

UK Friends of Khwendo Kor: Annual Report for 2009/10

The core task of the UK Friends of Khwendo Kor (FROK) is to support Khwendo Kor (KK) in its work for women and their families in FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (formerly the Northwest Frontier Province or NWFP). This annual report on FROK's work must therefore outline developments in KK and the way FROK has responded to them.

Last year's report described the background to KK's work: the deteriorating security situation and the influx of refugees – probably the largest movement of people in South East Asia since India was partitioned. The fighting has been worse this year, particularly in Waziristan. American Drone attacks continue in FATA and the Taliban have struck back in other areas of Pakistan. Peshawar, the location for KK's head office, has suffered heavily through frequent suicide bombings. All this combines with the chronic under-development and deeply conservative culture to form the current context for KK.

Faced with these challenges, KK has continued work in villages on schools, health provision and micro-credit. Death threats, the kidnapping of staff, and the war in Waziristan have meant that it has had to adapt its methods, relying to an even greater degree than before on its grass roots support and its success in recruiting local activists and staff. This has enabled it to continue its work in very dangerous areas. Even the Taliban may hesitate before attacking an Islamic organisation which is genuinely popular with the local people they want on their side. At the same time, KK has developed a new role in helping villagers and administrations to prepare for and meet emergencies. It is also putting more emphasis on advocacy: giving a voice to local people (e.g. through registering women to vote) and on combining with others to promote peace. New initiatives include the work with refugees from Waziristan (KK is one of very few NGOs licensed and able to do this) and the opening of a new office in Islamabad (something that allows KK to lobby the Government of behalf of those it serves and also to have better contact with funders).

A developing and key role for KK is that it gives a voice at the highest level to the people with whom it works. This is helped by the new office in Islamabad and by a new division of responsibility at KK which has freed the Chief Executive to spend more time on this work. Over the year, she has, among other things, spoken to the President of Pakistan, Hillary Clinton, Richard Holbrooke, and members of the United States Congress, as well as presenting KK's work to a British audience at the House of Lords. The well-known documentary-maker Farah Durrani has also filmed KK's work, concentrating particularly on its role in promoting peace, and this will be shown on Al-Jazeera television on 14th of July.

These changes have increased the demands on KK, which it needs funds to meet. Notable successes have been the renewal of KK's grant from its Dutch funder (Oxfam-Novib), and large grants from the Norwegian Council of Churches, UNICEF and the Pakistan Fund for Poverty Alleviation. Paradoxically this success does not reduce KK's financial problems. Funders insist on very high standards for proposals and reporting and KK has had to develop its financial accounting and operational monitoring. All this takes up a lot of management time and requires skilled staff, who can command a high market rate. Donors do not want to pay for this, preferring to fund direct services for a limited time. KK does have to pay for it and has ongoing responsibilities for what it starts. The more direct work it undertakes the more it struggles to raise the core funding it needs.

FROK's Activities, 2009 – 10

Interaction with KK – To keep in touch with these changes and provide effective help, FROK has needed frequent email contact with KK's Operations Director, Finance Officer, and CEO. The CEO (Maryam Bibi) has visited the UK twice during the year, once for successful negotiations with Oxfam-Novib and once to raise awareness of KK's work. She spoke at three meetings in York, one in Oxford, two in London (one of these arranged by the J.A. Clark Trust at the House of Lords) and one in Bristol. These meetings identified a number of potential donors, led to interest from the Pakistan Office of the Department for International Development in Pakistan, and furthered KK's new advocacy role. It also helped to extend FROK's membership outside York and among British people of Pakistani origin. FROK helped arrange these meetings and looked after Maryam's accommodation, travel costs, and need for office space.

Financial Support of KK: The transfer of some 'untied money' has eased KK's financial crisis and helped it establish its Islamabad office, thus advancing its advocacy work and fundraising. FROK has also helped KK to develop its new 'relief role' through an appeal for the Waziristan refugees. The money raised enabled KK to start work which was then taken up by UNICEF with a much larger grant. During the year KK also started the innovative project funded by Pinner Church following an appeal by FROK. The project has equipped and staffed an ambulance to provide maternity care to 25 Karak villages and transport serious cases to hospital. It also runs medical camps in the area.

