

ASPIRE

A quarterly publication of OBAT Helpers Inc.

July 2013

Thoughts and reflections on Geneva camp- By Joanna Casey

About Joanna

Dear friends,

My visit to Geneva Camp came about unexpectedly. It was a Thursday in early February 2013 and there was a general strike in Dhaka. Everything was closed so I was wandering around Dhanmondi Park with a 1950's film camera. A man approached me and we got into conversation. On learning that I was a photographer, he invited me to visit what he called a 'refugee camp' in Mohammadpur. I don't usually get into a rickshaw with a stranger to an unknown destination but there was something engaging and earnest about him, and I was curious, so I accepted.

Ten minutes later, we arrived at Geneva Camp- an area of slum housing, the size of a city block, in central Dhaka. This was my first visit to Bangladesh, to attend Chobi Mela Photo Festival, and I was fairly ignorant of politics there so I had no knowledge of the situation of the stateless Bihari people, or 'stranded Pakistanis' as they are also referred to, prior to my visit. [Read more.](#)

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Please Join Us in APPNA Convention

Stranded Pakistanis

An awareness program at the

APPNA convention in

Orlando on Friday,
July 5, 2013 @ 3:00 pm

Location: Sawanee
conference room # 15.

Learn more about these
forgotten people, their
situation and possible
solutions.

Visit OBAT's booth # 531 at
APPNA Bazar.

How Can You Help?

Spread the Word!

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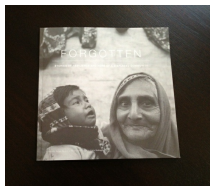
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**An OBAT Donor's
Compassion
Saves a Life**

"Forgotten"



**"Forgotten" Book
Cover**

We are excited to introduce OBAT's new photo and narratives book, "Forgotten." The book conveys stories of resilience and hope from the camps through compelling images and resonating text. Photos are by human rights photo journalist, Katie Basbagill who visited the camps in December 2012.

Proceeds from its sales will fund OBAT's programs to empower the forgotten in

Bangladesh. Order a copy for yourself for \$25 plus shipping by emailing us at contact@obathelpers.org or just stop by our office at 1100 W. 42nd St., ste 125, Indianapolis 46208.

A Memorable, Inspiring Exhibit



**Photo exhibit at
the Harrison
Center**

On June 1st, the walls of Gallery 2 of the Harrison Center for the Arts were graced by photos of the talented human rights focused photographer, Katie Basbagill. The evening marked the opening of the photo exhibit, "Forgotten," by OBAT Helpers. The images at display were raw and resplendent. Katie had recently joined OBAT in Bangladesh to capture photos and stories of numerous men, women and children living in appalling conditions in the camps. The product was this large-scale photo exhibit whose objective was to inspire and inform others about this marginalized community and OBAT's efforts to alleviate suffering among these camps' residents. [Read more.](#)

Friends of OBAT Appreciation Night



**A big thanks from our team for a
wonderful night!**

highlighted the issues faced by the camp residents. Heartfelt talks by Carey Craig, Anwar Khan, Zachary Rockwood, John Clark, Maarij Syed and Azher Khan further focused on the appalling situation; some speakers also reminisced about their time spent in the camps and how enlightening the experience proved to be for them.

OBAT's supporter and sponsor of the NLJ school, Dr. Shadia Jalal received recognition for her extreme generosity. Zachary Rockwood and Professor John Clark were also acknowledged and honored for their exceptional contributions to OBAT.

On June 15th, OBAT invited its friends for an evening of appreciation and awareness. The focal point of the event was the showing of part of a documentary made by talented film maker, Zachary Rockwood captured from his visit to the camps in December 2012.

The documentary was poignant and moving and



**Aslam with his mother and
wife**

Aslam was born and raised in Sardar Bahadur Nagar camp in Chittagong. His father works as a mason but being a daily laborer, he has no permanent source of income. For this reason, after studying till 8th grade, Aslam tried and was able to get a job in Abu Dhabi as a boutique worker.

In September 2012, he received the bad news that his kidney was damaged. Penniless from his medical tests, he returned to Bangladesh. [Read More](#)

New Water Project!



**Women collecting water from
tube well**

A tube well at the Sardar Bahadur Nagar camp is the latest addition to OBAT's drinking water projects. People in this camp have been suffering from a dearth of clean water for the past 42 years. Now, 150 families will have access to clean water obtained from this tube well. According to an elderly camp resident, "When any guests visited us, we offered them food and a place to sleep but they could not bathe here due to the serious crises of water."

**OBAT Tutoring
Center Students
Receive Outstanding**

OBAT Takes New York!



Husam Ahmed sharing his experience of camp visits.

On June 22nd, valuable supporter Husam Ahmed and his family hosted a phenomenal event in New York. It was a night of stories, experiences and shared concerns for the Forgotten in Bangladesh. After opening the floor to discussion and idea sharing, attendees collectively took part in expressing heartfelt suggestions and hopes for OBAT.

The Ahmed family has created a wonderful platform and we look forward to more OBAT supporters bringing this model to their own cities and circle of influence. Contact us and we would love to plan with you!

