

FROK

The UK Friends of Khwendo Kor
UK registered charity no: 1095857

Annual Report for 2016-2017

This is my sixth Chair's Annual Report of activities undertaken by UK Friends of Khwendo Kor (FROK) Trustees and members. It covers the year from 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. FROK exists in order to support Khwendo Kor (KK) in its work with women and their families in FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK, formerly the Northwest Frontier Province) and to promote the values that KK stands for and its vision of 'A compassionate society where women live with dignity and self reliance'. Contributions we receive from members and donors – financial and otherwise - are all valued for the part they play in meeting FROK's aims.

Led by its founder and Chief Executive, Maryam Bibi, KK focuses on the four key areas of Education, Civil Rights, Health and Women's Economic Empowerment and its scheme of promoting 'Viable Villages'. It also meets humanitarian challenges as they arise, including most recently the mass movement of people from North Waziristan and the earthquake of October 2015.

Turning to the current situation with the North Waziristan people displaced from their homes over the last two years by military activity against the insurgents, there are now reports of some of them being able to return. This is by no means yet a mass return but it is hopeful. However for some, their homes, land and livelihoods may have been destroyed so much rebuilding lies ahead. While there is some physical infrastructure work going on – roads and so on – rebuilding communities will no doubt prove more challenging. KK is well placed to help with this, given their local knowledge and community development expertise, but of course funding is required. FROK hopes that such potential can be turned into reality. As we reported last year, developments go on far from the gaze of the international media and hence engaging public interest in fundraising outside the region is difficult.

Security issues in the region remain stark as does the impact of enduring poverty and of the very traditional culture with regard to gender. The staff and KK as a whole continue to be faced with threats to their existence because of their work but remain undaunted. However there is an encouraging development on the horizon which might lead to real and positive change. Plans have been announced that KP and FATA are to merge and become a single province. If this were to come to fruition then there would need to be considerable investment in FATA to improve its economic and social state. This would mean among other things investment in schools and health facilities and employment opportunities. How welcome would that be for all these communities but also if opportunities and services were made available equally across the genders. As one of the very few organisations that combines service delivery with advocacy and keeps women and children as its core focus, KK will be pushing for this.

KK continues to be sought out by, and to actively seek, funders and has also been doing well on slowly building up a philanthropic income stream from within the country. However it can never count itself to be financially secure – far from it. In fact their current financial situation is considerably worse than in the last reporting year and they have had to let some staff go. This results from a number of factors. The international climate is changing and major challenges lie

ahead in that sphere. There have already been funding cuts to KK's schools programmes as a direct result of US funding sources being severely pared back. Currency exchange rate dips have meant that grants don't go as far, as costs remain the same. Almost three quarters of their projects in FATA have been severely affected by difficulties in obtaining the necessary government permits to reach the areas where they work, resulting in some grants having to be returned to donors with no work undertaken. The groundbreaking community mental health services that KK was developing – and which we reported on in FROK Newsletters - had to be closed down earlier in 2017. Despite the funder being more than happy with their work, as were those using the services, all their efforts to secure continuing funding failed. Such is the harsh reality and we hope for an upturn; KK staff are certainly working flat out to achieve that.

Against this backdrop it is remarkable to report that KK has achieved its aim of building its own HQ – in part with the financial support of FROK - and the staff moved into it in February. With foresight, they have created a below ground car park and training suite which they hope to rent out in order to provide a regular income. As I explained last year, KK's old HQ building was in a residential area and KK had known for some time that it was being required to vacate. During the visit of Ian Sinclair and myself in late January, of which more below, we met with the builder who was so impressed by the work of KK and their project management of the building work that he made a substantial donation to them!

FROK's activities during 2016-2017

Since the last AGM, FROK's Executive Committee has had three face to face meetings (one on split sites) with email and phone contact in between. We are also in regular contact with KK staff which allows us to keep up to date with developments within the organisation itself as well as in the wider region.

We have had some exciting developments this year and some disappointments. Let's start with the latter. One of FROK's aims is to enable up and coming KK staff, especially women, to come on UK visits, something from which both they and FROK can benefit. Last year, we were able to bring Maryam Bibi but hugely disappointed that her colleague, Laila Shahnawaz was refused a visa. In the autumn of 2016, there was again an opportunity to bring someone over when the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York invited KK to send a representative to a two day international workshop that they were running. Nuzhat Ahmin was selected and we arranged a further 5 days of activities for her. As with Laila, Nuzhat's visa application was rejected. We have sought advice and will not give up on our attempts but the barriers are high.

