This year, we were delighted to be one of the first charities awarded the highly sought-after Rotary International Grant. Our support for this grant came from fourteen Rotary Clubs across Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, Canada and California, USA. Here is a list of the Rotary Clubs who contributed to this grant, led by our partner Rotary Clubs of Belleville, Ontario, Canada and Midtown Dhaka, Bangladesh.

1. Uxbridge
2. Belleville
3. Napanee
4. North Scarborough
5. Etobicoke
6. Brantford
7. Dryden
8. Guelph
9. Oakville Trafalgar
10. Vancouver Quadra
11. Kamloops
12. Edmonton Strathcona
13. Edson
14. Scotts Valley

As we were one of the first recipients, it took a lot of extra effort on the part of many to get it right and we accomplished a lot as described below including closer relationships between Amarok Society and members of the Rotary Club of Midtown Dhaka, capacity building for our staff in the area of monitoring and evaluation, training for our mothers in the use of tablets from email to basic computer skills to taking pictures and videos – all to the benefit of the children they teach. These children now benefit from richer lessons with short videos and recorded songs. These children, ranging in age from 5 to 12, are able to gain and master computer literacy for themselves in a small fraction of the time it takes older people to learn the same thing, not as well.

Some things are constant around this world.
We would also like to thank the more than 20 Rotary Clubs from across North America who made donations toward the general operations of Amarok Society – so critical to our ability to continue. The Rotary Clubs are:

- Belleville
- Cambridge Preston Hespeler
- Cambridge Sunrise
- Dryden
- East York
- Edmonton Mayfield
- Edmonton Northeast
- Edmonton Strathcona
- Edmonton Sunrise
- Festival City of Stratford
- Guelph South
- Hinton
- Interact Club of Etobicoke Collegiate
- Mission Sunrise
- Napanee
- Niagara Falls Sunrise
- Oakville Trafalgar
- Pickering
- Quinte Sunrise
- Rain City (Shoreline)
- Regina Eastview
- Salmon Arm-Shuswap
- Toronto Forest Hill
- Toronto West
- Vancouver Quadra
- Vancouver Yaletown
- Weston
- Whistler

**Thank you to our Individual Sponsors**

We are also most grateful to our valuable individual supporters who have adopted a mother (with the five children she teaches), two mothers, a neighbourhood or a school. Without the support of these generous Canadians and Americans, we would never touch and change the lives we do.

**Accomplishments**

We saw great progress with our operations in coordination with our partner the Roshni Organization in Pakistan. Our mothers there are able to overcome obstacles and threats and continue in their determination to provide the poorest children in their community with a quality education.
Here are some of the highlights of what was accomplished in 2016

1. Amaro Society developed a much closer relationship with members of the large and long-standing Rotary Club of Dhaka-Midtown. Similarly, relationships between them and Canadian Rotary Clubs were developed.

2. We organized trainings by health specialists in the area of nutrition and basic health for mothers of very young children in the communities. What our mothers learned, as always, they passed on to neighbourhood mothers. The way they do this is over time through information conversations. By this way, many households have changed attitudes and practices regarding girls, child rearing, the value of education, health, nutrition and information (not propaganda) about the ‘west’ and the larger world.

3. All 520 mothers received training in drama from script writing to performance. The form of drama taught is an ancient form of drama in this geographic area, shared with India. It uses single-coloured bolts of red, yellow, green and blue cloth as props and focuses on social messages. Our mothers prepared and presented dramas to thousands of community members in common outdoor areas. The themes focused on gender issues, hygiene and community responsibility. They were well attended and very popular.

4. Our mothers organized and delivered community training on early marriage, child development and nutrition. Drama is one of the most effective ways they have of encouraging discussions about these issues amongst several
hundred community members in each neighbourhood.

The number of early marriages in our neighbourhoods has decreased over the past few years. The messages in the dramatic productions were reinforced by inviting neighbourhood mothers to the school for an information session and sometimes through less formal conversations.

5. Our senior staff increased their capacity in their ability to develop and monitor progress in curriculum, including the development of quick tests to spot-check progress.

6. All staff increased their ability in recording, using and analyzing evaluation results. Databanks are now regularly updated by the mothers to reflect progress in subject areas.

7. Mothers are excited at having learned about conflict resolution. We know this because they can’t wait to tell their Adoptees (sponsors in North America) all about how they are learning to overcome household conflict. Perhaps because of extremely overcrowded and hopeless-feeling living conditions, conflict is often the first resort to a dispute. This is evidenced by the high crime rates and overflowing court systems. Our mothers have been able to apply what they have learned about conflict resolution to their households and helped other mothers in their neighbourhoods do the same with very positive results.

8. Community libraries were established in 10 schools. The purpose of these libraries is to allow community members to check out books to read for themselves as well as children’s books to read to their children. The libraries are open briefly each week with one of the mothers from the school volunteering as the Community Librarian. This position rotates from time to time.

9. One of the things our mothers are enormously proud of is their understanding and use of technology. All mothers are able to
use tablets for doing Google searches and downloading lesson songs and short videos for the children they teach. This has made school that much more exciting for them and for the children they teach.

Throughout 2016, we continued to strengthen and deepen community relations in the neighbourhoods in which we operate. We received local media coverage on 34 different days, had local politicians visit schools. Outreach from mothers and children increased including reading newspapers to crowds of illiterate women every day to helping neighbours read and follow prescriptions and providing advice in areas of conflict or business.

Challenge

We remain deeply concerned by the growing extremism and intolerance in the countries in which we operate. Bangladesh, with a population of around 175 million people, is in danger of losing its classification as a moderate country. The only sustainable way to prevent that also happens to be relatively inexpensive: Education to those desperate people living in the urban slums – the very target area for recruitment by extremists.

Our brave mothers and teachers are determined to carry on in the face of growing threats. We receive regular invitations to open schools in new neighborhoods and need to expand our stronghold to empower those who resist the extremists.

Right now, the Canadian dollar doesn’t go nearly as far and the extremists are growing many times faster than we are. Can we match the courage shown by our mothers?

We know education is the answer. That’s how minds are changed. Can you help us to standing beside these women against this tide of intolerance?

We need your help in expanding our reach by:

• introducing us to your friends, book clubs, community groups;
• introducing us to your company through a brown-bag lunch with speaker or short video about Amarok Society or by other means:
• hosting a fundraiser.

The future of these children and their families depends upon Canadians and Americans taking a bold stand for them.

If you’re able to contribute to that effort, please reach us at 603 726-3373 or amaroksociety.org@gmail.com