

# FROK

**The UK Friends of Khwendo Kor**

**Registered charity no: 1095857**

## **Annual Report for 2019-2020**

Welcome to the Annual Report of the UK Friends of Khwendo Kor (FROK), covering activities undertaken by FROK's Trustees and members during the year from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. Let me start by acknowledging the highly unusual times in which we find ourselves at the time of sharing this Annual Report. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all our lives and KK is currently actively mobilising all its resources and experience to reach out to the marginalised and impoverished communities where it works. This includes the distribution of food and cash, awareness-raising, hygiene education and support, especially to women, in economic revival activities such as the production of face masks (and distributing masks to their volunteers) and the provision of agricultural inputs, poultry birds, livestock feeds and sewing machines. We will report further on this and the outcome of FROK's Covid-19 Appeal in our next newsletter.

FROK is a volunteer-run charity so we incur minimal expenses. We retain only £1000 each year for unexpected emergencies and transfer the rest of monies raised to Khwendo Kor (KK). KK is one of the oldest women-led and women-managed NGOs in this region and works with women and their families in the Newly Merged Districts (NMDs) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly the North West Frontier Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas). FROK promotes KK's four core values - commitment, accountability, mutual respect and integrity and has as its vision 'A compassionate society where women live with dignity and self reliance'. We are grateful for all contributions, financial or in other ways, received during this reporting year from members, donors or other supporters.

KK was founded in 1993 by Maryam Bibi together with a small group of female friends; Maryam remains its Chief Executive. KK is a participatory development initiative which focuses on the active involvement of communities, especially women and children, in its key areas of Education, Civil and Political Rights, Health, Combating Gender Based Violence, Social Cohesion and Livelihoods Improvement. Using its well respected 'Viable Village' approach, KK works with communities not as passive recipients but as active

partners. Villages thus help define both the “change” that is needed and the means for bringing it about by owning and taking a lead in their own development. KK focuses in particular on areas where services are either non-existent or dysfunctional and where women and the poor are marginalised. KK also provides humanitarian responses where needed. You can read more about KK’s work on the FROK website ([www.frok.org.uk](http://www.frok.org.uk)) and on that of Khwendo Kor ([www.khwendokor.org](http://www.khwendokor.org)).

As we reported last year, the space for civil society is shrinking in many parts of the world, including Pakistan. KK’s focus on women’s rights and social cohesion faces an increasingly difficult environment, even with its highly credible reputation both nationally and internationally.

In addition, Pakistan itself has been working hard on countering the findings of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) - an international anti-money laundering watchdog – which had placed Pakistan on its ‘grey list’. As part of this, the government introduced a new regulatory framework for NGOs and INGOs. This has involved a complex and lengthy process of implementation which is still ongoing. Many NGOs and INGOs are struggling to meet all the requirements – indeed many have closed - and hence funds and projects have sometimes been delayed or even lost.

KK has been caught up in this. As we reported last year, KK was among the few NGOs early in the process with whom the government’s Economic Affairs Division (EAD) signed the necessary Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), in October 2017. Such MOUs are now a basic requirement for the implementation of foreign-funded projects. Despite this, KK still had to close down some of its projects because of delays or difficulties in getting No Objection Certificates (NOCs) to work in certain parts of the region. Then, unexpectedly, KK’s MoU was withdrawn in January 2019 because two of its major projects were funded by international organisations - Development In Literacy (DIL) and Heinrich Boll Stiftung (HBF) - that had not got the required MOUs in place. KK took immediate action: it ceased its partnership with both organisations, informed the authorities of ways in which it sought to comply with government instructions, and applied for restoration of its MoU. The restoration process was in process for the whole of the period covered by this Report, i.e. up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. Some parts of its service were not affected and able to continue as normal. We are pleased to report that KK has recently been informed that its application for an MOU has been accepted; the full process will take at least 4-6 months before a final decision is reached. In the meanwhile, KK can start implementation of both local and foreign funded projects, subject to any required NOCs being in place.

In the meantime, KK had been badly affected. Around 100 staff had to be laid off while the remaining staff agreed to a pay cut, a significant matter given that as an indigenous organisation KK’s salary levels

are already quite low. Some projects had to be closed or not started. Forty community-based schools were closed as were KK's regional offices, some of which now have to operate out of staff's homes. More than 3,000 girls have had their education affected. Throughout this year, KK's senior management has had to focus considerable time and energy on dealing with the situation as well as overseeing KK's ongoing services. They were required to provide detailed information and documents time and again, in addition to being in regular contact with government officials at different levels, often having to travel to Islamabad (a two hour journey) at short notice to do so. As you will appreciate, these are sensitive and demanding tasks and ones which require skilled handling. Given the uncertain financial situation, two of the senior management team, Laila Shahnawaz and Subhan Ali, reluctantly decided to take up job offers elsewhere towards the end of the year but continue to offer their full support to KK.

