

LAMB HEALTH CARE FOUNDATION

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Dear Friends,

This is not another request for money! It is just a brief letter keeping you up to date with news from LAMB. It has been a great pleasure for us to meet Dr Mark Pietroni, the LAMB Project Director who is on furlough in the UK at the moment with his family, and he has told us how things are going in Bangladesh. This letter is actually sent from Bangladesh as it is the cheaper option and we are seeing how the logistics will work.

Mark tells us that in the last two months two couples among the LAMB staff have been able to adopt babies who would otherwise have died. In the first instance Hannah and Niren, who have been with the project since at least 1989 as a nurse and paramedic, were able to adopt a young boy whose mother had died during childbirth. The boy's father had taken a new wife and she was unwilling to look after the child. The other baby was born prematurely at LAMB and sadly his mother died soon afterwards. The baby, also a boy, was admitted for several months while he slowly put on weight – many LAMB staff volunteered to be part of the 2 hourly feeding rota. After discharge the boy's father took him home and tried to look after him on his own but returned after a month unable to cope and with the baby losing weight. A childless couple, Rina, who works as a cook for one of the expatriate couples, and Lawrence who is a driver, adopted the boy who is now doing well.

Another area of progress of which the project is proud involves the management structure. It has recently been restructured so that national Christians are as involved as expatriate donors in appointing the members of the Board. This is still innovative in Bangladesh and we pray that this and the robust management structures will be a model for similar groups.

As far as finance is concerned, the LAMB project has recently been given a one-off grant from DFID (UK overseas aid money). This is excellent news and has removed the threat of a financial crisis for the next year or so. The grant will enable LAMB to finance its normal activities, including maintaining the Poor

Fund, until June 2005. However DFID are changing the way they operate and the prospects of receiving further grants from them in the future are not good.

Meanwhile the LHCF has managed to raise nearly £30,000 with of the help of many friends, which is a really encouraging start. We are very grateful to everyone who has been part of this – much of it raised with small gifts – and we feel it is a splendid example of Christian love in action. Of this we have sent £7,000 to LAMB to enable them to build 4 extra units of staff accommodation. These are much needed and LAMB has not been able to build them before this because money has been so tight recently. LAMB will use the rest of the money mainly to build up the poor fund so that it will be able to meet the demands placed on it from next June onwards.

As you will know, it is the Poor Fund which enables LAMB to help people who cannot afford to pay the cost of their treatment. Unlike the UK, where the NHS means that most of our health care is free, there is no such provision in Bangladesh. This means that the hospital has to charge for its services including seeing a paramedic (who refers up to a doctor or can arrange admission when necessary), getting a laboratory test and then being given treatment. There has been a great deal of effort in the past to keep these fees as low as is possible, but there are still a large number of the poorest people who cannot pay.

The hospital sees an average of 200 patients a day, some with TB, pneumonia, vitamin deficiencies etc. When I worked there many years ago I met a man who had sold the roof off his house to get the train fare to bring his ill daughter to the hospital. There are many such stories. The Poor Fund then supplied her medicine costs.

The demands on the Poor Fund are increasing and LAMB estimate that in future it will cost approximately £100,000 per year. We hope that our American partners will be able to raise half of this amount and our aim is to raise the other half. We are busy applying to various trusts and looking into an application to the Lottery fund! But while this is on-going we also hope for continuing support in the future from friends such as yourselves. Please also continue to remember LAMB in your prayers.

I would like to encourage everyone to look at the LAMB project web site- www.lambproject.org. The hospital is only part of the work that goes on there. We will be in touch again at Christmas.

With all best wishes,

Dr. Rosemary Croft,
Trustee, LAMB Health Care Foundation

