

FREEDOM KIT BAGS

England & Wales - Charity number 1173656

Details

Status Registered

Legal form Trust

Registered 2017-07-03

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address 28 The Willows
Highworth
Swindon
SN6 7PG

Phone 01793764979

Email freedomkitbags@hotmail.com

Website freedomkitbags.org

Activities

Objects: THE RELIEF OF POVERTY AND THE PRESERVATION OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN NEPAL BY PROVIDING OR ASSISTING IN:- HEALTHCARE AND HEALTH RELATED PROJECTS- HEALTH RELATED EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RESEARCH- SUPPORT OF THOSE AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION- SUPPORT TO ENABLE INDIVIDUALS TO GENERATE A SUSTAINABLE INCOME

Activities: Freedom Kit Bags - eco friendly, sustainable, hygienic sanitary wear. Women and girls in rural Nepal have no access to sanitary wear leading to a lifetime of infection, social exclusion and indignity. Our kit bags are made in Nepal, mostly by poverty stricken women, generating an income to those who need it most. The bags give everything a woman needs for three years of hygienic sanitary wear.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Other Finance, Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Sponsors Or Undertakes Research
- **What:** The Advancement Of Health Or Saving Of Lives, The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty, Human Rights/religious Or Racial Harmony/equality Or Diversity
- **Who:** The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Nepal
- Throughout England And Wales

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-06-30	£99,196	£109,191	-	-
2024-06-30	£118,981	£92,276	-	-
2023-06-30	£75,260	£89,823	-	-
2022-06-30	£76,322	£90,327	-	-
2021-06-30	£90,289	£76,966	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
ROSA MARIE MATHESON	Chair	2017-06-08
ANNE FISHER		2017-06-08
BRIAN MILDENHALL		2017-06-08
DR IAN MATHESON		2018-06-09
Hanna-Gael Darney		2018-05-24

FREEDOM KIT BAGS

England & Wales - Charity number 1173656

Accounts

Freedom Kit Bags

*eco-friendly, sustainable, hygienic
sanitary wear*

Trustees Annual Report to 30 June 2025

Freedom Kit Bags (FKB) is a registered UK charity (1173656). The Freedom Kit Bag project began in late 2016 and the trustees decided to manage it through a charity, established in June 2017.

The main aim of the charity is to provide eco-friendly, hygienic, reusable sanitary wear to the women and girls of Nepal, alongside health and hygiene education so the wider community, including men and boys, understand menstruation, its role in reproduction and how everyone can stay healthy.

Trustees and Structure

The current trustees, who served during the year, are:

Dr Rosa M Matheson
Dr Ian Matheson
Mr Brian Mildenhall
Mrs Anne Fisher
Mrs Hanna-Gael Darney

The governing document is a deed of trust and the charity is unincorporated. None of the trustees receive a salary or personal benefit from the charity. The trustees meet regularly and are in constant discussion to raise funds, develop and manage the programme. We talk weekly with our ambassadors in Nepal via the internet.

Three of the trustees visit Nepal each year enabling us a first-hand review and management of the programme. The trustees personally pay a large contribution to the costs of these visits. Our last visit was in April 2025 and we will visit again in October 2026.

The trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and have taken this into account when carrying out their work. Likewise, risks are identified and mitigated. One of the key risks is to ensure our funds are well spent and fully accounted for and our regular visits to Nepal and working through trusted individuals known to us for many years helps to ensure this.

The trustees have significant experience of supporting work in Nepal gained over the past 17 years. They have a wide network of contacts engaged in health and education both in the UK and in Nepal.

We have two Nepalese ambassadors based in Nepal, essential to the programme. Their role includes – identifying community groups in need, planning distributions with local representatives, maintaining quality control, delivering education and empowerment talks, distributing kit bags, maintaining detailed accounts, raising our

profile, providing information, keeping detailed records of recipients of our kit bags, and carrying out follow up interviews to gain feedback from users.

Three of our sewing rooms are partnerships with three local Nepali organisations who have many years experience working in social development. They run many complimentary programmes around gender equality and social inclusion. Between them they have many contacts at local government level and are strong advocates of Freedom Kit Bags in their locality. In their own areas they carry out all the tasks ascribed to our ambassadors.

The need is great

Nepal is a very poor country. Adjusted for local prices and population, it is 17 times poorer than the UK. Over 80% of the population are mostly subsistence farmers. It's estimated that every second family has a member working abroad, usually in construction, warehousing or domestic work; around 25% of the national income comes from such remittances.

Women who are now in their 30s and 40s would have left school in their early teenage years. This was driven by poverty as parents could not afford school fees; the needs of the family for children to work in the home and the fields, collecting firewood or vegetation to feed their goats; the high rate of child marriage and the prevailing view that women did not need much education. Sadly, many of these factors still exist today.

