



Newsletter

Winter 2022

Update on COVID- 19 and the work of the project

During most of 2021 all schools in Bangladesh were closed. Since September they started to re-open as the risk from covid 19 declined. The project schools were open for most of 2021. Small groups of children attended on alternate days. However, for part of the year the schools closed completely as required by the Government of Bangladesh. When schools were closed the teachers provided home tuition to the children.

Unfortunately, the situation regarding covid 19 is now rapidly deteriorating in Bangladesh due to the new omicron variant and the Bangladesh Government has again required all schools to close until 6th February 2022. It is quite possible that this deadline will be extended.

During the closure period the children registered at the pre-primary centres will again receive home tuition on a weekly basis. Many of the children are quite new as a lot of children transferred to Primary School at the beginning of January so it is a good opportunity for the teachers to get to know all the children and their family circumstances individually. Very small numbers of computer and sewing students are attending the office daily and the computer class students engage in learning activities using a whatsapp group. The widows' allowances continue to be distributed with widows again attending the office in smaller numbers over several days.

Fortunately almost all project staff, parents of children, trainees and widows have been vaccinated and the project is actively encouraging those who have not had the vaccine to register and receive it.

FRIENDS OF KHASDOBIR, BANGLADESH, Registered Charity No: 1185262

The Big Tea Party- raising funds to support widows

Since the Khasdobir Project started it has raised funds to support widows living on the tea estates and in the slum areas of Sylhet. These women have few opportunities to take on well paid jobs- especially if they received very little education and cannot read or write. If they become a widow, they often have huge responsibilities for their home and children and they rely on help from their wider family, which is often limited. Many widows are elderly, with significant health problems and they must pay for their own medicine. The Khasdobir Project pays 80 widows 700 taka (about £7) per month to help with living expenses.

Our Big Tea Party is the main way our supporters can get involved with our fundraising in 2022 and spread the news about the project. It follows the successful Khasdobir Walk, held last year. As covid lock downs are lifted we are asking our supporters to invite a few friends to their homes or gardens for a cup of tea. All guests should be asked to donate to the project, and this can be paid to us



either online at: <https://www.goldengiving.com/fundraising/TheBigTeaParty> 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. Tea parties can be held at any time between now and the end of the year.

If you are willing to hold a tea party, then please let us know at khasdobir@btinternet.com If you want us to post you copies of the Khasdobir Project leaflet for guests then please let us know. We also have a video of a tea party held with widows on the tea garden, a video of the widows' allowance distribution, a video showing production of tea in one of the factories in Sylhet and a video of dancing on the tea estates. All these maybe used to support Tea Parties if you wish to make use of them. We can send them by email, or they can be viewed from our facebook group for tea party organisers that you may join. We have many case studies about widows and how they make use of their monthly allowance from the project. These may be requested by party organisers.

To help supporters wishing to hold parties we will organise a virtual tea party by zoom. This will be held at 3pm on Sunday 24th April.

To supplement the parties' supporters may also consider auctioning old tea sets- either online or during their party.

We hope you will get involved with this initiative to support some of the most forgotten people living in the Khasdobir area.

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Khasdobir trustees agree three more years funding for the project

At their meeting on 15th January the Friends of Khasdobir trustees agreed 3 more years of funding for the project, subject to receiving a detailed proposal and budget from Bangladesh. This will include some development of the outreach work and introduction of new skills alongside the traditional sewing training. These developments were discussed with the project when our chairperson Mike Sherriff was in Bangladesh in October and November 2021. During the next 3 years the project will be asked to pilot initiatives that could ensure its long-term future including raising some funds locally and working closely with other organisations.

Gallery



Widow allowance distribution



Children receiving Home Tutoring during lock-down

Peter's name reunites a child with her family

Fomani is 5 years old. She attends the pre-primary school in the tea garden on the outskirts of Sylhet named after our founder, Peter East.

Fomani likes playing at school. She also likes learning the alphabet and numbers. Her favourite game is an in/out game using an imaginary pond. Her favourite story is about a fox.



Fomani with mother & grandmother

Fomani likes the tea garden and the tea plants and flowers. She likes the birds and animals in the tea garden. She says she once saw a tiger and an elephant in the Tea Garden. She was frightened. Her favourite animals are horses, and she also likes ducks and hens. Her favourite food is cabbage and dhal. She also eats eggs.

Fomani's mother works in the tea garden every day. Her father is a labourer on a building site. Her grandmother looks after their house. She has just one daughter and her husband is dead. They all stay in one room in the Tea Garden.

