

Autumn-Winter/

2015-6



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FROK: UK Friends of Khwendo Kor

Maryam Bibi visits UK

As members and supporters know, UK Friends of Khwendo Kor (FROK) recently hosted a two week programme of events around the UK for Maryam Bibi, founder and Chief Executive of Khwendo Kor. Its purpose was to promote the unique approach taken by Khwendo Kor to their work with women, girls and their communities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and to make contact with current and potential donors.

With an overall theme of 'Building female dignity and self reliance in the conflict zones of northwest Pakistan', Maryam visited more than twelve venues. She met current and potential donors, policy makers, human rights workers, academics and students as well as FROK members & supporters. Starting with Quakers in Oxford, talks and discussions were also held at St. Columbus Oxford centenary celebrations, Pegasus Grange Oxford, Oxfam GB, Sussex Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, Afghanaid, Amnesty International, Centre for Applied Human Rights York and the Days for Girls Rotary project. Maryam

also gave public lectures at Brunel and Leeds Beckett universities and the



Maryam Bibi in pensive mood during her trip

University of York. An invitation only event was held at the Royal Society for Medicine where more than 40 high profile attendees were also addressed by Kamran Arif of the Human Rights

Commission of Pakistan and Mustafa Qadri of Amnesty International, both of whom praised the work of Khwendo Kor and painted a very vivid picture of the nature of the challenges facing them.

Maryam shared examples of how Khwendo Kor staff go about their work and the barriers they face. For instance, at times dogs are set upon them to cast them out of villages or the Taliban arrive and ban their presence. Female workers sometimes have to accept going a step back in their personal freedom in order to gain access to conservative communities, for example by wearing burkhas.



Discussing psychosocial matters with Dr Shakil Malik, Consultant Psychiatrist, in a break at the Sussex seminar

Listening to Maryam was 'like gold dust'



L to R: Prof Ian Sinclair, Prof Sardar Ali, Maryam Bibi, Dr Ayesha Shahid & PhD student Syed Raza Gilani, at Brunel University

What was most inspiring was how Khwendo Kor workers find ways around these barriers to do what is needed. Maryam reminded us of how refusal from local chiefs does not mean defeat but instead biding time until that particular power holder is persuaded. Challenging is not necessarily best done by confrontation. She talked about how some powerful Imams have changed their practice in their own families in following Islamic laws of female inheritance, to make sure that what they...

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But where was Laila Shahnawaz?

As some readers will be aware, Maryam was due to be accompanied by her younger colleague Laila Shahnawaz, Senior Programme Manager-Civil Rights & Humanitarian Response Programmes. This was part of a joint Khwendo Kor/FROK staff development strategy whereby FROK aims to bring to the UK an up and coming female staff member—a leader of tomorrow—from time to

time to experience an international visit alongside Maryam, both to support Maryam by taking on some of the tasks and to forge closer links between the 2 organisations. We were shocked and dismayed when Laila was turned down for a visa at the last moment on the grounds that she was single and had a low bank balance and therefore may not have sufficient reason to return to Pakistan. Clearly anyone working for Khwendo Kor does not do so for the money—and Laila's commitment to Khwendo Kor and to striving for betterment for the people of northwest Pakistan is second to none. What a waste of an opportunity for all of us.



Maryam addressed the centenary celebrations at St Cuthbert's Church, Oxford, which has been supporting Khwendo Kor

News from the FROK AGM, Oxford

The FROK AGM on 20 June in Oxford was followed by a fascinating talk by Shaheen Sardar Ali, Professor of Law at Warwick University. The talk unpacked the context and history of Frontier Crimes Regulation, a set of laws which seemingly codified existing practices but in reality were used to oppress people who lived in the tribal areas between present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan. Despite attempts to reduce the impact of this set of laws, the application of the FCR still leads to the 'othering' of people in those regions. The talk gave a context to present day conflict in those areas and was followed by a lively question and answer session.

FROK is delighted to announce that Professor Sardar Ali has agreed to join the FROK Committee.

Right: Maryam talks to Tony Clark of the J A Clark Charitable Trust at the London reception



Maryam, pictured here with Professor Nick Ellison, giving a public lecture at the University of York

This afternoon's presentation was truly inspiring. I wish I could replay every minute of it in my mind.....

If you would like a copy of Maryam's powerpoint presentation, please email marilyn.crawshaw@york.ac.uk. Unfortunately we cannot put it on the FROK website for technical reasons.



FROK's 100th member!

In our last Newsletter, we were on the brink of getting our 100th member. We're delighted that we passed this milestone at our AGM in June with the registration of Laurence Devlin, pictured below with FROK Chair, Marilyn Crawshaw. What will it be by the next AGM?



We are urgently seeking advice as to how to try and ensure that future visa requests for KK staff are not turned down.....

If you currently make an Annual Subscription to FROK by cash or cheque, will you consider converting to a Standing Order?



Above: talking to a female PhD student after the Leeds Beckett University

Thank you to the John Mercer Human Rights Trust who recently made a grant for KK to purchase a microscope for use in the labs for the medical camps and two LED screens for use in schools

The 'Days for Girls' initiative comes to Khwendo Kor

By a serendipitous coincidence, Maryam's stay in York coincided with a workshop being run as part of the Days for Girls initiative, funded locally by

Minster on International Women's Day to promote this work. Maryam could immediately see its benefit for adult women as well as girls in her

region so the group agreed to supply Khwendo Kor with 10 starter packs and a grant of £100.

Watch this space!



Maryam being shown how to make reusable sanitary wear at a Days for Girls workshop

Rotary International (<http://www.daysforgirls.org/>).

