

Activity Report 2012-13

Educational Programmes: The Foundation. Loomba Foundation beneficiaries – who are selected without regard to race, religion or gender – receive a scholarship for a complete education, with guaranteed funds for a period of five years. Today many Loomba Foundation scholars have completed their education and have moved on to skilled employment or further education. To date, The Foundation has educated over 9000 children of poor widows and supported over 38,000 family members in their households in India. More than 2,000 children are currently being educated by the Foundation in 15 states in India. All donations received for the education of these children are applied wholly to the cost of their education.

Empowerment Projects: In 2012, the Loomba Foundation launched a new project to empower 10,000 impoverished widows in India, each of them will receive a sewing machine and training to make garments. They can earn money, be independent, educate their children, support their family members and lead a life of dignity.

The impact of this project would be that not only 10,000 widows will be economically empowered but also they will educate about 30,000 children assuming that they have three children on average and they will also support 60,000 their family members assuming there are around six family members in each household. Therefore, 100,000 people stand to benefit from this project.

The Loomba Foundation has supported a community-based project for HIV orphans in South Africa in partnership with Virgin Unite, a charity of Sir Richard Branson. We have empowered young widows in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Syria, Kenya and Uganda in association with HRH Prince's charity, Youth Business International. We have also set up an agricultural project to empower 300 genocide widows in Rwanda in partnership with OXFAM (UK)

Cherie Blair CBE QC, who became the first Patron of the Foundation in 1998, agreed to become the President and officially inaugurated Loomba House in London on 8 September 2004. Over the years, Cherie has continued to travel to various countries to attend the Foundation's events in order to raise awareness of the plight of widows and their children around the world.

Sir Richard Branson agreed to become Patron-in-Chief in 2004. He has attended the Foundation's fundraising events in India and South Africa. He has also supported the Foundation by making an appeal on BBC Radio 4 in 2004 and he raised over £500,000 through three 'Change for Children' appeals on the Virgin Atlantic flights worldwide.

International Widows Day – Flagship: The Loomba Foundation launched International Widows Day, which takes place each year on 23 June to highlight the plight of widows and their children all over the world and to provide a focus for effective action. The date of 23 June was chosen because it was on this day that Raj's mother, Shrimati Pushpa Wati Loomba, the inspiration for the Foundation, became a widow.

This flagship of the Foundation was announced at the House of Lords in the UK on 26 May 2005, which was followed by launches in India on 7 September 2005 and the USA on 21 October 2005, respectively. The US launch was attended by Kofi Annan.

The Loomba Foundation is proud that through its tireless campaign over next five years, the **United Nations declared 23rd June as International Widows Day at the 65th General Assembly in 2010**. The first UN recognised International Widows day was marked on 23rd June 2011 by the United Nations at its Head Quarters in New York and chaired by Madame Ban Soon. The second UN recognised International Widows Day was marked on 23rd June 2012 at No 10 Downing Street in London by the Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg MP and his wife Ms Miriam Durantez Gonzalez.

2012: The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations recommended the Loomba Foundation for Special Consultative Status in 2011 and granted it in 2012. "Special Consultative Status" is conferred upon those non-governmental organizations that demonstrate a special competence in a select field of concern. This designation will allow the Foundation to send official representatives to participate in events and conferences at the United Nations.

Awareness and Fundraising events during 2012

The Loomba Foundation continued to raise awareness of the plight of widows around the world and the much needed funds for the Foundation's educational and empowerment projects by organising fund-raising events:

23 June 2012, London: The Loomba Foundation marked the second UN recognised International Widows Day in London by hosting three events and launched a new project to empower 10,000 impoverished widows in India, who will each receive a sew machine and training to make garments.

10 Downing Street Reception: The Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg MP and his wife Mrs. Miriam Gonzalez Durantez, hosted a reception at 10 Downing Street to observe the second UN recognized International Widows Day and in support of the Loomba Foundation, which was attended by Shrimati Rajashree Birla as Chief Guest from India.

An exhibition of 17 oil and acrylic paintings on the themes of 'South Asia', 'Africa' and 'Conflict' painted by Reeta Sarkar, a Trustee of the Loomba Foundation, were displayed at Downing Street to highlight the plight of widows.

At the reception, the Loomba Foundation recognised the support of several donors who were presented Mementos by the Deputy Prime Minister. The recipients included Mrs. Rajashree Birla, Mr. Rahul Sharma and Trustees Mrs. Aruna Oswal, Mr. Balbir Singh Kakar and Harjiv Singh, who had travelled from India to attend the International Widows Day events in London. Rahul Sharma of Micromax Mobile pledged to support the Loomba Foundation by organising a TV telethon to raise money for the education of children of poor widows in India.

London Bridge Celebrity Walk with Goats: The Downing Street Reception was preceded by a Celebrity Walk on London Bridge, which was organised by the Loomba foundation to raise awareness of the plight of widows and their children around the world. A herd of 20 goats was led by the Founder and Chairman Trustee of the Loomba Foundation Lord Raj Loomba, who was followed by 20 prominent women including the President of the Loomba Foundation, Cherie Blair, a renowned singer and TV personality, Cilla Black and a famous celebrity, Nancy Del'Olio.

Lord Loomba exercised an ancient privilege as a Freeman of the City of London, which allowed him to walk livestock over the bridge. The goat is a lifeline for many widows in South Asia and across Africa who get milk and use them for carrying water and firewood from faraway places to their homes.

