



# THE LOOMBA TRUST

## ACTIVITY REPORT

April 2009 to March 2010

### A Challenging but Significant Year for The Loomba Trust

During the year the Trust continued to organise fundraising events in the UK, USA, India and Africa. The Trust also continued with its campaign for the recognition of International Widows Day by the United Nations, which has gained strength and support from many world leaders.

We are grateful to our Patrons, Trustees, Advisors, Partners and many supporters for their continued support of our work during the year.

### Our work during the year

In India, we continued to educate over 2,000 children of poor widows in all 29 states in India, the same as last year. All beneficiaries were selected irrespective of religion, gender and caste.

The Loomba Trust 500 Club was launched at the British High Commissioner's residence in New Delhi in February. Through this initiative, individuals will be invited to educate children or poor widows in order to raise the number of beneficiaries to 1,000 in Delhi. We are delighted that Lady Arabella Stagg, wife of the British High Commissioner, has become the Patron of the Loomba Trust 500 Club.

We were honoured that the President of Rwanda, His Excellency Paul Kagame, launched the Loomba Trust in Rwanda in April, 2009. At the launch, His Excellency also initiated the the Loomba Trust's Cooperative business project for the empowerment of 850 widows, including 500 genocide victims, which will run in partnership with Oxfam GB and the Mayor of Kigali.

During the year we have expanded the Loomba Trust's Entrepreneurial Programme in association with the Prince's Youth Business International in Nepal and Syria. This is in addition to Kenya, Uganda, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh which started two years ago and continues to be a success.

Our community-based projects, in partnership with Sir Richard Branson's charity, Virgin Unite, which have been supporting 1,500 HIV orphans in South Africa since 2006, are continuing to benefit the orphans.

We were also honoured that the Rt. Hon. Patricia Hewitt MP, Mary Reilly and Sir Paul Stephenson QPM, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, have leant their names and support to the Trust as Patrons.

### **RAJ BHAVAN, Kolkata**

In the month of January 2010 Mrs. Blair came to India to support the work of the Loomba Trust. She visited Kolkata to meet the beneficiaries of the Trust. The Governor of Kolkata HE Shri Devanand Konwar hosted a function at Raj Bhavan in honour of Mrs. Blair. One hundred children along with their widowed mothers attended the function. Mrs. Cherie Blair, H E Shri Devanand Konwar, Governor of West Bengal and Mr. Raj Loomba distributed scholarship cheques to the beneficiaries.

### **13<sup>th</sup> January 2010 : Lohri Dinner at The Park Hotel, New Delhi**

The Loomba Trust held a charity gala dinner at the Park Hotel in New Delhi on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2010, to celebrate the festival of Lohri. The Trust was honoured that our President, Mrs. Blair and our ambassador, Preity Zinta, the famous Bollywood actress, attended the charity gala dinner to support the widows in India.

The charity dinner was attended by over 200 high profile guests, including the Trustees, Sardar Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, Shri Lalit Mansingh, Shri K. M. Singh, Sardar Balbir Singh Kakar and Shrimati Sushmita Malik.

A Lohri bonfire was lit at the hotel and the guests threw popcorns and rewaris into it. The guests were entertained by Punjabi singer Malkit Singh MBE. An auction was held and the total funds of Rs. 13 Lacs were raised which included table sales and auction amount.

### **15<sup>th</sup> January 2010 : New Delhi: Delhi Public School R K Puram**

Delhi Public School R K Puram, New Delhi hosted a function at the school to support the work of the Loomba Trust. It was attended by Mrs. Cherie Blair, President of the Trust, Mr. K. M. Singh, Trustee of the Loomba Trust, Mr. & Mrs. Raj Loomba and Chairman & Vice Chairman of the DPS Society.

The children from various classes of the school and Anubhav Shiksha Kendra gave a dance performance which also included A R Rehman's "Jai Ho" from the Oscar winning 'Slumdog Millionaire' film.

Mrs. Blair presented awards to meritorious students of the school for their outstanding performance in various fields. The Chairman and the Principal both promised to support the work of the Loomba Trust by educating 25 poor widows' children at the school free of any school fees.

