



BANYAN NEWS



Year 15

NEWSLETTER OF THE BANYAN TRUST

Registered Charity No. 1071981 Company Limited by Guarantee No. 3610633

Spring 2014



SANJEEVANI'S NEW SPRING

For some time now the Banyan Trust felt its Sanjeevani Project in Dhaka was in need of a new local partner. Our partner SLUM was no longer able to fulfil the needs of the project. Expansion is needed, new location necessary due to lack of space, new ideas are asking for implementation. Therefore difficult administration is required by the Bangladesh government who must approve of the budgets for all initiatives supported by foreign funds. SLUM, a small local NGO, began to feel out of its depth and last year expressed reluctance to be in charge of Sanjeevani's renewed governmental approval for 2014 – the Banyan Trust needed to look elsewhere for a new local partner for the project, no easy task!

As we shared with you in a previous newsletter Sanjeevani was slapped hard with an absurd fine last year by the authorities. The case was eventually dismissed in court, but solving the problem proved rather a challenge and the Banyan Trust realised we could no longer support the project adequately at managerial and administrative level, just like SLUM had also already indicated. So the search was on for like-wise minds, kindred souls, similar projects, friendly colleagues.

Two years ago we came to hear of an NGO working much in the spirit of Sanjeevani, with a project for multiple disabled children in the Bangladeshi countryside. Annie Lerner (Chair UK) and Alex van der Bijl (Chair Holland) went to visit and discovered Niketan.

The visit turned out an inspiration and a success. A professional friendship was born. Subsequently, Dutch founder and director Antoinette van Thersmshuizen was enthusiastically received at Sanjeevani together with her colleagues and it didn't take long before cautious talks began with regard to the uncertain future of Sanjeevani. Niketan is part of a conglomerate of NGOs working with disability and we understood Sanjeevani could much benefit from a place within this professional network. It took months of deliberations, not least amongst ourselves as Banyan Trust - many different boards had to get involved to eventually come to the unanimous decision of Sanjeevani's adoption by Niketan/DRRA, two organisations intertwined, with a highly competent administrative department shared by a network of different disability projects and NGOs.

First of May 2014 was the official hand-over date. All students and staff have since moved over into the warm embrace of Niketan/DRRA. A new project template full of exciting plans and a brand-new budget will be submitted to the Bangladesh authorities for approval, which in practice will mean the ability to expand. The project is in need of a proper vocational training unit, more outreach, proper space for physical exercise, extra staff and new equipment. Because the Banyan Trust was officially restricted by the previous budget and could therefore not transfer additional funds, it became necessary to tear up the old formal paperwork to pave the way for new exciting opportunities for the Sanjeevani project.



The Sanjeevani Centre for Child Development participating in the World Disability Day rally in downtown Dhaka, December 2013.

The Banyan Trust

Letchmore Farm, Rush Green, Langley near Hitchin, Herts SG4 7PJ / Phone: 01438 358500 / Email: annie.banyan@talktalk.net



Outing to Basundara Park, Dhaka

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

MOVING OUT, MOVING ON, MOVING UP

We are in the middle of a rather big change – to say the least. For a long while it's been obvious that Sanjeevani was bursting at the seams, with nowhere to store equipment, no quiet corner for calming down children with autism, and little space for our crucial physiotherapy programme and the parents workshops. There was no outside play space either. Something had to be done.



Sanjeevani art competition for students and parents, held outside due to lack of space inside the building.

You may remember the Rice bank was closed down and there were other restrictions imposed on us regarding the budget. We could not have a programme for our older students and there was an increasing need for vocational training but no space and no extra funds allowed into the country till spring 2014.

To cut a long story short, all these urgent needs have now been met. Sanjeevani closes for the summer break, leaves the building and we open up in a bigger place with a new administration to run the office and support, without any financial pressure, the new programmes the children now need. Equipment can be mended or replaced too.

I feel like I did when my kids left school and went off to college! I feel happy for them and even excited – they will be fine, since all but one member of staff is still with them and our project coordinator Rabeya Neela is supporting the change wholeheartedly. Under her strong leadership they will absorb the newness and start realising their full potential.



