoplesfundraising.com/fundraising/TheBigTeaParty>

The money raised will help women like Rejiya who is aged 65 and lives in Boro Bazar, where she was born.

She lives with her sister who is disabled and is also a widow.

Rejiya's husband left her a few months after their marriage (and is now dead). She now wanders the streets begging and lives with her sister in 2 rooms in a slum area.

With her allowance Rejiya buys food and medicine.

Presentation of certificates to sewing and computer class students

During the last visit by our chairperson, certificates were presented to students who completed their sewing or computer training at the end of June 2022. It was a great achievement for the students because their classes were disrupted by the COVID 19 pandemic.

Amongst the computer students several are still coming into the office to practice computing. Some of the students will use their new skills in employment and some hope to start doing on-line freelance work to earn money to meet their daily living expenses or help with continuing their education.



Those who completed the sewing training were all presented with basic equipment such as scissors and a measuring tape to enable them to continue sewing at home.



As a result of selling clothes made during the course three students who did very well in the training and now need a sewing machine to earn some money were presented with machines purchased with the profits from the sales by the class.

Sylhet experienced worst floods for many years in June

At the end of June Sylhet was badly affected by floods. Most of the city, including the areas where we work, saw water levels rise by several feet in a few hours. Areas outside the city, especially in Sunmaganj where many of the families living in the slums where we work come from, experienced severe damage to homes and communications making it difficult to obtain and prepare food and find safe drinking water.

We were very proud that teachers from our schools volunteered to help Sylhet Jubo Academy with their relief effort, distributing basic food and fresh water in the worst affected areas. Fortunately, the position improved in July, but significant long-term damage was done to many homes and livelihoods.



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We are compliant to EU General Data Protection Regulations

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Also notify us if you no longer wish to receive the newsletter (by either post or email).

Please email to khasdobir@btinternet.com



Feedback from our Annual Meeting

This year our Annual Meeting was held in Leicester on 2nd July. Eight people attended in person and more than twelve attended by zoom.

Those taking part enjoyed a variety of live performances by the children from the schools (by zoom) as well as demonstrations of work carried out by students of the sewing and computer classes. An update on the flood situation in Sylhet highlighted the extremely difficult situation people had experienced with water levels in the town rising by several feet within an hour.

The annual report and accounts were presented and there was a report about visits to the project during the past year. In the discussion on fundraising, it was suggested that as 2023 would be the 100th birthday of the charity's founder, Peter East, a gathering in East London and via zoom should be arranged. Finally, there was a discussion about the importance of recruiting new trustees.

The Annual Meeting in 2023 will be held on the morning of Saturday 1st July by zoom.

First School Committee Meeting for Peter's School



Her favourite colour is "lipstick red"

Samira is five years old. She is a new student at our Boro Bazar School, which takes children from the slum areas on the outskirts of Sylhet city. Samira's family of four live in just one room, which they rent for about £30 per month. The room is located at the back of one of the bigger houses on the main road and access to it is through a very narrow passage from the main road. There is a stove for cooking which is outside on the veranda. The family share a toilet and tube well (for water) with another family who live next door.



Samira's father drives a CNG (3 wheeled motor vehicle for passengers). He rents the vehicle for about £5 per day and he must pay about £3 for fuel. His daily income from passengers varies

but can be up to £15, meaning he makes £4 to £7 daily for the families daily living expenses (rent, food, fuel etc). He generally works from 8am till 9pm or 10 pm every day. When schools are closed (for example due to the covid 19 pandemic) his income is less.

Samira loves attending the Boro Bazar School and likes the teachers there. At school she has learnt rhymes, numbers, and letters. Her favourite song is about a dream for Bangladesh where everybody is treated equally. When asked about her favourite colour she replied that it was "lipstick red". Her favourite animal is a cat. Her favourite fruit mango and her favourite vegetable potato.

Samira's sister attends the local primary school and is now in the second year. Her mother is a housewife. Her mother originally attended one of the Khasdobir Schools Under the Sky and then went on to attend a local primary school for 5 years. Her family have lived in Sylhet for 20 years and originally came from a town in another district (Mymensingh). The family have lived in the Boro Bazar area since then. Samira's grandmother lives in a separate house near our school. She works at a restaurant in town. Her husband (Samira's grandfather) left the family 12 years ago. Her grandmother looked after her mother, Samira's uncle (who also now drives a CNG), another uncle aged 19 who is disabled and stays at home, and an auntie who is studying in class 10.

Update on birth certificates

In our last newsletter we highlighted the work that our outreach workers are doing to help families get a birth certificate for their children. A short report was produced by the outreach team with case studies describing the problems that families are experiencing. Since producing the report, it has been shared with our patron, The Rt. Hon the Baroness Morgan of Cotes and discussed with the Senior Government Officer of Sylhet Upazilla.

Our patron raised the issue with the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Minister responsible for South Asia who informed us that only 37% of children in Bangladesh below the age

of 5 are registered but that the Bangladesh Government has a target to increase this in the next couple of years to 100%.

The Bangladesh Government Officer in Sylhet welcomed our report and agreed to take the issues we raised about children who were not living with both parents, avoiding the need to travel to other districts to obtain documents, and publicising the arrangements for obtaining birth certificates and arranging corrections to incorrect documents with her senior officials in Bangladesh.

If you receive your newsletter by post and we do not currently have your email address it would be extremely helpful if you could provide it to us so that we can communicate with you occasionally about our various on-line events using email. It is still possible to receive a paper version of the newsletter. If you want to stop receiving a paper version of the newsletter and just receive an email copy, then please let us know. You can contact us at: khasdobir@btinternet.com



YES, I'd like to help...

1 Friends of Khasdobir, Bangladesh Registered Charity No. 1185262

2 Gift Aid Declaration

I am a U.K. taxpayer, and wish the charity to treat all donations that I make as Gift Aid donations from the date below, so that the tax I have paid on those sums can be recovered by them.

Name, including Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms, and first name

.....

Full Address

.....

Postcode Date

Signed

E-mail Address (optional)

Notes:

This declaration is in force from the above date until it is cancelled. It need only be made once.

I confirm that have paid or will pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax (added together) for the current and each following year; 6th April to 5th April, until further notice, that is at least equal to the amount of all the tax that the charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts each tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand that The Friends of Khasdobir charity will reclaim the tax on my donations to them.

If your financial circumstances change, and you cease to pay income tax or capital gains tax at a level at least equal to the sum that you donate to all charities and CASCs each year, then please let the charity know by writing to the Treasurer.