### **13 November 2009 – Dinner in honour of Sir Paul Stephenson QPM in New Delhi**

The Loomba Trust hosted a dinner at the British High Commissioner's residence in Delhi, in honour of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Paul Stephenson QPM, who was invited by the Indian Government to speak at a conference in Mumbai. Sir Paul is a Patron of the Loomba Trust. The dinner was co-hosted by Sir Richard Stagg KCMG and his wife, Lady Arabella Stagg. It was attended by our Trustees, supporters, business leaders and dignitaries in Delhi. Next day, Sir Paul, met with the Trust's beneficiaries and their mothers, who had come to India Gate for a picnic. Balloons were released to mark the Children's Day and the birthday of the first Prime Minister of India, Gundit Jawahar Lal Nehru.

### **28 October 2009 – Gateway Conference in Delhi**

We were delighted that the Gateway Conference, which was organised by Ecky Tiwana, a Barrister from Birmingham, supported the Loomba Trust as its chosen charity at their Gala Dinner in Delhi. Over 50 pledges for the education of children of poor widows were made on the night.

### **27 October 2009 – Sanskriti School in Delhi**

Cherie Blair, President of the Loomba Trust met the beneficiaries of the Loomba Trust, including the five girls that she has 'adopted' each of whom would be provided with Rs.500 per month for a year. She also attended an exhibition which showcased paintings of children studying at the Sanskriti as part of its Umang programme. The paintings were based on the Gandhian principles of peace, non-violence and tolerance and awards were given out by Mrs. Blair. The Loomba Trust also announced the adoption of 10 students from the Umang programme who would be supported by the Trust.

### **8 October 2009 – Annual Diwali Dinner in London**

History was made by the Loomba Trust, as the first time ever Diwali, the Indian festival of lights was celebrated at the 800-year old Guildhall in London.

The chief guest of the evening was the new High Commissioner for India, His Excellency Shri Nalin Surie, who earlier in the day had presented his letters of credence to the Queen, and his wife, Mrs. Surie, who were greeted by the Cherie Blair, the President of the Loomba Trust.

Guest of Honour, Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP, Foreign Secretary, was amongst 475 leaders of business and government at the dinner. The Foreign Secretary praised the work of the Loomba Trust and congratulated the Trust's Founder and Chairman, Raj Loomba CBE, for his dedication and tireless efforts to raise awareness of the plight of poor widows and their children around the world.

The famous and charismatic Bollywood star, Preity Zinta, who this year won the best actress award at the Chicago International Film Festival for Deepa Mehta's film Heaven and Earth, in which she played the role of a wife subjected to domestic violence, added a touch of glamour to the evening. Preity said she was honoured to be associated with such a prestigious charity and as her mother was widowed when she was only 13 years old, she fully understood the problems widows face in India and wanted to support the work of the Loomba Trust to alleviate the plight of widows in India and other countries. She accepted to become an International Ambassador of the Loomba Trust and made an appeal to the audience to join hands with her and support the charity.

The event, the Trust's 11<sup>th</sup> charity gala dinner in the UK, raised over £400,000, which will enable the Trust to continue the education of 3000 children of poor widows in India and empower Rwanda's 850 widows, including 500 genocide victims - where half of the male heads of all households lost their lives in the inter-tribal conflicts - by helping them set up small business co-operatives. This project will be run in association with Oxfam GB and The Mayor of Kigali.

#### **24 September 2009 –Annual Diwali Dinner in New York**

The Loomba Trust's sister charity, The Loomba Foundation, hosted its fifth Diwali dinner in the US at the Jumeirah Essex House in New York, to raise funds for the work of the charity and build awareness of the dire circumstances widows face. The dinner was attended by over 200 guests, including corporate leaders, politicians and diplomats from both the American and Indian communities in the tri-state New York area.

#### **19 September 2009 – GOPIO – The Hague, The Netherlands**

The Founder Chairman and Trustee, Raj Loomba CBE, was invited by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India, to speak at their conference in The Hague. The conference was attended by Hon'ble Minister, Shri Vayalar Ravi and many other leading dignitaries from Europe. Mr. Loomba's topic at the conference was 'Empowerment of the Indian Women and the Role of the Diaspora'.

