

## ARTICLES OF 1999

### A Visit to DIL Projects

By Fiza Shah

The temperatures were in the 120's--the heat seemed to be emanating from the ground. Had it not been for the soles of my shoes my feet surely would have been scorched. But, soon I became oblivious to the discomforts of one of the hottest days of a typical Khairpur summer. The one room, one teacher classroom that I was visiting, equipped with only a fan, was filled with eager young students busy tackling math problems. The classroom consisted of 35 students separated into four grade levels. It was intriguing to see how the teacher had skillfully divided the blackboard into four different columns displaying math problems of varying difficulty. This was my second trip to Khairpur since DIL's intervention in this arid region, and I was once again captivated by the enthusiasm displayed by the students as they read from their textbooks, recited poems and sang songs. The walls of the classrooms were plastered with drawings done by the students, and its shelves were lined with indigenous artwork, some showing genuine artistic talent.



My visit to the Mianwali schools was equally satisfying. The kids whom I had previously observed learning the English alphabet are now reading sentences and translating them into Urdu. I was delighted to hear two ten-year old girls give extremely boisterous speeches on the role of women in society. Needless to say, the progress observed in merely a year is a true reflection of the teacher's commitment and dedication to her students.

In a country where gender bias is more entrenched than any other place in the world, educating a rural female is considered a waste of time and money and, by some, detrimental to her own well being. It is widely believed in these areas that the time a girl spends in school will divert her from her chores such as helping her mother in her home and in the field, make her independent minded, and reduce her chances of marrying. It is no wonder that every teacher I interviewed had a story to relate of the hardships she faced in her quest to receive a basic education. The majority of our teachers are the first females to have received an education in their particular village--pioneers in their own right.



Probably the most poignant tale was that of Shamshad who now teaches at Madrasa-e-Dil, Khairpur. "When I first asked my parents to send me to school my entire family objected. My older brother, despite being educated himself, objected most vehemently especially since the only school in my village was a boys school. But, I was determined, and with my mother's tacit support, secretly started attending school. I would

rush back home, and hide my books before any of the men in my family returned. Then one day as I was leaving school, I was horrified to find my brother waiting outside with a stick. He beat me black and blue forbidding me to return to school. But even the bruises did not diminish my resolve to educate myself. First I refused to step out of the house, then I declined to meet relatives, and as a final recourse, I stopped eating. It was then that my mother took a stand. She warned the male members of our family that as long as she was alive I would be free to pursue my dream." Nasim went on to do her B.Sc. and is now intent on making her school one of the finest in the area.

When asked what they have gained by becoming teachers, the unanimous reply was "respect and admiration of the community". The commitment of these exceptional women is clearly evident in some of the Mianwali schools, where I found the student enrollment had risen from 25 to 40 and over, and in a few cases over 60. This increase is due to the continuous efforts of the teachers and the project coordinators to impress upon their communities the importance of education. MMBMT (Malik Maula Baksh Memorial Trust) has requested DIL for additional funds to hire assistant teachers in schools where the number of students exceeds 40. Their request has been approved.



Our Khairpur schools have received a grant from the Asia Foundation for the funding of a year's intensive teachers training course. The training, provided by SAHE (Society for Advancement of Higher Education), will also include further curriculum development. This initiative will not only improve on the existing quality of teaching methodology, but will also encourage teacher interaction, giving them a platform to collectively discuss, share and resolve problems they may be facing. We would like to provide similar training to the Mianwali teachers subject to the availability of funds for which we are dependent on our donors.

Barely a month has gone by since my July visit to Mianwali and Khairpur. Yes, the heat was intense, but the only warmth that I can remember was the warmth in the teachers grateful hearts, as they assured me they would continue to do their best, and the warmth in the children's smiles as they waved goodbye.

### **Mehnaz Akbar's report on the DIL Project August 1999**

Bilquees Bibi, a 23-year-old resident of the village Allah Wasayo Khaskhelly, 38 miles from the town of Khairpur, is a true example of a village activist. Despite the absence of a girls' school in the area, she managed to do her Bachelors in science. It was just by a twist of fate that she was enrolled in a boys' school. She used to accompany her brother to a government school nearby. The male teacher, on discovering that she was brighter than most boys in his class, convinced her



parents to enroll her as a regular student. Today she is in charge of one of the DIL schools in Khairpur being run in collaboration with the non-governmental organization, NOWA. She is a highly motivated teacher, and an excellent role model for her young students.