Micro-credit – Further support for KK's village work has come from FROK's efforts to develop outlets for KK micro-credit goods in the UK. This has meant, among other things, finding or adapting the best goods for the English market, agreeing a pricing structure with KK, selling goods at local events and finding shops to take them on a regular basis. We are now confident that we have an attractive range of goods that sell.

'Technical Support' – As described above, a key part of KK's unfunded work lies in the preparation of proposals. Funders expect KK to conduct its business in English and to present their reports and proposals in a way that meets Western expectations. This is a difficult task for staff whose first languages are Pashto and Urdu, who have not been educated in Western Universities, and who are much less well paid than Pakistani staff working for International Agencies. Members of FROK, particularly Carol Morris, have been helping with the presentation of KK's work and have played a subsidiary but important role in the development of their strategic plan, proposals submitted to the EU and major Dutch and German donors, and the development of some policy documents. (See Annex A for examples of other ways in which FROK has worked with KK)

Development of FROK. FROK's Executive Committee has met twice this year, with a third meeting planned in conjunction with the AGM. The task for next year is to build on progress in this one, particularly in terms of consolidating our links with the Pakistani community and outside our initial base in York, and further clarifying the help we can give to KK in its developing role.

Jonathan French ended last year's annual report as follows: "KK has had to face a number of challenges this year which would have sunk many an organisation, but their spirit and principles and strong sense of mission have taken them through. FROK, too, has faced difficulties, but remains strong in our faith in KK". This was true then, and remains true now.

Ian Sinclair, Chair, FROK : 27 June 2010

Annex A

Extracts from Email from the Operations Director of Khwendo Kor

The following gives lightly edited extracts from an email from Khalid Usman, Operations Director of Khwendo Kor, commenting on a draft version of this report. The thrust of the email was to wonder whether the report should say more about:

“KK's progress in terms of funds received from donors and also organisation and system development. This progress has a direct connection with FROK's contribution (e.g. its technical support in editing of proposals and reports and its provision of funds for IDPs support in FR Bannu which paved the way for re-starting development work in FR Bannu).”

As the email pointed out, much of this work has also been supported by the J.A. Clark Charitable Trust. This trust was initially introduced to KK by FROK and has gone on to make very serious contributions to KK's development and effectiveness. Khalid particularly wanted us to mention “the contribution of the JA Clark Trust to KK system development including the installation of the Quick Book [computer based] accounting system”. The J A Clark Trust is also supporting a three-year Self Help project in the Tribal Areas to set up Women's Learning Centres. Two are operating in Jamrud Khyber Agency, and two in remote villages in Karak. Due to the security situation the 2 proposed in FR Bannu could not be achieved.

Khalid's email goes on to give examples of the developments to which FROK has directly or indirectly contributed. Typically, other funders have been reluctant to fund these pieces of work or have only done so after initial work by KK. The examples include ‘indirect work’ (e.g. on the Government Commission on the status of Women), systems development, and the continuation or restarting of work in dangerous areas such as Dir and FR Bannu. Khalid mentions the following:

- “1. KK has provided medicines to about 200 women and children in FR Bannu from the funds provided by FROK through its Waziristan Refugee Appeal.
2. A project for continuation and re-opening of girls' schools in FR Bannu has been approved by Action Aid.
3. UNDP has approved a “girls go back to school” project in Dir, where girls schools have been burnt by the Taliban and damaged during military operations.
4. Financial software has been installed and staff trained to maintain it and generate periodic reports from it.
5. Monitoring systems have been developed and put in place. A qualified monitoring manager has been appointed and put in charge of it. Standard operating procedures have been developed for reporting, recruitment etc and monthly KK consolidated progress reports have been started.
6. Zubaida Khatoon (KK's BOD member) has been nominated as chair person of the Provincial commission on the status of women announced by Government of Khyber Pukhtoon Khawa in May 2010. Ms. Maryam Bibi (CEO) has been nominated as a member of this commission.”