Village primary schools have few resources other than some shared textbooks. At age 11 children move to secondary school, which for most means a walk of up to two hours to get to school and the same to return home.

Secondary schools are very basic by our standards. Often boys and girls use toilets of simple construction with no hooks or shelves to allow girls to change during their periods. As a result many miss school each month, fall behind in their studies and eventually drop out of education.

The upshot is a population with scant knowledge and understanding of the facts of menstruation and how to manage monthly periods in a hygienic and healthy way. Various myths and taboos feed into this knowledge-gap. In too many communities menstruating women are "untouchables" not allowed to go to their temple, not allowed to touch food, not allowed to touch men. Some believe if they touch plants, the plant will die. Young women and girls who challenge these ideas are told by their mothers they are bringing sin and shame to the family.

And, although illegal, Chhaupadi still exists: where young girls from the time of their first period are locked in a hut separate from the family. Every month they must endure this. Lighter forms of this practice exist, but no less harmful and discriminatory.

Consequently, women will use old clothes to make sanitary pads. Often they will be polyester lacking in absorbency so extra bulk is needed making them very uncomfortable. The women do not know to change often or about proper washing and drying – old clothes are put away damp so bacteria proliferate. Women suffer years of infection, discomfort and a lack of dignity. Problems and issues are not discussed openly, solutions easily become a low priority.

The national government gives funds to local governments to provide disposable pads to school girls. And some INGOs provide disposable pads. These programmes have real unintended consequences.

Disposable pads are very expensive in Nepal. They can cost from 12p to 25p per item depending on the difficulty of reaching the village (a significant proportion are more than two hours from a proper road). Typical nominal income is something like 25 times less than for the typical UK person. Imagine the problems we would have if one disposable pad cost from £3 to over £6.

By giving free disposable pads to school girls the government is encouraging a habit the girls cannot afford. We have heard first-hand accounts of young women wearing a disposable pad a whole day until it is thoroughly soaked and falling apart – because they cannot afford to replace it.

There is no easy way to dispose of a disposable pad in Nepal. In small towns rubbish is collected and then dumped by the sides of rivers. In a village there is no rubbish collection so pads are thrown in the bushes, sometimes buried in shallow pits, sometimes incinerated. Animals have died from eating discarded used pads.

The national government's initiative results in erratic provision, some schools are excluded from the programme, and mostly poor quality pads are provided – girls have told us they do not like to use them. Apart from this there is ample evidence to show disposable pads are environmentally more damaging than alternatives.

Freedom Kit Bags – education and a solution

We explain the facts about menstruation and its role in reproduction. We discuss common issues like discomfort, aches and pains, and what constitutes 'normal' for each person. We talk about healthy diets and the benefits of less sugar, spice and home-made alcohol.

We teach the need to wash hands and how to use pads correctly. We discuss the need to change often, to wash themselves with clean water rather than strong soaps.

Education is a vital first step, but alone is not enough. We need the women to experience a better way so they are motivated to maintain good practice and teach others. Every woman or girl who attends the education (and sometimes grandfathers, husbands and sons) is given a Freedom Kit Bag containing everything she needs to manage her periods for three years. Finally, we show how they can hand sew replacement pads when needed, using our pads as the template.

Our 'kit bags' are made in Nepal in one of our six sewing rooms giving some income to the women who make them. There are 12 cotton-rich reusable pads plus six thinner liners so women can add more absorbency when needed. We give three panties and three padholders to keep the pad in place with a waterproof lining to prevent leakage.

We include a small dry bag for used pads when changing away from home. There is soap to remind women to wash their hands plus a line and pegs to remind them to dry thoroughly in the sun. There is an attractive carry-purse so women and girls can take spare clean pads with them. Everything is contained in a larger bag made from recycled saris. Everything is colourful and celebratory.

All feedback is overwhelmingly positive. Women, girls, fathers, medics, social workers, local officials, police, teachers all praise our work and have welcomed us to almost 500 village events.

Review of activities

During the financial year we made and distributed **7,042** kit bags - the most ever. By the end of the 2025 calendar year the total since we started is an amazing **34,000**. It's remarkable and uplifting to think that so many women and girls (and many men and boys) will have a proper understanding of menstruation and the means to stay healthy because of this programme.



Collectively, these women will have **1,326,000** periods during the initial three years. They will bleed for around **5,967,000** days, and because of Freedom Kit Bags, they can face each of those days with dignity and comfort.

What's more, they can "afford" to change their pads **29,000,000** times without worry of the cost, without disposing of the used pads, and without infections and rashes.

Each change of pad costs our donors just **2.3p**. Each period costs only **51p**. Remarkable value, especially as this includes priceless education.

We now have sewing rooms in Chautara, Melamchi, Kathmandu, Butwal, Sanfebagar, and Nepalgunj. The last three are partnerships with local charities in Nepal, which we have developed over many years. Increasingly these three are gaining support from local governments. This often makes local distributions much easier to organise with officials in attendance to see for themselves the impact and quality of our programmes. Some have also given financial support.

