

# ASPIRE

A Quarterly Publication of OBAT Helpers

Dear Friends,

In March of 2010, I visited Dhaka, Bangladesh. In addition to gaining clinical experience, I had wanted to visit the place where my mother spent much of her childhood, and where 300,000 people have been living in camps since 1971. These are people who, like my grandfather, migrated to Dhaka from India seeking opportunity after the end of British colonial rule but either by choice or otherwise did not flee the country before the liberation war. After learning about the work being done by OBAT Helpers Inc, I was motivated to contribute in some way to their efforts in alleviating the condition of these people. I had the good fortune of being able to set up two vision screenings at the OBAT elementary school and at the NLJ school in the Geneva camp.

During my visit, I spoke to the teachers and to many of the parents on topics such as hygiene and nutrition, which are important both on an individual and community level. Things that are taken for granted in developed nations (hand-washing/use of soap, eating fruits and vegetables) have to be reinforced in a third-world scenario.

Clearly, the work being done by OBAT is having a significant impact on the camp communities in Bangladesh. Due to time constraints, I could not visit the camps outside Dhaka, but the consensus among both camp dwellers and those working for OBAT appeared to be that things are working. It is also apparent that the nation at-large and the government of Bangladesh have not made it a priority to address the challenges faced by this particular community.

There is much work that remains to be done for the camp communities in Bangladesh. The living conditions are truly deplorable. It is common to see large piles of garbage in unpaved streets where children play and families live. Single rooms or tents are crammed with 7 to 8 people. Bathroom facilities are grossly inadequate and unsanitary. A central water pump serves thousands of people. Severe malnutrition predisposes people of all ages to diarrheal diseases, which are propagated by unclean food sources and cause a high number of deaths each year.

It is my opinion that the most effective means of changing the long-term condition of the camp-dwellers, which OBAT has also focused on, is education.

The people I met and worked with in Dhaka left an ever-lasting impression on me and I can never express my full gratitude. There is much progress that has been made but even more that is needed. I will continue to work with OBAT in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

*Dr Asim Farooq*

Transitional Resident, St Francis Hospital, Chicago



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**OBAT wins  
CHALLENGE GRANT**

A huge thank you to all our wonderful donors who helped us win the challenge grant of \$15,000! Thanks to your generosity, your donations will now be matched up to 15,000 by one of our valued donors and will be used to support our two health clinics for up to a year.

OBAT would also like to express its deepest gratitude towards its iftar sponsors and all the attendees who made the iftar fundraiser held on August 12<sup>th</sup>, a great success. Most of the challenge was fulfilled through the iftar donations.



Every Eid, OBAT distributes presents as well as basic food items to enable the poverty stricken families celebrate Eid with joy and dignity. The gifts this year were distributed to the families of the children studying at its schools in Dhaka, Rangpur, Chittagong and Khulna. Rice, oil, sugar and vermicelli were among the food items that were distributed to 1550 families or approximately 8000 people. These gifts go a long way in lighting up the people's faces with happiness on Eid.

**SHALOM, SALAM and HALLELUJAH!**

Recently OBAT spent an elegant evening with the rest of its Center for Interfaith Cooperation partners, IIL, MAI and BRIDGE, hosting a fundraiser at the Indiana Interchurch Center. The objective was to raise funds which the partnering organizations could use for their collective administrative expenses. OBAT's secretary and the Director of the International Interfaith Initiative, Charlie Wiles was the glue and force that brought the whole event together. The beautiful Krannert Hall with its multihued stained-glass windows was a perfect setting for the soothing music played on the Oud by Yuval Ron, an Israeli award-winning musician. The guests sang along with him to the infectious strains of his song, "Shalom, Salam and Hallelujah." Feryal Khatri from BRIDGE, Anwar Khan from OBAT Helpers and Razi Nalim from MAI gave short introductions about their respective organizations. The special guests of the occasion were the Honorable Congressman, Andre Carson and the President of the

Christian Theological Seminary, Rev. Dr. Matthew Boulton. Both speakers stressed on how the common thread of benevolence toward mankind ran through and unified different faiths and religions and that in essence we all are one big human family. The Congressman was presented a photograph by Pakistani American photographer, Asrar Burney who had given a similar one to his grandmother, Julia Carson while she was in office. At the end, guests enjoyed appetizing Middle-Eastern cuisine prepared by Alfam Ghanim. Thank you, our valuable CIC partners; it's great to partner with an organization which advocates peace and harmony in a world torn with strife and conflict. And to all our friends out there, we say, Shalom, Salam and Hallelujah!



