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# ASPIRE

A quarterly publication of OBAT Helpers Inc.

October 2012

Dear friends and supporters of OBAT,  
It is my honor to join OBAT Helpers officially as its newest board member. I have been working with OBAT Helpers directly or indirectly since this organization was established seven years ago. It's really impressive and very heartening to see that despite the many challenges it faced, OBAT has thrived and developed into a nonprofit that is truly making a difference. I have witnessed the progress very closely. From its modest beginnings to now serving over 30 Bihari camps, providing opportunities for education to over 1,500 students; a successful microfinance endeavor and two health clinics. Not to forget, its tremendous efforts in improving the quality of life by building bathrooms; tubewells for provision of clean water and construction of sewers and drainage systems for the camp residents living in dismal conditions.

Thus, I felt like it was my responsibility to assist OBAT with its mission to the best of my capacity. I want to say thank you to all directors and board members for giving me the opportunity to serve in the board and thus serve the stranded Pakistanis who have been largely forgotten by the world. My plan as a board member is to lend my expertise to improving the efficiency of the various OBAT projects; spread the message about OBAT's work, as well as strengthen the organization by introducing community members whose skills and talent can help the organization move forward. I hope that you will join me in my mission.

Best regards,  
Rezwan Khan  
MD., Associate Professor,  
University of Illinois, Urbana, Champaign.

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## OF MYRIAD OBAT EVENTS

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### SHARE YOUR QURBANI WITH THE FORGOTTEN

***With your help, we have been arranging and distributing Qurbani meat for the last five years.***

***Let's continue to share the spirit of Eid with them each year.***

It is the promise of sustenance that gives one peace of mind. Most of the camp residents throughout these 66 camps, however, survive on a meager, paltry diet which leads to malnutrition - especially among the children. The meat OBAT Helpers is able to provide once a year during Eid-ul-Adha is most of what they will consume throughout the year. As said in the Quran, it is not the animal's meat or blood that reaches Allah, but your piety that reaches Him [Al-Hajj 22:37].

This year, we urge you to send your Qurbani to help the Forgotten people living across Bangladesh. Each year, more and more supporters join OBAT Helpers to perform Qurbani



OBAT stayed busy over the summer, attending and hosting events and spreading the word about its work in other cities in the US. From St Louis, in June to Ft. Wayne and DC in July, OBAT hosted friendly meets with its supporters in these cities. What culminated was the formation of two more chapters of Friends of OBAT in St. Louis and Ft. Wayne.

OBAT annual iftar followed these two events on the 21st of July at the ISNA headquarters in Plainfield, Indiana. Special guest speaker Mufti Yasir Nadeem from Chicago attended the event to talk about Ramadan and its significance.

The beginning of August brought some happy news. A photograph from OBAT's preschool project was submitted by us in the Global Giving photo contest. We ended up being one of the 75 finalists! Thank you to all those who voted for us and helped us finish in 17th place among the 75 finalists. We didn't win the contest and the \$1000 prize for our preschool project but our photograph of children from Chittagong's preschool captured a lot of hearts worldwide.

Booth no 802 at The ISNA convention on Aug 31st was a vibrant addition to the venue. The booth belonged to OBAT and drew attention with the display of pictures and literature from its programs.

The annual board Meeting was held on September 9th at the Indiana Interchurch Center. Last year's progress was reviewed and plans were solidified for the year ahead by the board members. A new board member, Dr Rezwana Khan was welcomed to replace the position vacated by Shariq Siddiqui.

A 5 K walk, some pre-walk zumba warm up moves, a hip hop dance performance, a raffle with great prizes as well as a performance by a local, ethnic music group, "Sweet Poison Victim." Sounds like enough fun for three hours?

Fun, it sure was! The latest OBAT undertaking was the Race4Rehma held on September 29th at the Indianapolis Canal Walk. Race4Rehma is a yearly event held to raise funds for OBAT's local Indianapolis projects which involve supporting Second Helpings and Sense Charter School.

The success of the event calls for several rounds of applause:

Thank you to all our awesome supporters who participated in the Race4Rehma and contributed toward making it a fun event. A special note of gratitude to Jennifer Vigran and Charrie Buskirk from Second Helpings and Kate Voss from Sense Charter School for their participation and for representing their respective organizations at the event. Thank you, Sweet Poison Victim for their terrific music and for entertaining the crowd long after the walk ended.

A huge shout out to H2O, OBAT's volunteer group of young professionals who made this event possible with their dedication, commitment and hard work.

## WILL YOU JOIN OBAT IN GIVING THE GIFT OF SIGHT TO 1000 PEOPLE?



OBAT Helpers and The Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind (also known as Sight Savers) have teamed up to perform eye surgeries for camp residents. Bangladesh has a very high level of avoidable blindness; levels are particularly high in the ultra-poor sectors of

the community. Amongst these are the camp residents, for whom this project has been designed. The reasons for the high levels of blindness amongst these sectors of society are principally two-fold: a lack of knowledge and understanding of eye health, and a lack of access to treatment. This project seeks to address both of these causative factors through raising awareness of eye health and the provision of services through local partners and NGOs.

This project is estimated to perform about 1000 cataract surgeries by the end of 2012 and will cost \$20,000.

You can give one person the gift of sight by donating just \$40.