In Chautara our sewing room is based in one room in an empty house (other rooms are used to store grain and crops). The three women here started by making 30 kit bags a month. That has steadily increased and now they make 150 kit bags a month. They have taught themselves how to maintain the sewing machines. It is easy to miss the significance of the income they earn from this regular work - without it they would need to find labouring work in the fields to sustain their young families.

Our Kathmandu sewing room was born out of the Covid pandemic. Many people faced an abrupt end to their income as tourism stopped and the effects are still in evidence today. We set up our sewing room in a family home where three women make kit bags, fitting the work around the family schedule.

In Butwal our partner is actively engaged with 10 local Municipalities. Each has attended a distribution event and have met together to discuss a way forward. They are

constrained by national procurement guidelines but are beginning to see how these exclude locally made solutions and foster a dependence on imports and a cost that most families cannot afford.

In Butwal we have trained a few older students (age 18) to be 'peer educators' who have now reached nearly 3,000 students to give them a better understanding of menstruation and menstrual hygiene alongside sexual health and the power to say "no".

Our partner in Sanfebagar has initiated a Dignified Menstruation Campaign across all 10 local governments in Achham district, which has now expanded to the ward level. This has helped increase awareness, community ownership, and acceptance of menstrual health initiatives. Encouragingly, local governments are actively supporting this campaign and have begun allocating a budget for Freedom Kits Bag, demonstrating strong local commitment and enhancing the project's sustainability.

In April 2025 all our sewing rooms came together for a few days in Kathmandu. We shared our histories and challenges, listening to many powerful, heart-breaking accounts. We shared best practices and looked ahead to continuing success.

We attended nearly 100 education and distribution events during the year - to schools, women's groups, hospitals, health posts, and women's safe houses in many parts of Nepal.



Increasingly when we visit schools we also invite the mothers of the students. This allows them to learn together and continue open conversations at home. It's not always possible for mothers to come into school, if rice needs planting or crops must be harvested. Often our ambassador will then go to the fields to teach the women there or hold evening classes, so no one is excluded.



Our educational flash cards are now available digitally along with a Nepalese transcript of the educational content. We make these available to schools and midwives to help reinforce the correct messages and consistent education..



Every place we visit we see the need for education, greater understanding and inexpensive, environmentally friendly products for women and girls to manage their periods.

Our Freedom Kit Bags are a delight bringing comfort, dignity and the freedom to live without harmful constraints and practices.

There are still far too many taboos and harmful practices. Yet in all these places we are warmly welcomed and everyone is keen for our education. Change is happening, albeit slowly.



Thank you

Support from so many organisations, many of whom give regularly, has helped to make this happen.

There are too many organisations and individuals to list here. The trustees simply wish to acknowledge this tremendous support and say a heart-felt "Thank you" to all who have given.

And 34,000 women and girls from Nepal say a grateful "dhanyabad".

Women and girls continue to tell their stories; the following two accounts given in earlier reports are, sadly, still common stories and worth repeating. They show our work is far from finished.

Adolescent Girl (Rupandehi): *"I found today's program very impactful. Despite being a science student, I couldn't openly discuss menstruation before. Now, I feel confident to speak up and share this knowledge in my school, emphasizing that menstruation is neither shameful nor something to hide. You must visit my school as well." She shared a tragic incident where her close friend, after being mocked by boys for dropping a*

disposable pad, could not bear the humiliation and committed suicide. This event deeply affected her and inspired her desire to work on this issue.

Rekha: *"When I had my first period, I was very young, and it happened on the day of my uncle's wedding. When I saw the blood, I cried because I didn't know what it was. I told my mother, and she explained that it was a normal thing that all girls go through. My mother was understanding and did not believe in the old customs, but my father was very traditional and separated me from everyone, telling me I couldn't go near anyone, not even in the kitchen, the temple, or participate in the wedding. There were many guests, and everyone was enjoying the wedding, but I was isolated. No one gave me food for two days; I only drank water. I felt like I had committed a sin for having my period, and I still haven't been able to forget how terrible I felt."*

Funds

All our funds are from donations achieved through the efforts of the un-paid trustees and volunteers. A further two individuals are paid to identify and help contact grant giving foundations and trusts across the UK. Our accounts are set out below

The charity's reserves at 30 June 2025 reduced to £77,527. The trustees intend to hold a reserve to enable production and distribution to continue for around nine months. It's very important for our sewing rooms to plan ahead and we want to give them the confidence to do so. Maintaining a reserve enables that and helps protect against fluctuating income.

Our income for the year reduced to £99,196. Many of our donors are repeat supporters and we understand that for some they will have a limit on how often they can support a cause. We, therefore, put in considerable effort to find new supporters and this is not easy in a crowded space.

