

Activity Report 2013-14

During the year, 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 in India and the UK. The Foundation educated 1798 children of poor widows in 13 states.

In addition, the Loomba Foundation started the sewing Machine projects in Bihar, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh and Pondicherry. The sewing machine project will have a ten-fold impact, as it will not only empower the widow it will also enable her to educate all her children and support the family members.

6th April 2013 - Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh, India

The Loomba Foundation, in association with District Collector of Srikakulam in the State of Andhra Pradesh in India, launched a project to empower widows through a sewing machine project. The project is supported by our Trustee, Mrs Shamin Lalji and her husband, Mr Shiraz Lalji. Through this project we will set up training centers to provide 2-3 months training to widows to learn how to make garments. Once the training is completed and the widows have received certificates upon completion of their training, they will each be given a sewing machine.

The Union Minister of State for Communication and Information Technology, Dr. Kruparani Killy, along with Loomba Foundation Trustees, Lady Veena Loomba and Mrs. Shamin Lalji, visited the Community Centre in Srikakulam where the training will be given to widows. Many beneficiaries were present to hear the District Collector explain how the project would work, and then five widows spoke of how this project would help them. Mrs Lalji, whose donation to the Loomba Foundation had made this project possible, was delighted to hear from the beneficiaries, and very pleased to have been able to make this contribution.

After visiting the training centre the whole team moved to the Grand Hotel where the Launch function was held. Dr. Killy, Lady Veena Loomba and Mrs. Lalji were welcomed by the ladies and the hall was packed to its full capacity. All three lit the ceremonial lamp, then a group of widows led prayers. The District Collector explained the project in detail to the audience, and thanked the Loomba Foundation and Mrs Lalji for their contribution.

Lady Veena Loomba and Mrs Shamin Lalji both spoke at the event, followed by the Chief Guest, Dr. Kruparani Killy, who fully endorsed the benefits of the scheme. She emphasized that the beneficiaries stand to get the maximum benefit out of it, as they will become self-reliant, educate their children, and feed and clothe their families. Most importantly it will give them dignity, and allow them to become contributors to society.

30th May 2013: The Loomba Foundation donated 100 sewing machines to Sarvan, an NGO, based in Puducherry (formerly known as Pondicherry). Sarvan has agreed to provide training to 100 widows, who will be able to find jobs and support their families.

International Widows Day - June, 2013: The Loomba Foundation marked International Widows Day 2013 by organising two events in London, as follows:

23rd June, 2013: Hyde Park – 5 km run/walk: The International Widows Day 5 km Charity Run/Walk took place in London's famous Hyde Park on Sunday, 23rd June, 2013. Over 500 people took part in the walk, who came from different parts of England, including Midlands and North of the country. Team Asian Voice, also participated in the first Loomba 5K Charity Run/Walk.

Founder and Chairman Trustee, Lord Loomba CBE and Mrs Cherie Blair CBE, who has supported the charity as its President for over 15 years, were at the start line to launch the runners and handout medals as they reached the finish. Other VIP's included Dr Karan Singh, Member of the Rajya Sabha (Upper House in the Indian Parliament) and the Bollywood celebrity, Mr Bappi Lahiri, who composed and sang an emotional song "Justice for Widows" to entertain

the runners and other attendees.

Mr. Raj Somaiya, chairman of a catering company provided complimentary hot and cold snacks and drinks to everyone who participated in the 5K Run/Walk.

24th June, 2013: House of Lords – IWD Conference

International Widows Day Conference was held at the House of Lords. It was attended by Mrs. Lakshmi Puri, Acting Head of the UN Women, human rights activist, Bianca Jagger, Dr Karan Singh Member of the Rajya Sabha (Upper House in the Indian Parliament), Baroness Northover, DFID Spokesperson in the House of Lords and Lord Loomba CBE

A panel discussion took place, which was moderated by Sangita Myska, BBC News Correspondent and those who participated were:

- Barbara Want, Freelance Journalist and Widow
- Lady Harding, Patron, The Loomba Foundation
- Meera Gandhi, CEO and Founder, The Giving Back Foundation
- Lord Dholakia PC OBE DL, Trustee of the loomba Foundation
- Balbir Singh Kakar, Trustee, The Loomba Foundation, India
- Harjiv Singh, Trustee, The Loomba Foundation, India & USA

UN Women projects in India, Malawi & Guatemala, were also discussed, which were funded by the Loomba Foundation. The conference was followed by lunch in the River Room, by kind permission of the Lord Speaker, Rt Hon. Baroness D'Souza. The food was supplied with the compliments of Mr. Raj Somaiya, chairman of Payal.

