



Interfaith Community Sanctuary



1763 NW 62nd Street Seattle, WA 98107

Dear Friends,

September 25, 2013

Imagine a country with a land mass half the size of Oregon, within whose borders are living half the population of the U.S. This not an imaginary country. It is Bangladesh...the homeland of Imam Jamal Rahman, his brother Kamal, and his sister Aysu, who was a medical doctor in Bangladesh before she came to the US in 2004. Most Bangladeshis live on subsistence farming in rural villages, such as Chondipur, the ancestral village of the Rahman family. For those in rural areas, village doctors with little or no formal training constitute 62% of the health care providers practicing modern medicine, and formally trained providers (like Aysu Rahman) occupy a mere 4% of the total health workforce. The World Bank estimates that Bangladesh is ranked first in the world of the number of children suffering from malnutrition. The maternal mortality rate is 34 for every 10,000 births, and the number of children who die before age five is 55 per 1,000 births. Every year 100,000 Bangladeshi children die of diarrhea related diseases, and 90% of the children suffer acute respiratory infection. In rural areas there is approximately one doctor for every 6,000 people.

Is it any surprise that the life-long dream of Aysu and her brothers has been to open a community medical clinic especially designed for women and children, staffed by professional doctors, built on the ancestral lands that have been in the family for generations? This dream was a natural extension of the dream of Hedayatullah, Jamal and Aysu's grandfather, who was determined to open a private school to educate women in his village. Aaur and Suraiya, Jamal's parents, manifested this inspiration when they built the Hedayatullah School for Girls. This school has been expanded and now serves approximately 150 girls ages 6-16, and has recently been fully accredited and supported by the Bangladeshi government, which supplies the teachers, the principal, and funding to assist with the expansion of the building. Jamal's brother Kamal, who still lives in Bangladesh, has overseen the expansion of the School Project. ICS has also provided some financial support for this project over the past few years, but most of the funding has come directly from the family.

Extremely poor health conditions in Bangladesh are partially attributable to the lack of government support. The total governmental expenditure on healthcare as a percentage of their GDP was only 3% in 2009. Thus, a privately funded community health clinic for women and children is a natural extension of the Rahman legacy. Kamal Rahman has supervised and personally

financed **Phase 1 of the Clinic Project**, by constructing a **Doctor's Residence and Guest House** on a plot of ancestral land adjacent to the school and clinic sites.

We are now on the brink of **Phase 2 of the Suraiya Aatur Medical Center Project (SAMC)**. On January 1, 2014, we hope to consecrate and dedicate the recently donated land (adjacent to the Hedayatullah School for Girls), which will one day become the permanent home of the SAMC.

On January 2, 2014 we hope to celebrate the Grand Opening of the SAMC clinic, which will be staffed by Doctor Nadira Begum, Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Rajshahi University, and a cousin of Kamal, Jamal, and Aysu. Dr. Begum lives in a nearby town, and will be in voluntary attendance at the clinic at least one day a week, assisted by several trained students from the school. Here women and children from surrounding villages will come for primary care in the treatment of respiratory diseases, fever, wounds, nutrition deficiency, reproductive services, and childhood diarrheal diseases. There is no other medical clinic of any kind anywhere near this village, and we anticipate that word will spread rapidly, far and wide.

Our goal now is to raise at least \$5,000 to take to Bangladesh this December, to help pay for the basic medical supplies, equipment and medications that will be necessary to open the clinic in January. The Hedayatullah School has offered two upstairs rooms in the schoolhouse, which will be the temporary site for the clinic, while design and construction of the new building gets underway. (Phase 3!)

Our Annual Bengali Dinner which will be held at Interfaith Community Sanctuary on Saturday evening, October 19th at 6:30 pm. Besides delicious homemade Bengali food, we will have more information, photos, and music to help us prepare for the Grand Opening of the Suraiya Aatur Medical Center in January. **If everyone who receives this letter donates \$30, we could achieve our financial goal.** One hundred percent of the funds raised will be spent directly on basic medical supplies, equipment, and medications, which will be purchased in Bangladesh to support the local economy. Labor to complete the construction of the clinic rooms is being donated by volunteers in the village. Dr. Nadira Begum is donating her precious time and expertise one day a week for the foreseeable future. Aysu, who is the Managing Director of the Clinic, will be travelling with her four children to Bangladesh in December to oversee and assist in the Dedication and Grand Opening of the Suraiya Aatur Medical Center. **What can you do to help?**

Please consider making a generous contribution to this worthy project! Every dollar goes a long way, and every gift is gratefully appreciated. Checks should be made payable to Interfaith Community Sanctuary (ICS) with a memo of "SAMC clinic." Tax deductible donations can also be made securely online at our website at www.interfaithcommunitychurch.org.

With Heartfelt Gratitude and Blessings,

Sally Jo Gilbert de Vargas
Treasurer, Interfaith Community Sanctuary