

IJA evening with Mavis Hyman

The Indian Jewish Association UK (IJA) organised an evening with Mavis Hyman, founder of the Children's Eye Care Centre, Orissa, India on Thursday, 27th November. She is a Jew with Indian roots. The hospital was founded in the memory of Mavis' daughter, Miriam, who was one of the tragic victims of the 7/7 bombings in London.

Asian Voice had a privilege to interview Mavis Hyman on her roots, causes behind establishment of the trust and her experiences!

AV: The Miriam Hyman Memorial trust is working very hard on its mission. Could you please give a brief history of how the trust came into being & what is its goal?

Miriam was 32 years old when she lost her life in the 7/7/05 London bombings; she was on the bus that exploded in Tavistock Square. We decided to respond as positively as possible by setting up a restricted Fund within a sight-saving charity, ORBIS UK. In two years £77,000 was raised with the help of friends, through a series of events. £5,000 was used to sup-



Mavis Hyman

Eye Care Centre was opened on 3rd July.

Our aims are to support the MHCECC within LVPEI, and to raise awareness of childhood blindness in the developing world. The long term aim is to contribute to the World Health Organization's "Vision 2020" initiative which aims to eradicate preventable blindness globally by the year 2020.

AV: After setting up the Miriam Hyman Children's Eye Care, have you closely monitored how successful the project has been? Is it working effectively as planned? How many patients have got free service and how many have been served in total since establishment?

The recent Quarterly

in Hyderabad (established in 1987) and the tertiary institute in Visakhapatnam serve the state of Andhra Pradesh. Other eye hospitals, particularly in urban centres, provide extensive eye care services.

AV: What are the India links of Miriam Hyman?

Miriam's links with India go back to the formation of a Jewish community of Iraqi origin in Kolkata at the end of the 18th century. I am from that community and immigrated to London in 1957. Miriam visited India twice and felt a strong connection with it.

AV: Having people killed in the Nariman Centre/Jewish Centre in Mumbai and several Jewish hostages in the Mumbai hotels, what would you like to say/comment about it?

We identify very strongly with all those involved in the terrorist attacks in Mumbai and grieve with them. Our experience has shown that while one is undoubtedly devastated, there is no question of being beaten

AV: What are the projects



back row from left to right: Professor Philip Bloom, John Levy (IJA Chairman), Ajay Aggarwal (IJA executive), Esther Hyman, Jayanti Patel (IJA Executive) Arjan Vekaria (IJA Executive), John Hyman, Mike Whine (IJA Secretary & Trustee); Front from left to right: Ramona Mehta (IJA Executive), Mavis Hyman

port a paediatric ophthalmologist from India in Moorfields Eye Hospital, London, for two months in 2006.

We decided that funds raised, together with compensation money for the loss of Miriam's life, would be more effectively used by partnering with eye care service providers. At the same time, L V Prasad Eye Institute (www.lvpei.org) was looking for a sponsor to equip a children's centre within their two-year-old institute in Bhubaneswar, Orissa. The Miriam Hyman Memorial Trust became a UK registered charity (No.1124032) in May 2008, and the Miriam Hyman Children's

Report from LVPEI (July-September) lists 1789 Outpatient consultations and 124 surgical procedures at the MHCECC. Approximately 50% of patients are treated free of charge.

AV: Why is the project only Eastern India oriented?

LVPEI Bhubaneswar (BLVPEI) serves a population of 50 million people (equal to the population of England). It is an enormous challenge to develop the infrastructure for screening and other eye care needs in this largely rural area. In the long term services will be extended to Orissa's neighbouring States. LVPEI's parent institute

that the charity has worked on already? What are the future plans of expanding?

Since May 2008 the Miriam Hyman Memorial Trust has been raising funds from Trusts, corporations and individuals. We support projects from training teachers to screen school children to developing a children's eye cancer facility.

Donations towards the eye cancer facility can be sent to the Miriam Hyman Memorial Trust, P.O. Box 63256, London N2 2AA.

Join the electronic Mailing List by emailing info@miriam-hyman.com.