Fundraising banquet at the Whitehall Banqueting House: The day of recognition concluded with a Fundraising Banquet at the Banqueting House in Whitehall. Over 300 high profile guests attended the

Banquet, including His Excellency Shri Jaimini Bhagwati, High Commissioner for India and the Deputy Prime Minister along with his wife.

23 June 2012, New York: The Loomba Foundation commemorated the Second Annual UN-Recognized International Widows' Day in New York City's Central Park. Loomba Foundation banners

were displayed on Central Park's classic horse carriages throughout the day in order to raise awareness for the struggles of widows, as well as their significant contributions to societies worldwide. Several New Yorkers were interviewed and many of them relayed their own personal stories of those they have known who were widowed. Many New Yorkers were also learning about the struggles that widows face worldwide for the first time as they viewed the banners in the park. The event marked an important milestone for International Widows' Day by bringing the issue to the forefront in both the New York community and the United States in addition to the poignant commemoration of the day in London.

23 June 2012, Hyderabad in India: The Loomba Foundation launched an empowerment project for disadvantaged widows in Andhra Pradesh, which is supported by the Foundation's Trustee, Shamin Lalji and her husband, Shiraz Lalji.

As part of this empowerment programme a ceremony was held on Saturday at the Jubilee Hall in Hyderabad to celebrate the distribution of 25 sewing machines and training courses to widows from Andhra Pradesh. 100 scholarship cheques were also presented to the children of poor widows from the region. The event was attended by H.E. Shri E.S.L. Narasimhan (Hon'ble Governor of Andhra Pradesh) and Shri M. Shashidhar Reddy (Hon'ble Vice Chairman, NDMA, New Delhi), along with beneficiary widows and their children.

July 2012, Special Consultative Status: The Loomba Foundation was granted Special Consultative Status by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations during the Council's July 2012 Substantive Session. This designation will allow the Foundation to send official representatives to participate in events and conferences at the United Nations.

“Special Consultative Status” is conferred upon those non-governmental organizations that demonstrate a special competence in a select field of concern. No country or organisation other than the Loomba Foundation had identified or addressed the plight of more than 245 million widows and 500 million children around the world.

20 November 2012, Bangalore in India: Forbes India awarded Lord Loomba CBE in the Distinguished Non-Resident Indian Philanthropist Category of the Prestigious Inaugural Forbes India Philanthropy Awards 2012

Forbes India instituted the Philanthropy Awards to recognize the efforts of individuals who have given time, money, skill and expertise to solve some of the most pressing societal issues, to create model institutions and to inspire others.

Lord Loomba was nominated for his efforts in promoting the need for educating the children of poor widows in India and establishing June 23 as International Widows Day by the United Nations.

22 November 2012, London: The dinner was attended by 400 people, including a number of distinguished guests. The Loomba Foundation signed a partnership agreement with UN Women for research, policy making and implementation of those policies in India, Malawi and Guatemala.

President of the Loomba Foundation, Mrs Cherie Blair, outlined a series of events to take place in June 2013 to mark the 3rd UN recognised International Widows Day. She said that a charity fun run

and family day out in Hyde park on 23rd June and an international conference at the House of Lords will take place on 24th June, in association with UN Women.

Lord Archer conducted a charity auction at the dinner, which raised funds for the sewing machines project for 10,000 widows that was launched on International Widows Day 2012.

For a cost of just £50, a widow is given a sewing machine and the necessary training to make garments. This project will give them independence, and the opportunity to make clothes, which they can sell to friends and their community. They can become self-reliant, educate their children, and feed and clothe their families.

20 March 2013, Mumbai Charity Dinner: The Loomba Foundation, in association with the Giving back Foundation, organised a charity dinner at the Trident BKC Hotel in Mumbai in India to raise funds for improving the lot of widows and their children.

The dinner was attended by the Foundation's President, Mrs. Cherie Blair, Meera Gandhi, Founder and Chair Person of the Giving back Foundation and the Honourable Union Minister of Law and Justice Dr. Ashwani Kumar as Chief Guest.

Lord Raj Loomba CBE, Founder and Chairman Trustee of the Loomba Foundation, called upon the government of India to set up "Widows Help Centres" through the Ministry of Panchayat Raj. Over 70% of the population lives in rural areas in India. At present, widows who are poor and uneducated do not know who to turn to when they are ill-treated by their families or communities.

Mrs. Blair endorsed Lord Loomba's call and said "in case they are abused physically, psychologically, raped, or robbed of their possessions, wealth and inheritance they should be able to reach out for support and help to a bona fide local authority that has the powers to help them and provide justice".

Dr. Ashwani Kumar, who is an Oxford alumnus himself, acknowledged the request of Lord Loomba CBE and promised in his speech that he would strongly recommend the Foundation's request for setting up Widow Help Centres, to the government of India and will definitely provide the legal framework to activate these centres.

The Minister admitted, "The government of India has many schemes for women in this country, some of them also pertain to widows, but I'm afraid they're not enough".

The Loomba Foundation raised a substantial amount of Rs.65 lacs net, which included Rs.50 lacs for the donation of 9 students, who will each study Engineering course for 4 years at Gyan Ganga Institute of Technology and Management, Bhopal, offered by Miny Raj Modi.