**Who we are**

Suraiya Ataur Medical Center (SAMC) is a non-profit medical clinic situated in the village of Chondipur, Bangladesh. It was established in 2014 to serve the basic health needs specifically of women and children of the village and surrounding rural areas. Many families live below the poverty level and access to the closest health facility is a challenge because of distance and cost.

SAMC also provides critical education on nutrition, reproductive health and hygiene. Classes and workshops are held in the clinic and in the adjoining school for women.

Our center is staffed by female salaried professionals. The medical doctor is available eight days a month, while a physician’s assistant is available for services four days a week. Three staff members help with the administration duties and young girls from the nearby school offer volunteer services. Serious medical cases which are beyond the scope of our center’s services are referred to a local hospital in the area. Currently, the clinic sees 800 patients monthly and the numbers continue to grow.

SAMC medical services are essentially free. A nominal fee of five BDT, equivalent to less than five cents in USD is charged per doctor visit, which covers all costs including any prescribed medications.

SAMC has a motto crafted by the women of Chondipur who feel a sense of deep kinship with their clinic: “SAMC – Where Every Patient is Family.”

**History/Timeline**

The medical clinic is rooted in the vision and work of Maulana Hedayatullah and his beloved wife. Maulana Hedayatullah was a noted scholar, teacher and healer. He had spent 15 years of his adult life away from home absorbed in intense study and meditation with teachers in Northern India.

 Maulana Hedayatullah ministered tirelessly to the villagers of northern Bengal and in his lifetime grew a large following. He travelled extensively. Often his wife joined him in his work of healing through herbal medicine, spiritual practices and prayers.

Both husband and wife believed ardently in the critical need to empower women through education. They worked hard to overcome patriarchal traditions. To a conservative audience they used scripture and common sense to explain that female education would benefit immensely family and society. Consequently, a school for women was established in ..  supported by villagers and funded primarily from sales of mangoes from the orchards of the Rahman family.

Upon their death, the responsibility for the school fell on the shoulders of their eldest son, Muhammad Ataur Rahman, who chose to become a diplomat. Along with his wife Suraiya, they travelled all over the world. Ataur Rahman had the distinction of becoming Ambassador of two countries in his lifetime: first, representing Pakistan and when in 1971 the country split in two, Ambassador of Bangladesh.  For over four decades they supported from overseas the village school and a number of other village projects from their personal funds, assets and connections. Throughout their career they spent every single vacation in their ancestral village taking care of the needs of the school and other community ventures.

In 1990, both Ataur and Suraiya Rahman passed away in the same year. Their children, Kamal, Jamal and Aysu took over the work of caretaking the school. From 1992 to 2000 the Interfaith Community Sanctuary in Seattle sustained and grew the school through fundraising and donations. Because of the generosity of well-wishers in Seattle, the School for Women in Chondipur is today a flourishing institution, fully accredited and supported financially by the Government.

To expand the vision of her grandparents and build on the work of her parents, Aysu, who is a medical doctor, felt inspired to open a medical clinic for women and children. Her older brother Kamal who owns businesses in Dhaka, Bangladesh acquired land adjacent to the school, and commenced work on building a medical clinic in 2014. He and his staff continues to provide financial help and operational expertise.

Since 2014, Interfaith Community Sanctuary has been extraordinarily active in supporting and expanding the medical clinic. Through regular fundraising and generous donations, the clinic is able to serve an ever growing number of women and children not only from Chondipur but also from neighboring villages.

Enthused and excited by the palpable benefits of the clinic, village elders in Chondipur requested the Rahman family to build a nursing school. This institution would offer much needed professional training and employment to girls graduating from the school, and to other women in neighboring villages.

 Land has already been purchased in close proximity to school and clinic, and construction of nursing school has started. There are ongoing talks with health officials to secure government accreditation. It is anticipated that this phased project of the ambitious nursing school will take two years to complete.

During the last few years some members of Interfaith Community Sanctuary have visited the village Clinic in Bangladesh. Several doctors and nurses from Seattle have signed up to offer volunteer work in the village Clinic. To accommodate foreign visitors and volunteers, Kamal has completed construction of a building with modern facilities close to the school and clinic.

**Our Future Endeavors**

We are proud of the services SAMC is able to provide as a result of your continued support and generous donations. We have even more plans in the future to reach as many people as possible with health services, health education, and scholarships for women who wish to attend nursing or medical school. Please see below for a few of our current projects in the pipeline for 2021:

* Regular seminars and webinars for virtual experts from Dhaka (the capital city of Bangladesh) and globally to present on a variety of issues including:
  + Mental Health
  + Hygiene
  + Nutrition
  + Pre-natal, Pregnancy, and Post-Natal Health
  + Menopause
  + High/Low Blood Pressure
  + Physiotherapy
* Introducing domestic violence awareness through webinars and presentations by experts
* Creating support groups for victims of domestic violence
* Increase the number of scholarships we distribute to students hoping to go to nursing or medical school. Currently, we provide one scholarship annually which covers the costs of 4 years of tuition for one student. We are hoping to be able to award at least 2 or 3 a year by next year, and gradually increase it to at least 5 scholarships a year.
* Expansion of SAMC by constructing an adjacent building that will serve as the Suraiya Ataur Nursing School (SANS). SANS will give students from the village and surrounding areas the opportunity to take courses and earn a degree in Nursing to further their education. They will then have the choice to intern at our SAMC clinic.