Rabeya Neela (middle), project Director, at a birthday celebration of one of the students.

The formalities are nearly all done now – money will go from the UK to the Amsterdam office free of charge and there we still have our Dutch BT partners Alex van der Bijl, Cris Ribbens and Ghislaine Jaspers. I earnestly hope you will adjust your direct debits and cheques in order to not incur bank costs here in the UK.

Our exploratory visit to Niketan's residential campus 2 years ago was where we got the idea of collaboration in the first place. It reminded us of our Apanjan project in Calcutta! We knew by working with them and their administration office we could benefit enormously and they welcomed the idea and the chance to work with the Sanjeevani team, whom they had visited previously.

Details of how you can continue to send money from July onwards are attached. If you have any concerns, please call Annie on: 07795 548348.

Or email annie.banyan@talktalk.net

Thank you for several years of generous support, without which there would never have been a Sanjeevani, and come with us now and Move on to even better things for our children!

Annie Lerner, Chairman of the Banyan Trust

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BANYAN TRUST UK - CHANGES

This year is a time of big decisions and change. We have taken a close look at all our activities, which includes the running of the Banyan Trust in Europe. From 1998 until 2014 we have actually had two Banyan 'offices', one in the UK and the other in Holland, with two different administrations, although manned with volunteers and paid for by dedicated donations and tax returns, it is no longer possible for the Banyan Trust to continue this way.

With Sanjeevani now safely under new local management and Banyan taking an administrative backseat, we have decided to consolidate our activities and transfer all UK Banyan formalities to our Banyan Trust office in the Netherlands. We have always done our utmost to keep costs in Europe to an absolute minimum, so all your donations directly benefitted the children of the projects, therefore to streamline all paperwork and administrative costs into the accountancy office of our Dutch Chairman Alex van der Bijl makes good sense. Alex and his firm donate their time and absorb all administrative costs relating to the Banyan Trust.

This transfer will mean a change for our UK supporters. We sincerely hope you will continue to help the Sanjeevani children, as it remains the same project you have so generously supported for many years. However, we realise for our sponsors that standing orders need adapting.

As cheques are not accepted outside the UK, any cheques must now be made out to Annie Larner personally, still at the usual address, so Annie will be able to cash them and forward your donation to the Banyan account in Holland. CAF cheques we can unfortunately no longer receive. The new account details for the Banyan Trust will be:

Name: The Banyan Trust

Account number/IBAN: NL98ABNA0527017353

Sort code/BIC: ABNANL2A

Country: Netherlands

Money transfers within the EU are free of cost now. We apologise for the inconvenience this administrative change may cause you.

THE GRADUATES

Sanjeevani offers special education and support to a diverse group of children with multiple disabilities. Whereas the project has always been keen to enrol children at the youngest possible age - early intervention a key approach - Sanjeevani also recognised the plight of youngsters with disabilities, who lived neglected and often desperately lonely on the margins of their slum community.

Previously, these teenagers never received any specialised support and surviving was difficult for them. Sanjeevani created a second day shift for this particular group in the afternoon. Their special programme focussed on better integration in society and it is heartwarming to now watch some of them actually succeed in securing small jobs for themselves.

Ashraful, Selim and Liton are three young men at present graduating from Sanjeevani. Two of them will help out at local shops - jobs pledged to them some time ago and at Sanjeevani they have learned all necessary skills. The third young man will work at a woodcutting workshop.



Ashraful, Selim and Liton.

Sanjeevani's community worker Shilpi on her daily rounds through the community will monitor them and the young men will return to Sanjeevani regularly for evaluation sessions and where necessary further training.



THE BANYAN TRUST

*Our work would not be possible
without the consistent and generous support
of our regular sponsors.*

For more information please contact The Banyan Trust:

Phone: 01438 358500.

Or email us at: annie.banyan@talk.talk.

Our website: www.banyantrust.com



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BANYAN TRUST NEW DETAILS

From the 1st of July 2014:

Name: **The Banyan Trust**

Account number/IBAN: **NL98ABNA0527017353**

Sort code/BIC: **ABNANL2A**

Country: **Netherlands**



The Banyan Trust

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