To donate, pls visit: <https://www.obathelpers.org/index.php/donate-now>

in the camps. Last year, friends from all around the States participated in OBAT's Qurbani program. This year during Eid we look forward to feeding and helping even more people with your help. Thank you for choosing to share this Eid tradition with the Forgotten people in Bangladesh. May you be blessed for your compassion and generosity.

Please download [Qurbani Donation Form](#) and mail to OBAT Helpers: 1100 west 42nd Street, Indianapolis, IN 46208. If you would like to donate online, please follow instructions on the donate now page.

[DONATE ONLINE](#)

## DISTRIBUTION OF NEW UNIFORMS AT RANGPUR SCHOOL



In May 2012, new uniforms were distributed amongst the students at Rangpur School. The picture above shows some students in their new uniforms. There are a total of 315 students at Rangpur School. The grades taught at this school are I-III.

## CLEAN WATER FOR 750 PEOPLE



**Drinking water project in Millat Camp, Mirpur, Dhaka.**

How many times do we leave the water running while brushing our teeth? Or pour a whole glass of water, and toss out the other half as we only needed to

## THE UNFPA VISITS DHAKA TUTORING CENTER



A team of workers from the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) Bangladesh, recently visited the tutoring center run by OBAT in Dhaka. The team expressed a keen interest in knowing about Biharis and their living conditions, literacy rate, as well as the degree to which other organizations are servicing this neglected population.

They expressed their appreciation and pleasure at OBAT's contribution in a letter they sent later on. Below, the content of the letter is reproduced for ease of reading.

Letter from the UNFPA:

"It has been a pleasure to visit your fantastic organization, to get to know your work and meet your energetic students. We leave with good ideas about how an organization can effectively support its community and future generations. Keep up the great work and continue empowering the young people, especially women!

Congratulations and Thank You!  
Clara, Mariano and Anna.  
UNFPA, Bangladesh."  
Arientos, Argentina."

## 10,000 OBAT CARE PACKAGES SPREAD SUNSHINE AND SMILES



At the festival of Eid, OBAT staff and volunteers distributed gifts and care packages among 2,062 families or approximately 10,000 people. These were distributed in the cities of :  
Chittagong -860 families, Rangpur-750 families, Dhaka-210 families and Khulna -242 families.

The joyous occasion of Eid (Muslim festival following the month of fasting, Ramadan) is a time to celebrate with family and friends, exchange gifts and enjoy special food. For the people living in the camps, these constitute luxuries as their life is a day to day struggle.  
Thank you to our supporters for making this possible.

## THANK YOU TO OUR SCHOOL SPONSORS



We would like to extend our deepest thanks to our new school sponsors in 2012:

1. The Friends of OBAT- St. Louis chapter, who adopted the Sardar Bahadur Nagar School, Chittagong the school with the highest number of enrolled students (450 students) among all of OBAT's schools.
2. Friends of OBAT Plainfield, IN for adopting the Ferozeshah school, Chittagong.
3. Mr and Mrs Mahmood from Terra Haute, IN who graciously adopted the Khulna School.
4. Mr and Mrs Shahid Athar of Zionsville, IN for their generosity in assuming the financial responsibility of Halishaher School, Chittagong.
5. An anonymous donor from Carmel, Indiana for her magnanimity in sponsoring the OBAT-NLJ Middle School, Geneva camp Dhaka.

## 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

drink half of it. We often water our yards when we don't really need to, just to make them look extra lush or take extra long showers just because we can.

This abundance of water that we enjoy and take for granted is a sheer luxury for the camp residents in Bangladesh.

The Millat Camp in Mirpur is one of the largest camps in Dhaka. Approximately, seven thousand people are living in the camp with little or no access to clean water.

The people of the camp live in tiny thatched huts made of tin and bamboo. Extremely narrow alleys separate the rows of huts in the camp. The camp dwellers face a growing threat from a quick population increase as well as poor health and hygiene standards. The government supply of water is not available for them. Whatever they do get access to, is tainted with pathogens carrying several water-borne diseases. To be able to get to this source of water, they have to traverse long distances and carry the heavy pots of water on their shoulders, on the way back to their homes.

To address this issue, OBAT Helpers installed a deep tubewell in the Millat Camp in August, 2011. The tubewell provides water from 6 to 8 hours daily. A committee was formed for maintaining the system of water supply and the upkeep of its sanitation. Each family using the well contributing 10 Taka weekly to make this project maintained and self-sustained.

The committee has reported that there has been no incidence of water borne diseases since the installation of the well. Also, the involvement of the committee in managing the tubewell has established a system of accountability which generally lacks in under developed countries.

## DISTRIBUTION OF SEWING MACHINES



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. Please help us by passing on this message to others who can also join us on this journey.

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.

**Please send and make your donations payable to:**

OBAT Helpers Inc.  
1100 West 42nd St.,  
Ste. 125 A, Indianapolis, IN 46208.  
Visit [www.OBATHelpers.org](http://www.OBATHelpers.org) for more details.

[Donate on line](#)

As a part of its family assistance program, OBAT distributed 28 sewing machines amongst the destitute women living in Syedpur camps. The women have already undergone a four month training course at the OBAT Sewing Training Center. They are now capable of stitching articles of clothing on a manual sewing machine. With the help of these machines, the women will be able to earn about 6,500 taka or \$85 per month and gradually increase their income to a level at which they will be able to support their families.