One day Fomani followed her father to a mela (fair) in Sylhet town. She liked the mela, especially the dolls and roundabout, but she got lost at the fair. She was alone and there was a large crowd. She started to cry and was looking for her father who was also looking for her. She was lost for 3 hours. Somebody asked her why she was crying and who she was. She said that she went to Peter's school on the tea garden and hearing this the people at the fair knew where to take her and return her to her family.

Introducing two of the widows supported by the Khasdobir Project



Khursheda is 60+ years old. She has lived on the tea estate for 50+ years. She is originally from Mymensingh and her husband is originally from Comilla but she lives in the part of the tea garden with families from Barisal.

Khursheda's husband died 7 years ago. She has 3 daughters and one son. All her daughters are married, and they live and work on the tea garden. Her son is a Day Labourer- sometimes pulling rickshaws and sometimes working on people's houses.

Khursheda lives with one of her daughters who has separated from her husband. This daughter has one daughter who is Khursheda's granddaughter. This daughter works in the houses of different people.

Khursheda uses her widow's allowance to buy medicine and sometimes to buy things to eat such as fruits

Rejiya Khatun is 65 years old and lives in Boro Bazar, where she was born. She lives with her sister who is disabled and is also a widow. Neither of the sisters have children.

Rejiya's husband left her a few months after their marriage (and is now dead). She does not work. She wanders the streets begging.

Rejiya and her sister live in 2 rooms in a slum area. She was born in this house and her grandmother lived there.

With her allowance Rejiya buys food and medicine. The total cost of these items is 2-3 thousand taka per month. Her medicine costs 248 taka per month.



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Gallery

Puppet Show raises over £600 to support the project

Our new trustee, Dulon, organises wheelchairs for people needing them in the Khasdobir area



Old man who receives wheelchair



Puppet show



21st February 2021 - Pre-school children drew in celebration of International Language day



Handmade puppets by Pre-school children

A big thank you to everybody who supported our annual Christmas puppet show held in December. This year the puppet show came from our newly constructed school at Boro Bazar. It was based on a story about the fox and the crow. The children also demonstrated arts and crafts and sang songs. This was the story:



A long time ago a fox lived in a forest. One day he was wandering around the forest looking for food. As he walked around, he came to a village.

The fox was tired because of walking for such a long time, so he rested under a tree. Suddenly he smelt a very sweet smell. He looked all around but could not see anything. Then he looked up and saw a crow sitting in a branch of the tree. In the crow's mouth was a huge piece of bread and seeing this the fox began to dribble. The fox thought: "I wish I could jump up to the branch and take the bread, but the crow is not stupid. If I jumped up to the branch the crow would be certain to fly away. I will have to think of a better way to trick the crow so that the crow will give me the bread itself." So, the fox looked at the crow and said with a sweet smile: "Dear crow I would love to hear your song. Your voice is very smooth. It is sweeter than the voice of the nightingale, the cuckoo, and the blackbird. Your body is a beautiful black colour, and your voice is also beautiful. When you sing in the morning, I love it. People gather around to hear you sing. Compared to other birds your song is so sweet my friend. Today I would love to hear your song. Please will you sing me two lines?" Hearing what the fox said the crow was very happy. He opened his mouth and began to sing. As he was singing "ka, ka, ka" the bread fell from the crow's mouth and the fox caught the bread. The fox was very pleased as he ate the bread and left. The crow then realised his mistake, but the fox had gone a long way from the tree and had taken the crow's food.

What can you learn from this story? Many people without good reason praise you and then take advantage of you. We should not give them this opportunity.

One of the wheelchairs provided by Dulon was recently given to an old man who has lived in Boro Bazar since before Independence in 1971. He used to drive a rickshaw but can no longer do so. He is 60 years old. Originally the family were from Comilla but moved to Sylhet before independence.

The old man's son used to work in a shop but did not earn enough to afford the medicine his father needed. He now works as a rickshaw puller and can earn more because he has 30+ passengers a day between the hours of 7am and 9pm.

The old man who received the wheelchair lives with his wife and his son. He has 3 daughters and one younger son who are married and live separately. With the wheelchair he hopes to be able to go outside again and go to the tea stall to see people.



One day, the old man's older son was crying on his rickshaw and a passenger asked him why he was crying. He said he was crying because of his father's condition. The passenger posted the story on facebook and a member of staff at the Khasdobir Project saw it and he was visited by the outreach team. The team found that the old man could not move without a wheelchair and a few days later his son collected one from the office using his rickshaw.

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Please send this page to:

Phil Watson, April Cottage, 12, Church Street, Rothley, Leicestershire, LE7 7PD