Our charitable expenditure at £84,279 was a planned increase over the year. Currently we are benefitting from a strong exchange rate of around £1=167npr to 185npr over the year; in 2019 it was closer to £1=145npr. The stronger exchange rate has offset local inflation.

The Other Expenses shown in the accounts include bank charges transferring funds to Nepal and some UK print costs for our newsletter. The contribution the charity made to the trustees costs of visiting Nepal to see things first hand are also included. The trustees also personally contribute to these costs.

These visits allow us to monitor the sewing rooms, working conditions and practices, attend distributions, meet with local government and health workers. This gives us valuable insight, helps maintain high standards and gives assurance as to the controls and effectiveness of the programme.

Our next visit will be in October 2026 and so for the current financial year 2025/26 there will not be a trustee visit and no costs arising.

Accounts

For the period 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025

	2024/25	£	2023/234	£
Receipts				
Grants and donations		99,196		118,981
Payments				
Charitable activities		84,279		74,525
Cost of Fundraising		17,448		16,793
Other expenses		7,465		959
Total cost		109,191		92,276
Surplus/(Deficit)		(9,995)		26,705
Cash and bank at 1 July 2024		87,522		
Total reserves		77,527		
Represented by				
Cash and bank at 30 June 2025		77,527		

Notes to the Accounts:

None of the trustees received a remuneration or personal benefit from the charity
The charity has no UK employees

We have a proven track record of delivering a quality sustainable solution, remarkable value for money, education and community understanding, and above all we are changing lives, improving equality and health for thousands.

We have partnerships in place that can sustain our work over the coming years and increasingly draw on local resources.

Digitally signed on behalf of the trustees:

BRIAN MILDENHALL

Mr Brian Mildenhall
3 March 2026

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Freedom Kit Bags

On accounts for the year
ended30th June 2025Charity no
(if any)

1173656

Set out on pages

Financial statement attached

Responsibilities and
basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30/06/2025.

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

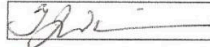
Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Date:

4/2/2026

Name:

Terry John Williams

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

Retired accountant

Address:

36 Bydemill Gardens, Highworth, Swindon, SN6 7BS.

FREEDOM KIT BAGS

England & Wales - Charity number 1173656

Accounts

Freedom Kit Bags

*eco-friendly, sustainable, hygienic
sanitary wear*

Trustees Annual Report to 30 June 2024

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Trustees and Structure

The current trustees, who served during the year, are:

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The governing document is a deed of trust and the charity is unincorporated. None of the trustees receive a salary or personal benefit from the charity. The trustees meet regularly and are in constant discussion to raise funds, develop and manage the programme. We talk weekly with our ambassadors in Nepal via the internet.

Three of the trustees visit Nepal each year enabling us a first-hand review and management of the programme. The trustees personally pay around one half of the costs of these visits. Our last visit was in March/April 2024 and the next will be in April 2025.

The trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and have taken this into account when carrying out their work. Likewise, risks are identified and mitigated. One of the key risks is to ensure our funds are well spent and fully accounted for and our regular visits to Nepal and working through trusted individuals known to us for many years helps to ensure this.

The trustees have significant experience of supporting work in Nepal gained over the past 16 years. They have a wide network of contacts engaged in health and education both in the UK and in Nepal.

We have two Nepalese ambassadors based in Nepal, essential to the programme. Their role includes – identifying community groups in need, planning distributions with local representatives, maintaining quality control, delivering education and empowerment talks, distributing kit bags, maintaining detailed accounts, raising our

profile, providing information, keeping detailed records of recipients of our kit bags, and carrying out follow up interviews to gain feedback from users.

Three of our sewing rooms are partnerships with three local Nepali organisations who have many years experience working in social development. They run many complimentary programmes around gender equality and social inclusion. Between them they have many contacts at local government level and are strong advocates of Freedom Kit Bags in their locality. In their own areas they carry out all the tasks ascribed to our ambassadors.

The need is great

Nepal is a very poor country. Adjusted for local prices and population, it is 17 times poorer than the UK. Over 80% of the population are mostly subsistence farmers. It's estimated that every second family has a member working abroad, usually in construction, warehousing or domestic work; around 25% of the national income comes from such remittances.

Women who are now in their 30s and 40s would have left school in their early teenage years. This was driven by poverty as parents could not afford school fees; the needs of the family for children to work in the home and the fields, collecting firewood or vegetation to feed their goats; the high rate of child marriage and the prevailing view that women did not need much education. Sadly, many of these factors still exist today.

Although now illegal, child marriage is still too common. Village primary schools have few resources other than some shared textbooks. At age 11 children move to secondary school, which for most means a walk of up to two hours to get to school and the same to return home.

Secondary schools are very basic by our standards. Often boys and girls share toilets of simple construction with no hooks or shelves to allow girls to change during their periods. As a result many miss school each month, fall behind in their studies and eventually drop out of education.