The commitment and dedication of the DIL teachers is also clearly evident in the Mianwali schools. Without being paid, some of the teachers there are imparting education at secondary level to girls who have completed primary school. In fact, during my last visit to Mianwali some of the teachers suggested that DIL should take on the responsibility of funding secondary level education for girls who have already completed primary level education from DIL schools.

A few years ago when I used to ask the villagers what level of education would be desirable for their girls they would state "primary" only. Now after three years, I ask them the same question they say at least "matriculation" level. The girls themselves enthusiastically raise their hands to share their dreams of becoming teachers, lady health visitors, doctors, etc. Their awareness level has shot up even with the basic education the girls have received so far. I asked one girl if she thought she could become the Prime Minister. She replied that it was not a matter of whether she could but that she did not want to, as these leaders do not fulfill their promises and eventually people start hating them. DIL's NOWA Pirbhat Khairpur project has received funding from the Asia Foundation under the USAID program. This support will allow SAHE (Society for Advancement of Higher Education) to hold training sessions in Khairpur for all the fifty teachers and the staff working on the DIL project. The training will include teaching methodologies and education management, with a focus on community participation. A select group of these teachers will then be given further training to qualify them as teacher trainers, which would ensure the advancement of education in the said areas.

It must be remembered that the success of the DIL project is dependent not only on the funds provided by the donors, but also on the enlightened attitude of the parents and the commitment of the teachers and the students.

We would like to share, with our readers, the following two letters received from two highly motivated teenagers. Rabia and Omar are the children of Najmi and Malik Sarwar of New Jersey. We hope this will encourage others to emulate their example.

### **Letter from Rabia Sarwar**

Assalamo Alaikum. I would like to give you some background information on the DIL funds that I have raised. At my school, Kent Place, in Summit, NJ, I organized a supply drive. For two weeks I collected notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers, markers, crayons and other school supplies that students brought in for the DIL schools. The middle school responded with great enthusiasm and within the first week, we had a full box of supplies. In addition, my school is having a major bake sale, which usually earns a good amount of money, and the student council has agreed to donate a portion to DIL. I found this whole

experience very rewarding and hope to work on more projects associated with the DIL organization.

Regards.

**Letter from Omar Sarwar:**

Assalamo Alaikum. At the Pingry School, Martinsville, NJ, I was able to raise close to \$420.00 through an event commonly known as a "Jeans Day". Since we have a dress code at our school, the opportunity to wear jeans and casual clothing rarely comes along. After I introduced the DIL organization and our goals to my Division Head, he approved a "Jeans Day". Students responded enthusiastically, and although the deal was "one buck at the door," many students, friends, and faculty donated more than a dollar. I have found it very rewarding to talk about the DIL organization and its mission with my community and I would look forward to another opportunity in the future.

Regards.

**DIL Discussion in New York**

On March 24, a lively get-together for young professionals was held at Tasnim Azhar's house in New York. About forty-five people attended, most of them bankers and lawyers on the threshold of their careers. They were eager to learn about the aims and achievements of DIL and how they could get involved in the work of this educational and humanitarian organization. Some good ideas were put forward and we hope that these young people will stay in touch with DIL as we need all the help and support we can get to further spread our message of literacy.

**Exhibition Sale in New York**

On May 27 an exhibition of Pakistani clothes, arranged by Samira Badad, was held at Najmi Sarwar's house in New York. There was a good turnout and more than forty-five 'joras' were sold. Samira donated a good percentage of the selling price to DIL. Information pamphlets on DIL were also distributed on the occasion. Subsequently, more clothes were sold at another exhibition, thus raising more money for DIL. We hope to continue holding such events at least once a year with Samira's cooperation.

