

Project Tea Garden

Project Tea Garden is now into its second year and in 2022 it is the hope of the Trustees, together with the generosity of our many loyal supporters, that the lives of many more impoverished people will receive life changing eyesight. In spite of Covid restrictions the work has developed in 2021 and we have established a firm footing on which to extend the work in the future.



Photo Above:
Pastor Ivan Samadder.

Within the Tea Gardens around Moulvibazar in north west Bangladesh are thousands of marginalised tea pickers who have little or no access to basic health care. Vision for Bangladesh is working through a Christian pastor, Ivan Samadder, to gain access to the gated Tea Garden communities and to provide the following benefits:

- Giving free access to eye assessments
- Funding eyesight saving surgery and glasses
- Educating illiterate people in basic health care, nutrition and sanitation
- Providing medicine and supplements to malnourished people
- Showing compassion to a largely ignored people group

Photo Below:
People awaiting eye screening in one of the tea gardens.



It is hoped that once every month fully qualified staff from the BNSB eye hospital in Moulvibazar will travel to a specified tea garden, arranged by Ivan and his team, and provide eye assessments for anyone who is willing to attend. On average in the past few months almost 250 adults come to each Eye Camp. Glasses and medicine will be given to anyone benefiting from them, and those with cataracts are transported the same evening to the BNSB hospital where they will receive surgery. Staying overnight and receiving breakfast the next morning,

their eyes are checked before being transported back to their homes. Approximately 100 pairs of glasses are issued and 200 receive medication for various eye conditions whilst 50 patients are given cataract surgery. The whole cost from advertising the camp using a loud hailer (since most of the workers are illiterate), to transport for hospital staff, glasses, medicines, transport of patients to Moulvibazar, and the cataract surgery is funded by Vision for Bangladesh, at a cost of approximately £3,000 per camp.



Photo Above:
Issuing Glasses.



Photo Above:
Happy patients after surgery.



Sumi and Seema are also relatively new to Ivan's team, both having been raised in a Tea Garden but having received a basic education. They have now been given further training in nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, but understanding the culture and speaking the unique tea garden dialect they are equipped to instruct Mums in these matters which in turn raises the health of the family and helps to prevent long term problems of blindness. They are also able to provide necessary vitamin and iron supplements funded by Vision for Bangladesh. Although not measurable in terms of benefit to individuals, the education we trust will have long term benefit to whole communities.

A new member of the team is Rimly who has been trained by the BNSB hospital to examine children's eyes and to find those requiring surgery or other treatment. Malnourishment is a major cause of blindness and whilst a child remains undiagnosed with cataracts within the first 5 years of life he or she could be condemned to a lifetime of blindness. This is preventable, so Rimly systematically works through a tea garden, knocking on doors and speaking to new Mums' with young children, looking into their eyes to see early signs of cataract. When she finds a child needing treatment she arranges transport and travels with the children and their Mums to the hospital where they receive the necessary surgery. All of these costs including Rimly's wages and expenses are paid for by Vision for Bangladesh which delivers life changing treatment to 5 children each month.

Photo Above:
Rimly advising young mother.

Photo Below:
Sumi, Rimly and Seema



Regrettably, right at the end of 2021 Rana resigned as Ivan's assistant. He had only been a member of the team since September and was particularly helpful as he was able to travel greater distances by motorbike and work longer hours for safety reasons than the female team members. He was able to check up on all patients after treatment to ensure their long term progress and was a great help to Ivan in organising the eye camps.

He had been in a unique position to show compassion and to explain the reason why Vision for Bangladesh is concerned for the physical and spiritual welfare of the impoverished and largely forgotten people in the Tea Gardens, and to speak to them about the love of Jesus towards them. We wish Rana well and trust that Ivan will be able to find a new assistant quickly.

In 2021:

4046

Childrens Eye Tests

847

Adults Attended Eye Camp

209

Sight Saving Surgeries

Vision for Bangladesh is indebted to BNSB eye hospital for the skill and interest the management and staff have shown in supporting Project Tea Garden and working in harmony with Ivan and his team to give necessary training, allowing us to provide otherwise unaffordable eye treatments to the poorest people in the Sylhet region of Bangladesh.



Above Photo:
Ivan and the hospital team.

In 2021, 4046 children had their eyes tested, 847 adults attended 7 eye camps, 125 children received treatment at BNSB hospital, 304 adults went to the hospital and 209 received sight saving surgery; 100 pregnant mothers, 222 maternal mothers, 68 malnourished mothers and 35 newly married couples received health education and 154 supplements were provided as appropriate. In the last 6 months, 418 pairs of glasses were provided, excluding those having cataract surgery.

Without the prayers and finance given by our many supporters none of this would have been possible. In 2022 we hope to increase the number of eye camps to 10 and to re-start the school eye screening programme which has been on hold throughout 2021 as a result of Covid-19. We trust that our readers will also grasp our Vision for Bangladesh as we seek to eliminate avoidable blindness throughout the Tea Gardens in Jesus' name.



Above Photo:
Dhiman and his new glasses.

Story of Dhiman

Dhiman is 7 years old and lives in Bormachara Tea Garden. His mother is a tea picker whilst his father has no permanent work. At the age of 6 Dhiman was accidentally hit in his left eye but the injury was ignored at the time by the family. Unfortunately the injury created a cataract which grew steadily worse until he became totally blind in that eye.

Recently Dhiman was found by one of our Health Care Workers and taken to BNSB hospital for assessment. On examination it was found to be too late to operate on his left eye and even his right eye had a refractive error so his vision was blurred. The hospital however gave Dhiman some eye drops and glasses which restored good vision to his right eye.

The story of Dhiman demonstrates illiteracy and ignorance on the part of the parents concerning basic healthcare and because of their extreme poverty Dhiman only has two meals a day consisting of rice, potatoes and bread. They have no access to free modern healthcare nor can they afford a healthier diet.

Dhiman has now been given the ability to learn, to read and to move forward with his life. His mother showed her joy with tears as she thanked the charity for its help. She said it was like a ray of light coming into the family.

The story of Selina

Selina is 50 years old and lives in Kalighat Tea Garden. She has 5 children whom she brought up alone after her husband left, and she has no permanent job. She is a member of Ivan's church and his children bring a little money into the home in order to support her, but nothing in Selina's life is permanent or secure. Their diet is inadequate consisting of rice, potato and bread so cataracts can develop very quickly.

Selina was blind in her right eye due to cataract and she was finding life very difficult with only one eye, which due to her age did not have good vision either. Selina heard about the Vision for Bangladesh eye camp held recently in Kalighat Tea Garden and after examination was sent to BNSB Hospital for surgery. The operation was successful in removing the cataract and now she has good vision in her right eye and a new lease of life.

Selina's whole family are so grateful for her operation as she can again look after the family with the cooking, the cleaning and a little outside work.

Blindness affects the whole family and there are many more women like Selina who due to ignorance and extreme poverty are unable to access treatment.



Above Photo:
Selina and her family.

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