"Statelessness & Citizenship"



Victoria Redclift with Murtaza Khan, OBAT's project officer in Dhaka

Victoria Redclift was first introduced to the Urdu-speaking community in Bangladesh in 2006 and has been touched by their struggles since then. She went to the camps in April 2013 and visited OBAT's educational projects in Dhaka. Victoria is currently conducting research at the University of Manchester on the Urdu-speaking diaspora who fled Bangladesh at the time of liberation and moved to the UK. Her PhD was done on the citizenship of the Urdu-speaking community in Bangladesh (Sociology, London

School of Economics). Victoria has a book about the camps coming out in June ('Statelessness and Citizenship: Camps and the creation of political space' Routledge, London) and continues to be strongly dedicated to this subject.

See what OBAT's up to!

APPNA convention: If you are in the Orlando area, be sure to attend our informational session at the APPNA convention on July 5, 2013 from 3-5 pm at 9939 Universal Blvd., Orlando, FL 32819.

Ramadan Iftar: Bring your family and friends to join us for our annual Ramadan Iftar being held at the ISNA headquarters on July 20th, 2013 at 8 pm.

Photo exhibit: If you missed the exhibit, "Forgotten," on June 1st, here's another chance!

The Indiana Interchurch Center's (1100 W. 42nd St., IN 46208) Gallery is exhibiting the photos during the month of July. Don't miss it this time.

If your place of worship, organization or community center is interested in displaying these pictures, reach us at contact@obathelpers.org to let us know and we will get in touch with them.

ISNA annual convention: OBAT looks forward to seeing you at the convention in Washington, D.C. from August 30 to September 2nd, 2013!

Results



Students at Dhaka tutoring center

In early May, the Secondary School Certificate exams results were announced. Out of the 16 candidates taking the exam from OBAT's Dhaka Tutoring center, 68% received an A or an A-. Out of the 10 candidates from OBAT's Mymensingh Tutoring Center, 60% received an A or an A- grade. Congrats to our brilliant students!

Specialized Training for Tutors



Tarek Amir, conducting the training.

For the first time, a training workshop was organized for the tutoring center teachers at Rangpur. The two day workshop was titled: Strategic training on academy teaching. Tarek Amir designed and conducted the workshop. He has been studying at the Dhaka University's Geology Dept. with the help of OBAT scholarship program. He is currently a fourth year honors student.

Ramadan Mubarak!

During this blessed month, please

Chapter Meeting - Friends of OBAT Helpers, St. Louis

Please join the Friends of OBAT chapter meeting in St. Louis on September 22, 2013, hosted by Dr. Azfar Malik. For details and information, please contact our Indianapolis head office at contact@obathelpers.org.

About Us

OBAT Helpers is a US based non-profit, 501(C)3 organization committed to providing aid, support, education and economical empowerment to the suffering and displaced people. Our immediate focus is the most forgotten and ignored Urdu speaking people, commonly known as stranded Pakistanis/Biharis, who have been suffering silently in the many shanty camps across Bangladesh for the past 40 years.

We hope that you will continue your generous support to provide help to these unfortunate and forgotten people. We are the only hope for them, as they don't have any help and support from anywhere else around the world. Together we are making a difference in their lives as we help them fulfill their hopes and dreams.

Pass along this message to others who can join us on this journey!

Thank you for sponsoring our educational projects. Currently our needs encompass the following areas:

Health Clinic Rangpur: \$14,500/yr
Health Clinic Syedpur: \$23,600/yr
Computer Training Center Rangpur: \$3,500/yr
Computer Training Center Dhaka: \$3,500/yr
Cataract surgery: \$15,000 (Total 1000 cataract patients will be served. Total cost \$35,000 @ \$40/person- \$20,000 donated by HCI Canada)
Economic Empowerment: \$250-\$900/project
Family Assistance program: \$300-\$600/yr
Educational scholarship: \$200-\$500/yr
Clean water infrastructure: \$6000 motorized deep tube well
Non-Formal Schools for working children: \$13,100/yr for 10 Schools
Community latrines and Drainage system \$10,300

We value and appreciate your support tremendously. For questions and concerns, please email us at contact@obathelpers.org

**remember your
Muslim brothers and
sisters in the camps.
Please send
and make your Zakat
donations payable to:**

OBAT Helpers Inc.
1100 West 42nd St.,
Ste. 125 A, Indianapolis, IN
46208.
Visit www.obathelpers.org for
more details.

[Donate online](#)

We Need Your Help!

**Are you attending the
ISNA or the APPNA
convention this year?**

We are in need of volunteers
who can help us during these
events!

APPNA convention-OBAT informational session

Date: July 5, 2013

Time: 3:00-5:00 PM

Venue: Rosen Shingle Creek
located at 9939 Universal
Blvd., Orlando, FL 32819.

ISNA annual convention:

Date: Aug 30-Sept 2, 2013.

Venue: Walter E. Washington
Convention Center
801 Place NW
Washington, DC 20001

**Please reach us at:
contact@obathelpers.org if
you are interested.**

Join Our Mailing List!