The upshot is a population with scant knowledge and understanding of the facts of menstruation and how to manage monthly periods in a hygienic and healthy way. Various myths and taboos feed into this knowledge-gap. In too many communities menstruating women are "untouchables" not allowed to go to their temple, not allowed to touch food, not allowed to touch men. Some believe if they touch plants, the plant will die. Young women and girls who challenge these ideas are told by their mothers they are bringing sin and shame to the family.

And, although illegal, Chhaupadi still exists: where young girls from the time of their first period are locked in a hut separate from the family. Every month they must endure this. Lighter forms of this practice exist, but no less harmful and discriminatory.

Consequently, women will use old clothes to make sanitary pads. Often they will be polyester lacking in absorbency so extra bulk is needed making them very uncomfortable. The women do not know to change often or about proper washing and drying – old clothes are put away damp so bacteria proliferate. Women suffer years of infection, discomfort and a lack of dignity. Problems and issues are not discussed openly, solutions easily become a low priority.

The national government gives funds to local governments to provide disposable pads to school girls. And some INGOs provide disposable pads. These programmes have real unintended consequences.

Disposable pads are very expensive in Nepal. They can cost from 12p to 25p per item depending on the difficulty of reaching the village (a significant proportion are more than two hours from a proper road). Typical nominal income is something like 25 times less than for the typical UK person. Imagine the problems we would have if one disposable pad cost from £3 to over £6.

By giving free disposable pads to school girls the government is encouraging a habit the girls cannot afford. We have heard first-hand accounts of young women wearing a disposable pad a whole day and until it is thoroughly soaked and falling apart – because they cannot afford to replace it.

There is no easy way to dispose of a disposable pad in Nepal. In small towns rubbish is collected and then dumped by the sides of rivers. In a village there is no rubbish collection so pads are thrown in the bushes, sometimes buried in shallow pits, sometimes incinerated. Animals have died from eating discarded used pads.

The national government's initiative results in erratic provision, some schools are excluded from the programme, and mostly poor quality pads are provided – girls have told us they do not like to use them. Apart from this there is ample evidence to show disposable pads are environmentally more damaging than alternatives.

Freedom Kit Bags – education and a solution

We explain the facts about menstruation and its role in reproduction. We discuss common issues like discomfort, aches and pains, and what constitutes 'normal' for each person. We talk about healthy diets and the benefits of less sugar, spice and home-made alcohol.

We teach the need to wash hands and how to use pads correctly. We discuss the need to change often, to wash themselves with clean water rather than strong soaps.

Education is a vital first step, but alone is not enough. We need the women to experience a better way so they are motivated to maintain good practice and teach others. Every woman or girl who attends the education (and sometimes grandfathers, husbands and sons) is given a Freedom Kit Bag containing everything she needs to manage her periods for three years. Finally, we show how they can hand sew replacement pads when needed, using our pads as the template.

Our 'kit bags' are made in Nepal in one of our six sewing rooms giving some income to the women who make them. There are 12 cotton-rich reusable pads plus six thinner liners so women can add more absorbency when needed. We give three panties and three padholders to keep the pad in place with a waterproof lining to prevent leakage.

We include a small dry bag for used pads when changing away from home. There is soap to remind women to wash their hands plus a line and pegs to remind them to dry thoroughly in the sun. There is an attractive carry-purse so women and girls can take spare clean pads with them. Everything is contained in a larger bag made from recycled saris. Everything is colourful and celebratory.

All feedback is overwhelmingly positive. Women, girls, fathers, medics, social workers, local officials, police, teachers all praise our work and have welcomed us to over 400 village events.

Review of activities

During the financial year we made and distributed 4,118 kit bags and, including those distributed to the end of 2024, the total since we started is now 27,109. It's remarkable and uplifting to think that so many women and girls (and some men and boys) will have a proper understanding of menstruation and the means to stay healthy because of this programme.



Collectively, these women will have 1,057,250 periods during the initial three years. They will bleed for around 4,757,630 days, and because of Freedom Kit Bags, they can face each of those days with dignity and comfort.

What's more, they can "afford" to change their pads almost 24,000,000 times without worry of the cost, without disposing of the used pads, and without infections and rashes.

Each change of pad costs our donors just 2.3p. Each period costs only 51p. Remarkable value, especially as this includes priceless education.

We now have sewing rooms in Chautara, Melamchi, Kathmandu, Butwal, Sanfebagar, and Nepalgunj. The last three are partnerships with local charities in Nepal, which we have developed over the past few years. We are hopeful this will lead to increasing funding from local governments - for now their support makes it easier to organise distributions and small contributions have been made for local transport.

Initially our production was mostly handled by a small family business in Kathmandu. This gave us consistency and easy modifications to the design, but we always envisaged community, not for profit, production sites giving employment to local women. We are very happy this has been achieved and now around 20 Nepali women earn some income by making kit bags or giving the education to village women and girls.