It is heartening to report that some of the staff who had been laid off have continued to volunteer for KK (in some cases, sadly, because they have been unable to find paid work). Many of the communities and individuals with whom it works have also continued to do what they can to keep services and projects going. As readers will be aware, KK has received much recognition from various stakeholders over the years, both nationally and internationally. It is therefore of note that, during this difficult period, they have continued to be approached as 'favoured' partners for provisional schemes and some donors have said that they prefer to wait for KK to get their registration restored than to look elsewhere.

We are pleased to report that KK's Chief Officer, Maryam Bibi, tells us that KK has been able to function sufficiently well even during such a challenging year that it will be ready to pick up to their usual levels of activity and beyond with even more vigour as soon as they are allowed. She and the Board of KK are therefore confident that projects can be implemented quickly once clearance and funds come through. It is important to stress that KK itself has done nothing wrong to cause these delays and difficulties, but they are instead the result of changing government policies, especially regarding security and the role of NGOs. KK's reputation for effective work and moral probity continues to be strong as does their record in engaging 'hard to reach' communities and putting women and children at the heart of their interventions. This makes them especially well placed to play an important role in both Covid-19 related responses and the ongoing integration of KP and FATA.

### **FROK's activities during 2019-2020**

Since the last AGM, FROK's **Trustees** have had three meetings, supplemented by email and phone contact in between. We have continued to use Skype for two of our meetings in order to keep down costs and time spent travelling and will now switch to Zoom. In response to the Covid-19 lockdown and

having considered advice for charities, the Trustees reluctantly decided that the **AGM** planned for 13<sup>th</sup> June could not go ahead though the Trustees. All the Trustees and Officers are willing to serve another year so we are proceeding on that basis. We had a very interesting speaker lined up for the AGM and she has agreed to speak at a **national autumn meeting** if we can organise that safely.

We also maintain regular **contact with KK staff** by email, phone, whatsapp and skype to keep up to date with developments within the organisation itself as well as in the wider region.

FROK's **membership** remains remarkably steady. At 31st March 2020, we had 109 members. Members' subscriptions, donations and fundraising efforts form a substantial part of our annual donation to KK.

Our twice yearly **Newsletter remains a** key contact with members, supporters, donors and other interested parties in the UK and overseas. Our **Facebook** page remains popular and it now has more than 1500 'likes'. The proportion who live in Pakistan has risen from 2/3rds last year to 80% now, with a fifth of the 'likes' living in Peshawar (they are also counted in the 80%). The gender and age distribution is similar to last year with around half being aged between 26 and 35 and 80% male - a somewhat different demographic to that of our membership so we try to 'pitch' our 'posts' accordingly.

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

**(i) Financial Support of KK**

FROK aims to raise a minimum of £12,000 each year as an 'unrestricted' donation to KK, i.e. not tied to specific projects unless as part of a specific fundraising appeal. Unrestricted donations enable KK to take up new opportunities and/or have some protection against emergencies or unexpected shortfalls.

In June 2019 we sent a total of £25600 which was made up as follows: £12,000 to KK's core costs; an additional grant of £10,957; £600 for UWIC schools; and £2,043 from the Breslaff Centre.

Funds continue to be raised in various ways, many of which we report in our Newsletters. These include larger donations from individual members and collective fundraising efforts. We have been fortunate this year to have, as well as from the Breslaff Centre, donations from Oxford Quakers, Pinner Parish Church Council, and St Columba's United Reform Church Oxford.

Funds are also raised through stalls selling second hand jewellery (we can provide starter packs), home produce and micro credit goods and giving talks to interested parties. **If you are interested in**

**fundraising**, we can supply collection boxes, posters, laminated photos and DVDs of KK's work. We also have a Just Giving page for one-off or regular donations or anyone undertaking sponsored activities. Simple instructions sheets on 'Tips for Fundraising' and 'How to run a Clothes Swap event' are available on our website or in hard copy.

**(ii) Technical Support**

FROK members offer regular technical support to KK staff. This includes help with written English on KK's documents (such as their Annual Report) and assistance with funding proposals or report writing. **If any members have technical skills they would like to share, please get in touch.**

**(iii) Micro credit activities**

Maureen Hussain is our lead person for liaising with KK over their micro-credit goods. Sadly the coronavirus pandemic meant that she and her husband Del were unable to visit their family in the region this year and meet KK staff. However FROK is pleased to continue to support such economic activity albeit in a small way and still has some goods available from Maureen.

**(iv) FROK Website**

Although our website is deliberately low maintenance (to match our available resources) and we do not run an accompanying twitter feed, it does have regular visitors. In fact we were surprised at just how many visitors it attracts when one of our Trustees recently reported on its use. Most of this traffic is from the UK. Thanks also to FROK member, Kath Cox, for her continuing help with looking after the website. Do let us have any suggestions for further improvement.

**(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**, we hope that you enjoy reading this Annual Report and that it encourages you to continue your much needed support for KK, both financially and in solidarity with its 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 2020