Did you know that many girls lose up to 2 months schooling a year because they are menstruating? This simple yet highly effective initiative is helping to remove that barrier. Spearheaded by Issy Sanderson, a retired art teacher who spent most of her adult life working in developing countries, women in York are actively involved in making reusable sanitary wear kits. Indeed while we were there, it was announced that there is to be a mass sewing event at York



KK's first Medical Camp for the earthquake affected population in Upper Dir

The earthquake on 26th October, which was of 7.5 magnitude, hit the Hindukush region of Pakistan and Afghanistan. In Pakistan alone there were 279 killed and 1,980 injured and approaching 100,000 houses were damaged. Winter has already started here. A team from Khwendo Kor assessed the situation and decided to provide a medical camp in village Kandaw, located on a hilltop in Ushery Dara in Upper Dir. They engaged the government health department/ PPHI and the camp took place on 6th November.

Khwendo Kor talked to the community beforehand and identified the prevailing health issues which included chest problems, digestive/stomach problems, flu, cold, coughs and fever, skin problems and body aches and joint pains. More than 200 people were seen and provided with medicines: 98 women, 22 men, 46 girls and 44 boys. During the camp, it became clear that long term medical support is needed to the earthquake affected population.

Below: Women & children waiting to be seen

'A World at School' recognizes Khwendo Kor's work

Many of you will have heard of the worldwide initiative 'A World at School' whose aim is to ensure every child's right to go to school. They recently interviewed Maryam Bibi and the piece has just gone live on their website (<http://www.aworldatschool.org/news/entry/Maryam-Bibi-mission>

-to-educate-tribal-girls-in-Pakistan-2383. Maryam says that despite violent attacks on KK offices and kidnappings of their staff by Islamist extremist groups opposed to female rights: "We have been managing and surviving in spite of all these difficulties with the help of the local communities, who have been extremely supportive."



AUTUMN-WINTER/



World AIDS Day 1st December –KK plays its part

KK's HIV project is mainly supported by the Pakistan Government's National Aid Control Program (NACP). As in many parts of the world, those affected suffer stigma and rejection from their family and community. KK is now working with around 1000 HIV positive patients including women, men and children.

This involves door to door visits to build relationships, providing medical and psychosocial counselling, undertaking awareness raising, providing financial help for the children's education and encouraging some people to become role models and activists against the disease.contd back page



Maryam Bibi visits UK

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..... said to their communities would be seen as authentic. There were inspiring anecdotes of how Khwendo Kor would open up a school in a neighbouring village when refused by the target area and a few years later, the Imam of that same target village came to ask Khwendo Kor to open a school. The audience was very appreciative of this sharing of grassroots experiences.

There was a keen interest in Khwendo Kor's distinctive approach in involving local villagers, both as employees and volunteer collaborators, in helping to shape and implement community development. Their model of 'viable villages' in which village communities are engaged in building sustainable educational, economic, health and civic futures with women and girls centrally involved was especially inspiring. It is proving successful and sustainable even in the remote areas of FATA where no other female NGOs are working.

Maryam also talked at length about the humanitarian work in which Khwendo Kor is engaged. Most poignantly, news of an earthquake reached us within a day or two of Maryam's arrival. Khwendo Kor staff immediately set about offering their help, especially in those areas where it is already working. Maryam also reminded audiences of the ongoing displacement of hundreds of thousands of people from her home area of North Waziristan and the particular hardships faced by women and girls. Such hardships are so often either overlooked or little understood by aid agencies without a focus on women.

This was a rare opportunity to hear firsthand about Khwendo Kor's remarkable work through Maryam's ability to blend a sophisticated analysis of the context within which Khwendo Kor works both nationally and internationally with real-life examples from the field. She explored what difference it has made to their work that Khwendo Kor uses a rights-based approach, including by combining advocacy work with direct delivery of services.

Khwendo Kor's work and that of Maryam Bibi has been widely praised within Pakistan and internationally and yet they, like other NGOs and activists, live with increasing daily threats and financial insecurity.

World AIDS Day 1st December –KK plays its partcontd from p3

One young mother's story was not unusual: aged 26 and with 2 young children, she was ostracised by her in-laws (with whom they were living) after her husband died just 2 days after the family, including her, learnt that he had AIDS. She has been tested HIV+ve. Her parents agreed to take them in and KK now pays for her medicine and contributes towards school fees besides providing counselling and other support. She said she feels strong when people from KK come and share her parents' worry about her and her children's future. Now her parents are encouraging her to complete her education and take some job in her village, so she sees some hope.



Want to Donate to FROK or get a friend to join and not sure how?

Advice from our Treasurer

On our website at www.frok.org.uk, you can access a form to set up a **standing order**, download and **post a completed membership form and cheque** or find details on how to do a **bank to bank transfer**. Remember to fill in a **gift aid** form if you are a UK tax payer. For those with **Charity Aid Foundation (CAF)** accounts you can send me a voucher or set up regular payments

You can also donate up to £10 by sending a **text** to 70070 with the following message:

FROK10 £[put here the number of pounds you want to donate - choose from 1,2,3,4,5 or 10].

Another online donation route—either a one-off or regular amount—is through **www.justgiving.com/frok/Donate**. If you declare you're a UK tax payer, Justgiving will add gift aid to any donation.

You can also send me a **donation direct** (Jonathan French, FROK Treasurer, 85, East Parade, Heworth, York, YO31 7YD): cheques made out to FROK. If you're a taxpayer, please complete the gift aid form. (If you have already completed a form, it will not be necessary to do it on every occasion. I will come back to you if there is a problem).

For **online banking transfers**, use the bank account details on the website but please also let me know you're doing this. By putting your surname in 'payee reference' or emailing me at:

Jonathanfrench97@gmail.com

on the first occasion you go down this route so I can confirm receipt.

Finally, you can now support FROK when you make **on-line purchases** by using the **THEGIVINGMACHINE**.

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