In Chautara our sewing room is based in one room in an empty house (other rooms are used to store grain and crops). The three women here started by making 50 kit bags a month. That has steadily increased and now they make 150 kit bags a month. They have taught themselves how to maintain the sewing machines. It is easy to miss the significance of the income they earn from this regular work - without it they would need to find labouring work in the fields to sustain their young families.

Our Kathmandu sewing room was born out of the Covid pandemic. Many people faced an abrupt end to their income as tourism stopped and the dire effects are still in evidence. We set up our sewing room in a family home where three women make kit bags, fitting the work around the family schedule.

In December 2023, Butwal and Sanfebagar sewing rooms joined our ambassador Nirmala to distribute 500 kit bags and other emergency supplies (separately funded) to the Jajarkot area. In November 2023 this area was affected by a large earthquake causing extensive damage and loss of homes.



Three trustees visited this area in April 2024. From Kathmandu it's a 31 hour drive to Nepalgunj, then another four hours to Jarjarkot and another two hours to where the displaced people are now living. We gave a further 200 kit bags, mostly to landless women of the lowest caste whose only source of income is to fish in the local river. A further 200 will be distributed in early 2025.

We gave 50 kit bags to each of two village medical posts in the area. This matches the number of expected births in a year. Each new mother will receive education from the midwives and a kit bag. We also gave each a large tent to serve as makeshift birthing centres - one had been given in January and we met with the mother and first born baby in that tent. A tent doesn't sound much, but it's cleaner and more comfortable than the very basic room occupied by the health post and is much valued by the midwives and new mothers.

Back in Butwal we met again with elected representatives of 10 municipalities (three more than in the previous year). This year there were more representatives from health and education offices. Many were newly elected and so we presented again the cost effectiveness of our kit bags, the importance of our education programme and the testimony of many users.

We challenged the pitiful quality of the government paid for disposable pads given to some schoolgirls. With many powerful women's voices all agreed our kit bags were far superior. But financial decisions are made elsewhere and perseverance is needed.

Progress is being made. The 10 municipalities are keen to promote our kit bags. Each municipality has nine wards and each ward has elected officials in charge of almost all

activity. Many of these wards are asking us to distribute to their villages. The ward officials make it easier for us to organise and promote events, they often make rooms available and some provide refreshments for the attendees. Currently this is a modest but valuable contribution - a first step to getting financial support.

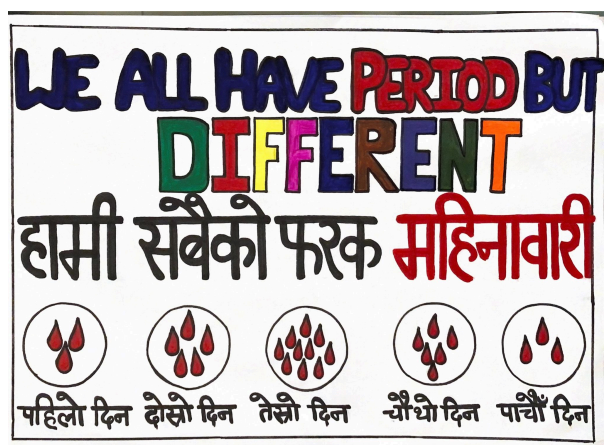
One municipality in Lumbini funded the training of 30 women by our team and provided them with sewing machines they can share. The women are from three different local women's groups and they will independently make kit bags for their villages. A similar scheme is underway in Jhapa in the far east of Nepal.

In Butwal we have given sewing lessons to 300 teenage girls. They are taught to hand sew the pads and pad holders. These are all "dirt-poor" girls. The trustees attended one of the sessions - it was held in a cattle shed. Tarpaulin was laid down for a clean surface while two buffalo were secured in the corner.

The aim is to expand the use of reusable pads beyond what our normal programme can do. The girls were given the normal FKB education. As expected we learned from this first exercise and this will be reflected in the next round of training. For example, the girls were asked to bring clean cloths to use. What they brought was closer to what we would call dirty rags. A simple difference of understanding and experience. In future we will provide the material so girls can see the difference. It will cost more, but the understanding it creates is immeasurable.

Nepalgunj is our newest sewing room. We have known the people here for some years and worked with them on several distributions. We have committed to funding 50 kit bags a month. Our hope is that through their local contacts they will be able to fund additional kit bags.

Sanfebagar sewing room has also met with two municipalities in their district. Both have agreed to support FKB and promote our work. They have both pledged to find other ways to develop a partnership.



Our educational flash cards are now available digitally along with a Nepalese transcript of the educational content. We make these available to schools and midwives to help ensure the correct messages are given and the education is consistent.

We have continued our distributions out of Charikot hospital. We have given them a further 110 kit bags for the medical team to give to women as part of their community work encouraging pregnant women to attend antenatal checks.