**DIL Fundraiser in Los-Angeles**

*By Faisal Siddiqui*

The fundraiser held by DIL in May was an avowal of its determination to continue spreading literacy in rural areas of Pakistan. It was a Mela, a Bazaar a chowk for the young and not so young, and all in all a reflection of our concern for the poor and destitute children of Pakistan.

Imagine this! In the heart of LA, you walk into a



modern hotel, through the lobby and along the corridors to suddenly find yourself surrounded by the rapturous sounds and colors of the subcontinent. As you stroll through rising pitches of "Chana jor garam" and "Fancy fabrics" you help yourself to a cup of tea and indulge in games of chance with the Kabarias and Subziwalas to end up with a T-shirt nonetheless. Some were having their fortune read by Najoomis (fortune-tellers)- did they perhaps found out the real direction of the stock market!

Right opposite the bazaar, in the man banquet hall, the master of ceremonies, Shaz Khan, carried the audience through the rest of the evening. Once settled around their tables, the guests heard intellectually stimulating speeches from Mr. Thomas Simons (former US Ambassador to Pakistan) and Mrs. Simons, Dr. Tahir Andrabi and Mrs. Fiza Shah (President, DIL). This was followed by an informative and heartwarming video presentation of the DIL-sponsored schools in rural Sind and Punjab.

It was because of the dedicated hard work and commitment of the board members of DIL and volunteers that all of us were able to enjoy such an extraordinary evening made all the more unforgettable by the lively performance of the Ali Khan Band. The DIL board would also like to thank its generous patrons for underwriting a major portion of the fundraiser expenses. To all those who participated and all those who contributed in so many different ways, I can only say, Bravo!

## **PHOTO EXHIBITION IN NEW YORK**

By Amena Patel

The East Coast chapter of DIL recently held a photo exhibition, in collaboration with Dr. Abrar Pirzada, in New York City.

The artist, or in this case the photographer, Abrar Pirzada has an extensive collection of architectural photos depicting various Mughal landmarks of Pakistan. He started dabbling in this medium of art as a hobby, and also because he felt the need to capture the esthetic beauty of this majestic architecture before it vanished due to the adverse effects of pollution and neglect.



The exhibition was held at the Consulate General of Pakistan through the courtesy of the Consul General, Mr. Abbas Haider Zaidi. More than one hundred and fifty people attended the exhibition to enjoy the one hundred and thirty photos displayed ranging from the details of the Badshahi Masjid to the beautiful tile work of Jehangir's Makbarah!

Many of the guests purchased these exquisite photos, not only to decorate their homes but also for the good cause of DIL. Dr. Pirzada has graciously donated a portion of the proceeds from the sale of these photos to DIL.

Many people wished that this event could have lasted longer so that they could bring friends to see the unique display of Mogul architecture and at the same time help in providing quality education to the needy children of Pakistan.

## Financials

### Developments in Literacy, Inc. Activity for Year Ended December 31, 1998

<b>1. REVENUE:</b>	
Sponsorship of Children	\$88,288.00
March Fund-raiser	\$36,519.00
Interest and Dividends	\$6,152.91
Candy Sale	\$2,560.00
Board Contribution for Administrative Costs	\$5,000.00
<b>Total Revenue Received in 1998</b>	<b>\$138,519.91</b>
<b>2. EXPENSES:</b>	
Education Expense	\$48,953.25
March Fund-raisers	\$13,901.73
Transfer to Endowment	\$7,136.50
Monitoring	\$1,825.00
Accountant's Fee	\$1,000.00
Secretary of State	\$645.00
Printing and Mailing	\$391.11
Merrill Lynch Management Fee	\$150.00
Telephone	\$141.18
Wire Transfer Expense	\$100.00
Postmaster Yearly Fee	\$85.00
Fee for NSF	\$20.00
<b>Total Expense in 1998</b>	<b>\$74,348.77</b>
3. Net income for 1999	\$64,171.14
Net Assets-Beginning of Year	\$72,775.99
Change in Net Assets	\$64,171.14
Net Assets-End of Year	\$136,947.13
<b>DIL Board Members have underwritten all administrative cost incurred so far. Every cent of donor's contribution goes towards education.</b>	