Annual Report - 2013

In 2013, Amarok Society opened four more schools in Dhaka and Khulna, Bangladesh bringing the total to 16 schools in operation by the end of the year. Each of those schools empowers some of the most oppressed women in the world to be catalysts of change by becoming neighbourhood teachers. Each mother teaches a group of 5 neighbourhood children every day and currently almost 2,000 extremely poor children without hope of education are receiving quality basic education.

Mothers becoming teachers of mothers
We are happy to report that we have two Amarok School teachers-in-training recruited from the mothers themselves. Whereas all mothers teach a group of 5 children in their own Mothers-of-Intention schools (in their huts), until now, our Amarok School teachers who teach mothers have been recruited from slightly better-off slums.

Farzana is working under the guidance of our most experienced teacher, Rohima. When Fatima fist joined Amarok Society, she faced ridicule from not only her husband, but from her in-laws, with whom she lives, and from men in the neighbourhood. Over time, she gained their respect as someone capable of learning and of teaching other children. As a teacher-in-training, she is not yet fully supported by her family, but is slowly changing their minds. In 2014, she will take over a school as the main teacher.
Sahara, one of the two mothers, is already teaching a school on her own. Just 3 years ago Sahara could not read or write a single word in Bangla or English. She could not add numbers, tell time or understand news on the radio and no one asked her for advice on anything, but she learned quickly.

When she first joined Amarok Society, her husband was steadfastly opposed. Over time, as with most husbands, he began to see the benefits her education was bringing to his own family including their young son.

When Sahara was invited to be a teacher, he only reluctantly allowed her to do that and is not yet entirely on board, however Sahara is sure he just needs more time to adjust to the fact that she is now held in such high regard in her community and earns a decent wage. She teaches 27 young mothers and supervises 27 Mothers of Intention schools and is full of enthusiasm and energy.

One of the newest teachers of mothers, Sahara, was illiterate just 3 years ago.

The lies lack of education tells

Life without a basic education, without being able to make sense of one’s world, makes for desperate people. In the autumn, we were invited to visit a large slum with over 5,000 uneducated children. The families in this slum are desperate to give their children hope for a brighter future and understand their best hope is through education. They have asked us to open schools there for the mothers. It would require that we open 8 schools, not 1 or 2. We would need to accommodate enough schools to reach all the 5 - 10 year olds without education.

Two months after our visit, a bomb-building operation was discovered in that slum - some of the residents of that slum feel they can wait no longer. We are not yet able to afford to open the 8 schools those desperate families need.

Our benevolent pyramid scheme

We like to call our model a benevolent pyramid scheme where Amarok Society teaches teachers to teach mothers who teach neighbourhood children. Many of these teachers go home and teach their siblings or younger neighbours what they have learned, in their excitement. Pictured here, a little girl teaches her younger brothers.

Little Hamila, pictured on the right, an 8 year old girl who attends a Mothers-of-Intention school
nearby, returns home each day to teach her younger siblings what she has learned!

Education as peace builder

Hindus comprise about 6% of the population in Bangladesh and in 2013, extremist religious groups became emboldened and targeted Hindus, burning several villages to the ground.

Education promotes the understanding, friendship, peace and tolerance reflected in the photo on the left showing Hindu and Muslim women working side by side as sisters. Before Amarok Society opened a school in this area, the Hindu and

Muslim women did not interact. Now, they are good friends.

Hindu and Muslim mothers work together as sisters

Currently, Bangladesh is at a critical crossroads between democratic secularism and extremism. Democracy works best with an education population. Expanding the operations of our existing schools into new neighbourhoods will help to keep radical extremism at bay and provide hope to thousands of women, children, men and families - allowing them to build stronger neighbourhoods and more tolerant communities.

Amarok Society has two areas of focus in the immediate future to allow for further expansion of the programme in Bangladesh and elsewhere, while ensuring quality:

1) Strengthening our monitoring system by teaching mothers take a lead role in measuring their own progress and the progress of the children they teach in their Mothers-of-Intention schools;
2) Provide greater support to teachers by converting the curriculum to an open distance and learning format, where parts may be uploaded onto mobile phones, with user-friendly guides for the mother/teachers.

Mothers remove shoes to enter the school

2013 Financials coming soon.