Similarly we have given 50 kit bags to the medical post in the village of Chyamtang close to Tibet. Our long standing friendship with this village ensures the kit bags arrive safely to this remote area.



Every place we visit we see the need for education, greater understanding and inexpensive, environmentally friendly products for women and girls to manage their periods.

There are still far too many taboos and harmful practices. It is common to hear that girls are sent away to a relative, or locked in a room, during their periods. Women are barred from family events, weddings and funerals, if it is known they are having a period. Menstruating women are not allowed in their temple.

Yet in all these places we are warmly welcomed and everyone is keen for our education. Change is happening, albeit slowly.

Support from many organisations has helped to make this happen. The trustees wish to acknowledge this tremendous support and say "Thank you" to all who have given.

Feedback from the women is important to help ensure our work remains meaningful. Below are some extracts from our field reports (names have been changed).

"In our conversations with the locals, it became evident that discussing menstruation was a taboo, met with embarrassment and shame, especially among men. The community members revealed that nobody in the village had initiated discussions or organised programmes addressing menstrual health. For them, menstruation was considered solely a woman's concern, limited to discussions about menstrual cramps and rarely extending beyond that.

However, as we delved into broader conversations about sexual health, women gradually opened up about the previously unshared challenges they were facing. Issues such as vaginal infections, unbearable lower abdominal pain, and uterine prolapse (one woman described a overhang from her vagina but not been seeking medical help due to lack of money and hesitation) were disclosed. This condition, uterus prolapse, added a significant layer of physical discomfort and highlighted the lack of access to healthcare resources. Within the group, seven women were identified to be experiencing some form of prolapse, and regrettably, they are unaware of their condition, enduring considerable pain in their daily lives."

Adolescent Girl (Gargare, Rupandehi): *"I found today's program very impactful. Despite being a science student, I couldn't openly discuss menstruation before. Now, I feel confident to speak up and share this knowledge in my school, emphasizing that menstruation is neither shameful nor something to hide. You must visit my school as well." She shared a tragic incident where her close friend, after being mocked by boys*

for dropping a disposable pad, could not bear the humiliation and committed suicide. This event deeply affected her and inspired her desire to work on this issue.

Rekha: *"When I had my first period, I was very young, and it happened on the day of my uncle's wedding. When I saw the blood, I cried because I didn't know what it was. I told my mother, and she explained that it was a normal thing that all girls go through. My mother was understanding and did not believe in the old customs, but my father was very traditional and separated me from everyone, telling me I couldn't go near anyone, not even in the kitchen, the temple, or participate in the wedding. There were many guests, and everyone was enjoying the wedding, but I was isolated. No one gave me food for two days; I only drank water. I felt like I had committed a sin for having my period, and I still haven't been able to forget how terrible I felt."*

Kalpna, Deputy Mayor: *"We didn't have these kinds of pads before, nor did we have good cloth. I had to walk two hours to get to school, and because we didn't have proper cloth, my dress would get wet before I reached school, and the boys would tease me. I felt ashamed, and that's why I used to miss school during my period."*

Saru: *"When I had my first period, I was kept separate for 7 days. I wasn't allowed to see my father or brothers, I couldn't go out in the sun, I couldn't go to school, and I felt very ashamed. I thought menstruation was a sin, and I regretted being a girl. But now participating in this program, helped me not to regret any more for being a girl."*

We have a proven track record of delivering a quality sustainable solution, remarkable value for money, education and community understanding, and above all we are changing lives, improving equality and health for thousands. We have partnerships in place that can sustain our work over the coming years and increasingly draw on local resources.

All our funds are from donations achieved through the efforts of the un-paid trustees and volunteers. A further two individuals are paid to identify and help contact grant giving foundations and trusts across the UK. Our accounts are set out in a separate document.

Our work continues. We are making real progress

Digitally signed on behalf of the trustees:

BRIAN MILDENHALL

Mr Brian Mildenhall
13 February 2025

Freedom Kit Bags

*eco-friendly, sustainable, hygienic
sanitary wear*

Financial Accounts to 30 June 2024

Freedom Kit Bags (FKBs) is a registered UK charity (1173656), established in July 2017.

The aim of the charity is to provide eco-friendly, hygienic, reusable sanitary wear to women and girls in Nepal, alongside health and hygiene education so the wider community, including men and boys, understand menstruation, its role in reproduction and how everyone can stay healthy. The Trustees Annual Report is available separately.

Funds

The charity's reserves at 30 June 2024 increased to £87,522. The trustees intend to hold a reserve to enable production and distribution to continue for around nine months. This increase is largely due to a number of donations towards the end of the financial year and has since reduced to around £75,000 by the end of 2024.

