

PARTNER PLAN

An ecumenical appointment with

The **Methodist Church** 

Pat Jamison - Bangladesh January 2014

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Hello Everyone,

Here in Bangladesh one of the first questions as a foreigner we are asked is 'apnar desh khotay' which is where is your country? Local people always ask Bangladeshis a similar question except instead of country they replace it with village. So to people here where we come from and where our home is are important.



When people live overseas for a long time where some call home may change however I feel it should be somewhere we all feel safe and secure.

Just recently I read some statistics in a local paper which horrified me. The heading of the article was 'Most abused at home.' It gave statistics such as how 87% of women suffer domestic violence, 77% of them in the last 12 months and also are regularly beaten, 50% of the women beaten require medical help and 1/3 of women are raped by their husbands. This equates to nearly 9 out of 10 women abused by their husbands. Of the abused, 50% are in urban areas and 40% in rural all have stated they were raped before they were 14 years old. The statistics are from the country's **first ever national census** on women and abuse in Bangladesh.

Growing up in NI I felt safe in my home and have always felt safe no matter where I have lived. Living in Bangladesh I still feel safe and yet for some in this land even home is not a safe place.

The article I read also had a report from the child rights unit from an organisation called Ain O Salish Kendra known as ASK. It was about the rape of a ten year old girl who was left at home while her mother went to work, a girl of 13 who was mutilated by acid thrown by her cousin because she resisted advances from him and a four year old raped by a neighbour. All of these horrific incidents happened in or near their homes, a place which should be safe and where there should be love, affection and happiness. Unfortunately this does not always happen and suffering for many continues.

There are several projects throughout CBSDP where staff work with and alongside women and children who have been abused. Many of the children have escaped from homes where there has been abuse by family members or guardians and they now live on the streets.

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ASK works closely with one of our projects in Old Dhaka where there are many issues of abuse and children living on the streets.

Above are some of the street children receiving lunch at the school; they only attend in the morning or afternoon as they also have a job. Here they are safe. They receive basic education, health care, food, they can play, are given blankets and clothes in the winter and most of all they are shown kindness and love.



I have been editing all the 2013 reports from individual project areas and I am currently in the middle of writing the 2013 CBSDP report using information from them all. It has given me insight into what is happening in areas I don't really know about and wonderful to know what is being done in and around our projects.



A major issue in Bangladesh is early marriage. Many young girls are married before they are 18, the age which the government stipulates. This causes many problems, as they get pregnant far too early. Along with other colleagues we have been planning the community health and hygiene programme and one of the overall programme objectives is to reduce the incidence of early marriage. Above is a photo of my ayah from Jobarpar who was married in her early teens and had babies in her mid teens.

The next photo is my current ayah with three of her many nieces and nephews. Shefali is an amazing lady. She too was married very young, but had no children. She shows such love to her family and to everyone she comes in contact with. Her home, like that of Sopas, is one where love is shown in so many ways. These homes are places where family members feel safe despite poverty and care for and look out for each other. I am glad to have been part of Sopas life and now that of Shefali and so glad their families, despite poverty, are being loved and not abused like so many others.

“Childhood should be carefree, playing in the sun; not living a nightmare in the darkness of the soul.”

Dave Pelzer - A Child Called “It.”

Please continue to pray for all the work being carried out throughout CBSDP, especially with women and children who regularly return home to abusive family members. Pray also for work done in ASK and many organisations throughout the land to help those who are being and have been abused in whatever way.

Please pray for children who work as house-helpers in many homes around Dhaka. New people have moved into the flat opposite to me and their house-helpers are a boy aged 8 or 9 years and a girl of 11 or 12. There are many others like this in the area and some are not being treated well.

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Please continue to pray for the government which is still up against considerable opposition with the possibility of a re-election in the near future.

Pray I continue to show love and kindness to the people I meet and be generous in my daily giving both of time and finance.

“Often the only thing a child can remember about an adult in later years, when he or she is grown, is whether or not that person was kind.” Billy Graham

Blessings

Pat 

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