

Since our last News Update in July, the Tea Gardens have been through difficult times. The monsoon season brought heavy rain which made travel difficult for our team of girls to get to more remote Tea Gardens and to transport needy patients to the BNSB hospital. The further they operate away from Moulvibazar town itself the more dangerous it becomes for the girls, so in some cases they are working together in the same Tea Garden. The energy crisis affects Bangladesh in the same way as we are suffering in the UK, with rapidly rising fuel costs making travel and transport more expensive.

However we are having lots of success stories.

Here are two of them:



Pronob

Pronob is aged 6 – a very important age to catch a child for visual and educational development. When Sumi found him in school he had conjunctivitis and a refractive error. Both conditions were making school life difficult and his vision would have deteriorated even further. His conjunctivitis was treated with antibiotics from BNSB eye hospital where he was also refracted. He now wears his glasses with pride. His education has been secured and he won't be dropping out of school by the young age of 8 due to a reduction in vision. 80% of a child's mental and physical development is through good vision. Pronob's life has been transformed by a £10 pair of glasses!

Fayjur

Fayjur Rahman, a 6 year old boy with 5 siblings lives in extremely poor conditions in Sultanpur village. Fayjur's father works as a day labourer and could not afford the cost of surgery to remove cataract from his left eye. The operation was carried out on 23rd August by surgeons at the BNSB hospital, fully funded by VfB, and during post operative follow-up Fayjur's parents expressed their feelings, saying; "Without the help of Vision for Bangladesh and BNSB there would have been no other alternative for our son than to accept the curse of inevitable blindness and life with despair and hopelessness. Now we are very happy because our son will see properly"



Since our last update, Seema has married her fiancé, Paulas (pronounced Polash!), from the Kalighat Tea Garden. We congratulate them and pray for their future happiness, but also remember Seema who continues to be troubled by various health issues. Both Seema and Paulas attend Ivan's church in Kalighat on special occasions.

Rimly with the patients treated on 13th September.



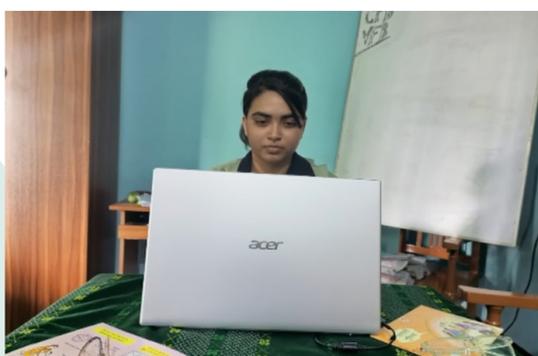
July and August are relatively quiet months in Bangladesh with no school and therefore no school eye screening camps. This year many tea pickers have been on strike during the summer demanding higher wages. Thankfully a pay deal has been reached with workers settling for an increase from 120BdT (£1.05) to 170BdT (£1.55) per day.

Towards the end of September a primary school eye screening camp was held in Amrailhara Tea Garden. 133 children had their eyes tested and 13 were issued with glasses. Although the number may be small, the outcome is potentially life changing for those children. It is anticipated that momentum will pick up through to the end of the year with 2 adult camps and 3 further school camps being planned for October, and more for November.

Apart from the camps, Rimly, Seema and Sumi continue their home visits, finding an endless stream of children needing hospital assessment and treatment. In September alone, 80 children were taken to BNSB hospital along with 18 adults.

Moom working hard to improve many lives

We are so thankful for Moom who manages the programme on our behalf. She keeps us fully updated with stories and pictures of the children we have helped and of the team members doing their work of eye testing children and educating mums in matters of hygiene, sanitation and nutrition. All of the girls are studying English which is helping us to keep directly in touch with them through Whatsapp as well as telephone.



As always, we are so grateful for all your prayerful and financial support. In these difficult times we seek to use available funds as wisely as possible. To keep you informed, the budgeted expenditure for all aspects of our work up to the end of June 2023 (the financial year at BNSB) is £49,365. The shortfall currently stands at £23,252. We are constantly monitoring the expenditure to ensure that we always have sufficient funds to support the team of girls and the children they find needing treatment. This is our highest priority, followed by the school eye screening camps. Although they are the most exciting in terms of numbers of patients treated, the adult camps are only sanctioned if funds allow.

In the past 3 months:

2293
Childrens eyes surveyed in their homes.

176
Children and
40
adults taken to BNSB for assessment and treatment

629
Mothers received health, sanitation and nutrition education.

On behalf of the Tea Garden people - thank you for every prayer and every pound. We cannot do this without your continued help.