UN Women, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women appointed Lord Loomba as the first founding member of the Circle of Women's Rights Champions. The citation reads: 'You have been a champion for widows for many years, highlighting their plight, calling for safeguarding their rights and enabling direct assistance through your Foundation. UN Women itself feels privileged to be able to reach out to widows in India, Malawi and Guatemala and improve their lives with your support. To count you as the first Women's Rights Champion would set the high standard of the membership we hope to attract.'

International Widows Day was also observed in many other countries in South Asia and Africa.

19th October, 2013: The UN accredited, the Loomba Foundation, hosted its annual fundraising banquet at the London's prestigious Landmark Guildhall, which was attended by over 400 guests, including senior politicians, diplomats and business leaders.

Acting High Commissioner for India, His Excellency Dr. Virander Paul, Chief Guest and Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg MP, Guest of Honour were welcomed at the Guildhall by the Foundation's President Mrs. Cherie Blair CBE QC, Trustee Lord Dholakia PC OBE DL and Lord Loomba CBE, Founder and Chairman Trustee of the Loomba Foundation.

Dr. Virander Paul said, "the plight of widows is a fact of life. We cannot and should not ignore it. They need our support. It is a global challenge and the whole society has to come together - Government, international institutions, business leaders and social activists in tackling this issue."

He added "Government of India is extremely sensitive to the issue and trying to tackle it. A lot has been done and more needs to be done for erasing the stigma attached to widowhood and help them economically,"

Speaking on the occasion, British Deputy Prime Minister RT. Hon. Nick Clegg MP and Patron of the Loomba Foundation, said the Foundation has been doing a "superb work" in trying to provide solace to widows who have been facing "terrible trauma and discrimination". Describing Lord Loomba's efforts as "heroic", Clegg said, "It is a wonderful effort and he has dedicated so much of his life for this cause".

President of the Loomba Foundation, Cherie Blair CBE, said over 245 million widows and their 500 million children around the world suffer social injustice in silence. Over 115 million widows are struggling to survive

The Foundation raised over £150,000 through auction and sale of tables and tickets at the event. This amount will enable the Loomba Foundation to empower 3000 impoverished widows in India, who each will receive a sewing machine and training to make garments. The Foundation raised sufficient funds for 7,000 widows during last year, who will now be able to complete its project for economic empowerment of 10,000 widows, which was launched by the charity in 2012.

29th October, 2013: The Loomba Foundation was pleased that the Rt. Hon. Danny Alexander MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, UK, visited training centre to see Widows empowerment project in Patna. He was accompanied by the British High Commissioner, Sir James Bevan KCMG. Mr Alexander was happy to meet some of the widows and learn more about the work of the Loomba Foundation.

10th March, 2014: Lions Clubs International

A reception was held in Attlee Room at the House of Lords in honour of International President of Lions Clubs International, Lion Barry Palmer, who announced that the Lions Clubs International Foundation will become a partner with the Loomba Foundation. He also announced that the Lions Club Foundation will donate 2000 sewing machines to the loomba Foundation, through a matching grant scheme,

The reception was hosted by Lion Max Mongia, who is a big supporter of the Loomba Foundation.

Educational Programmes:

To date, The Foundation has educated over 9200 children of poor widows and supported over 55,000 family members in their households in India.

The Loomba Foundation beneficiaries – who are selected without regard to race, religion or gender – receive a monthly scholarship of INR 500.00 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.

During the year, the Loomba Foundation educated 1798 students in 13 states in India.

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.

During the year, The Loomba Foundation started sewing machine projects in Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh in association with District Collector of Srikakulam, Delhi in association with Lions Club and Union State of Puducherry in association with Sarvam.