**Above: OBAT's staff at the SENSE School with Jamie Fahrner, Outreach Coordinator at SENSE Charter School.**

OBAT feels very fortunate to announce a new initiative which will benefit its home city of Indianapolis. Known as, "Rehma," the Arabic word for compassion, it is a three-tier program designed to emulate its operations in Bangladesh. As a US-based organization, OBAT feels a responsibility toward making a contribution toward pressing issues in the local environment.

The first corner of the triangle of Rehma is the **relief program** which aims to alleviate hunger in Indianapolis. OBAT will provide a \$5000 grant to Second Helpings. Second Helpings is an Indianapolis based charity that rescues food and feeds the poor in Indiana. Each meal costs \$0.64. Rehma's objective will be to feed 500 people every Friday for a year through Second Helpings.

The second tier of Rehma is the **micro-lending program**. This entails providing the South East Neighborhood Development (SEND) in Indianapolis, a \$3000 grant for a microfinance project to create income-generating opportunities.

OBAT Helpers **Rehma Fellows** is a new program that seeks to improve the educational opportunities of indigent and poor Hoosier children. The program will recruit 5 education majors from local universities. They will each tutor students at SENSE Charter School twice a week for an hour. SENSE is an Indianapolis Charter School that has 89% children eligible for free or reduced school lunch. The neighborhood is in the more impoverished areas of Indianapolis with a high rate of unemployment.

OBAT Helpers will provide SENSE an annual grant of \$3600 towards the hiring of 5 fellows to help increase the test scores of SENSE students in year 1. It is our hope that in year 2 we can increase this to 15 fellows at a cost of \$11,000.

The Rehma initiative allows OBAT to fulfill its goal of being involved locally without distracting resources from its mission to improve the lives in the camps of Bangladesh. Since funds are allocated separately for REHMA, please mark any contributions that you make as specific for the REHMA project.



**Students with their Eid gifts.**

## **Join hands with OBAT Helpers**

### **Adopt a tutoring center:**

**\$2000- 4,500 a year**

### **Adopt a school:**

**3,500-12,000 a year**

### **Educational scholarships:**

**\$300-\$500 a year**

**Help camp residents  
celebrate Eid-ul-Adha**

**Perform qurbani through OBAT Helpers;**

**meat will be distributed in the camps.**

### **Cost of animals:**

**Goat: \$80**

**Cow: \$455**

**1 share in a cow: \$65**

**Forms will be sent to you by mail.**

**You can also call 317-203-0603 or**

**email at [contact@obathelpers.org](mailto:contact@obathelpers.org)**

## DIGGING DEEPER...

In July 2011, OBAT inaugurated a new tube well at the Halishaher camp. Climatic changes had led to a rapid decline in the water level in the Bay of Bengal resulting in rendering the previously drilled 20-30 ft tube well ineffective. A new 100 ft deep tube well has been drilled which is now benefitting one hundred families or approximately 500 people from the Halishaher Trade School camp. Twenty % of the total cost of the tube well was covered by the camp residents; the rest was funded by OBAT.

## KUDOS KORNER...

OBAT would like to express its deepest appreciation to the following:

Dr Maarij Syed ( Board Member): Thank you for arranging and conducting, "An afternoon of awareness," a presentation and a fundraiser for OBAT at our gracious friends, Mr and Mrs Azeem's residence in July 2011. We really value your continuous efforts to help us grow and flourish.

Shariq Siddiqui (Board Member): OBAT is fortunate to have dynamic board members like Shariq whom we thank for being the principal force and guidance behind launching OBAT's REHMA initiative

Sohail Khan (Education Coordinator for OBAT's schools in Bangladesh): OBAT would like to acknowledge and applaud the efforts of Sohail Akhter Khan who has served as OBAT's Education Coordinator and Head Teacher of OBAT Halishaher School since 2005. Seven schools, three tutoring Centers and two computer training centers of OBAT are under the wing of Sohail. That is a lot of responsibility! However, his dedication and commitment to OBAT's work has enabled him to stay at the helm of our education projects and steer them in the right direction.

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"Clearing the Way for a Brighter Future"

Find us on the Web:  
[www.obathelpers.org](http://www.obathelpers.org)

OBAT Helpers is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.



*Students at OBAT's computer training center at Rangpur.*

## Please reach out

For our new REHMA project, our goal is to feed 500 people every Friday for a year through Second Helpings, starting Oct 7<sup>th</sup>.

OBAT Helpers seeks your help to feed the hungry and the poor in Indiana. You can sponsor any of the following categories.

1. \$64 provides 100 meals (\$0.64 / meal)
2. \$278 provides 100 meals every Friday for 1 month
3. \$640 supplies 100 meals every Friday for 10 weeks
4. \$3328 pays for 100 meals every Friday for one year