Moving on to better news, KK invited FROK to send representatives to their 7th Strategic Planning Workshop in Islamabad in January of this year. Ian Sinclair and myself were delighted to accept and spent a week there, the first five days in the workshop and the latter part in Peshawar at offices and projects. It was very beneficial indeed. Working alongside the staff in the workshop enabled us to engage much more fully in their planning and to learn in far greater detail than is possible from here about their work itself. Meeting staff with whom we'd previously either had no direct contact or only through email showed us the depth of knowledge and skill within KK. It also affirmed even more than before the bravery with which they go about their work and the commitment they show. And, of course, their hospitality is second to none. It was also fascinating to meet visitors to the workshop who attended for part of the time, sometimes just for a few hours. These were senior people from the region yet KK did not try to 'put on a good impression' by amending their timetable or what was being discussed as, dare I say it, can happen here in the UK. It was very clear from *our* discussions with these visitors the high esteem in which KK is held. It was also remarkable that the

two workshop facilitators, Shahnaz Kapadia, CEO Mera Maan & Fellow at Harvard University and Professor Andrea Fleschenberg, DAAD Long Term Guest Professor, Qaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad - both well known, senior national figures - gave their time free as an indication of their respect for about KK's work and importance.

FROK's **membership** remains steady. At the end of the subscription year (31 March 2017), we had 106 members (numbers have gone up and down over the year and were slightly higher at the close than at the same time last year). As subscriptions and donations from members form a large part of our annual donation to KK, we are trying a proactive recruitment drive in 2017-18. **We are asking each member to recruit at least one new member, thus raising our guaranteed annual income.** I know how hard it can be to push family, friends and colleagues to sign up but KK needs our support now more than ever. Members and supporters also provide the backbone of our fundraising efforts and where they have contacts with local or national organisations, shops, trusts and faith-based groups, their advocacy for KK has sometimes led to quite substantial donations.

Our twice yearly **Newsletter** remains a key route for keeping in touch with our members, supporters, donors and those otherwise interested in KK's work both in the UK and overseas. We have also continued to see a rise in the number of 'likes' on our **facebook** page which now stands at more than 1300, still mainly from overseas. Penny Bainbridge, who looks after it, will be doing some themed posts over the next year linked to selected UN days.

In addition to matters reported above, the following summarises FROK's activities:

(i) Financial Support of KK

FROK's aim is to raise at least £12,000 each year for KK to have as an 'unrestricted' donation, i.e. not tied to a specific project unless we have undertaken a specific fundraising appeal. The benefit is that it enables KK to take up new opportunities and/or provide some protection against emergencies or unexpected shortfalls. In the current reporting year, we achieved our target of £12,000 comfortably plus an additional £6,214. Sadly, this was less than our previous year's total donation of £21,000+.

We also receive some donations specifically for the UWIC schools, amounting to £350 this year; again this was a decrease on last year.

Funds have been raised in various ways, some of which we report in the Newsletter. To pick out just two recent but quite different examples: members in York again ran a Clothes Swap event during International Women's Week which has now become a fixed event with women returning each year for their bargains and to get an update on KK's work; and, against a backdrop of our members' contacts with trusts and churches continuing to be a source of changing and sometimes substantial support, a member introduced us to a group of churches in Worcestershire who have agreed to provide support over three years. We also continue to put on stalls selling jewellery, home produce and micro credit goods and give talks to interested parties.

Our thanks go to all supporters and donors.

For members interested in any type of fundraising, we can supply collection boxes, posters, laminated photos and DVDs of KK's work and access to our Just Giving pages especially for anyone interested in undertaking sponsored

activities. There are also starter packs of second hand jewellery and simple instructions sheets on 'Tips for Fundraising' and a 'How to run a Clothes Swap event'.

(ii) Technical Support

FROK continues to offer technical support to KK staff as needed. As well as helping with, for example, improving the written English on some of KK's documents such as their Annual Report, some of our members have now embarked on more detailed assistance in developing report writing skills among Regional Managers and the production of case studies for donors. **If any members have interest in sharing their technical skills, for example finance systems, management information systems, PR and so on, please get in touch.**

(iii) Micro credit activities

Maureen Hussain is our lead person for liaising with KK over their micro-credit goods. Maureen and her husband Del were again able to visit KK this year while on a family visit to the region, enabling her to meet some of the craft makers and relevant KK staff. FROK is pleased to continue to support such economic activity even if only in a small way.

(iv) FROK Website

We reported last year that we were going to update our website and I'm sorry to report that this work has ground to a halt for now. Our supporter doing the work remains keen to help and the hold up has been with me not yet being able to carve out dedicated time for it. Apologies. It will be a priority for the coming year.

(v) Links with the Pakistani community living in the UK

We continue to build and maintain contacts with UK-based Pakistani individuals and organisations and look forward to extending these where possible.

In summary, I hope that you find this Annual Report informative and interesting and that it encourages you to continue your much needed support for KK, both financially and in solidarity with their aims. FROK Trustees always welcome your ideas, suggestions and offers of help as we strive to enhance our work of supporting Khwendo Kor. If you wish to get more involved in any way at all then please get in touch.

Marilyn Crawshaw

Chair

June 2017