#### **28 August 2009 – Las Vegas India Chamber of Commerce**

The Founder and Chairman Trustee, Mr. Loomba CBE was invited by Las Vegas' Indian Chamber of Commerce to speak at their inaugural dinner in Las Vegas on the subject of education of children of poor widows and empowerment of their mothers in India and to raise awareness of the plight of the widows.

The dinner was attended by over 400 leading dignitaries in Las Vegas, including the Mayor of Las Vegas and the famous Bollywood actor, Anil Kapoor, from Slumdog Millionaire film.

#### **27 June 2009 – Asia Cup Polo Match, Ascot, Berkshire**

The Indian Polo Association, of which His Highness the Maharajah of Jodhpur is the official Patron, and the Hurlingham Polo Association, the World and England's governing body, hosted two polo matches at Guards, the Queen's polo ground in Ascot on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2009.

The first was the Jaipur Trophy match, which was in honour of the Rajmata of Jaipur, and was followed by the Ajit Singh Medtia Trophy match.

The Celebration Festival, who run this high profile event in the social calendar, selected the Loomba Trust as their chosen charity. Funds were raised from both a live and silent auction and the event was attended by over 200 guests.

#### **23 June 2009 – 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of International Widows Day – Celebrations around the world**

Cherie Blair, the wife of the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, President of the Loomba Trust and a leading advocate of human rights, appealed to the United Nations to recognise 23 June as International Widows Day. "Giving rights to widows and their children has been central to the work of the Loomba Trust since it became their champion more than a decade ago." This appeal came on the day that marked the campaign's 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations at the House of Lords.

International Widows Day is seen by the Loomba Trust's Founder and Chairman Trustee, Raj Loomba CBE, as a rallying point for the Trust's crusade to tackle the underlying issue of

poverty. "Poverty is the curse of Mankind" he said. "But when you put it in the context of widows and their children, it creates a new dimension in inhumanity."

Lord Dholakia hosted the London event, with the importance of the occasion underlined by the presence of His Excellency Sir Richard Stagg KCMG, the British High Commissioner to India as Guest of Honour. Sir Richard and his wife Lady Arabella are active supporters of the Trust's work on the Indian sub-continent.

The guest list also included Sir Mark Tully, the former BBC correspondent who has often reported on the Loomba Trust's work in the area of improving the rights of widows, and who subsequently became a Patron of the Trust, several years ago.

This year International Widows Day was celebrated not only in the UK, but also in the USA and India, as well as in a range of developing countries including Nepal, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

#### **20 May 2009 – Dr. Barry Humphreys Farewell lunch at the House of Lords**

The Loomba Trust, in association with the Commonwealth Business Council and the UK India Business Council, hosted a lunch at the House of Lords in honour of Dr. Barry Humphreys who had recently retired as Director of External Affairs and Route Development at Virgin Atlantic after 13 years.

Mrs. Cherie Blair, President of the Loomba Trust and Founder and Chairman Trustee, Raj Loomba CBE, thanked Dr. Barry Humphreys for his continued support of the Loomba Trust, through Virgin Atlantic over the years and is continuing to do so in his retirement.

#### **6 April 2009 – The Loomba Trust Empowers 500 Genocide Widows in Rwanda**

The Loomba Trust, in partnership with Oxfam and the Mayor of Kigali, came together to empower and support 850 poor widows, including 500 survivors of the genocide through a range of self-help initiatives, including mushroom growing.

His Excellency, President Paul Kagame hosted a dinner to officially launch the Loomba Trust in Rwanda and the partnership programme on the eve of the official week of mourning for the 1994 genocide, in which 1,000,000 innocent victims, including half of the male heads of all households, were slaughtered.

#### **4 April 2009 – Global Operation extended to Kenya**

A gala dinner on Saturday 4 April 2009, marked the official launch of the Loomba Trust in Kenya and was attended by many distinguished guests, including Cherie Blair, President of the Loomba Trust, Founder and Chairman Trustee, Raj Loomba CBE and Graham Shaw, Chairman of KYBT.

Working in association with HRH Prince Charles' charity, Prince's Youth Business International and the Kenya Youth Business Trust, the Loomba Trust already has a pilot project underway in Nairobi which has helped 28 young widows set up businesses.

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