Our income for the year increased significantly to £118,981 due to a couple of significant one-off donations. Our charitable expenditure at £74,525 was similar to last year. Currently we are benefitting from a strong exchange rate of around £1=175npr; in 2019 it was closer to £1=145npr.

The Other Expenses shown in the accounts include bank charges transferring funds to Nepal and print costs for our annual newsletter.

We are immensely grateful for the fantastic support we have received from many different organisations and individuals. On behalf of the thousands who have benefitted, we say "dhanyabad".

We have a proven track record of delivering a quality sustainable solution, remarkable value for money, education and community understanding, and above all we are changing lives, improving equality and health for thousands.

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All our funds are from donations achieved through the efforts of the un-paid trustees and volunteers. A further two individuals are paid to identify and help contact grant giving foundations and trusts across the UK.

Signed on behalf of the trustees:

Mr Brian Mildenhall

 13/2/25

Freedom Kit Bags, registered charity 1173656
28, The Willows, Highworth, Wiltshire, SN6 7PG

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Email: freedomkitbags@hotmail.com
www.freedomkitbags.org

Accounts

For the period 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

	2023/24	£	2022/23	£
Receipts				
Grants and donations		118,981		75,260
Payments				
Charitable activities		74,525		79,715
Cost of Fundraising		16,793		9,423
Other expenses		959		686
Total cost		92,276		89,823
Surplus/(Deficit)		26,705		(14,563)
Cash and bank at 1 July 2023		60,816		
Total reserves		87,522		
Represented by				
Cash and bank at 30 June 2024		87,521		

Notes to the Accounts:

None of the trustees received a remuneration or personal benefit from the charity

The charity has no UK employees

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Freedom Kit Bags

On accounts for the year
ended

30th June 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1173656

Set out on pages

Financial statement attached

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30/06/2024.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.


Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Date:

6/2/25

Name:

Terry John Williams

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

Retired accountant

Address:

36 Bydemill Gardens, Highworth, Swindon, SN6 7BS.

Freedom Kit Bags

*eco-friendly, sustainable, hygienic
sanitary wear*

Financial Accounts to 30 June 2024

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Signed on behalf of the trustees:

Mr Brian Mildenhall

 13/2/25

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Cash and bank at 1 July 2023		60,816		
Total reserves		87,522		
Represented by				
Cash and bank at 30 June 2024		87,521		

Notes to the Accounts:

None of the trustees received a remuneration or personal benefit from the charity

The charity has no UK employees

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Freedom Kit Bags

On accounts for the year
ended

30th June 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1173656

Set out on pages

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Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

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I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Date:

6/2/25

Name:

Terry John Williams

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

Retired accountant

Address:

36 Bydemill Gardens, Highworth, Swindon, SN6 7BS.

FREEDOM KIT BAGS

England & Wales - Charity number 1173656

Accounts

Freedom Kit Bags

*eco-friendly, sustainable, hygienic
sanitary wear*

Trustees Annual Report to 30 June 2023

Freedom Kit Bags (FKBs) is a registered UK charity (1173656). The Freedom Kit Bag project began in late 2016 and it was quickly obvious it had great potential so the trustees decided to manage it through a charity, established in June 2017.

The main aim of the charity is to provide eco-friendly, hygienic, reusable sanitary wear to the women and girls of Nepal, alongside health and hygiene education so the wider community, including men and boys, understand menstruation, its role in reproduction and how everyone can stay healthy.

Trustees and Structure

The current trustees, who served during the year, are:

Dr Rosa M Matheson
Dr Ian Matheson
Mr Brian Mildenhall
Mrs Anne Fisher
Mrs Hanna-Gael Darney

The governing document is a deed of trust and the charity is unincorporated. None of the trustees receive a salary or personal benefit from the charity. The trustees meet regularly and are in constant discussion to raise funds, develop and manage the programme. We talk weekly with our ambassadors in Nepal via the internet.

Three of the trustees visit Nepal each year (about 7 weeks each person) enabling us a first-hand review and management of the programme. The trustees personally pay around one half of the costs of these visits. Our last visit was in March/April 2023 and the next will be in March/April 2024.

The trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and have taken this into account when carrying out their work. Likewise, risks are identified and mitigated. One of the key risks is to ensure our funds are well spent and fully accounted for and our regular visits to Nepal and working through trusted individuals known to us for many years helps to ensure this.

We have four Nepalese ambassadors based in Nepal, essential to the programme. Their role includes – identifying community groups in need, planning distributions with local representatives, maintaining quality control, delivering education and empowerment talks, distributing kit bags, maintaining detailed accounts, raising our profile, providing information, keeping detailed records of recipients of our kit bags, and carrying out follow up interviews to gain feedback from users.

The trustees have significant experience of supporting work in Nepal gained over the past 14 years. They have a wide network of contacts engaged in health and education fields of work in the UK and in Nepal.

Understanding the need

Nepal is a very poor country. Adjusted for local prices and population, it is 17 times poorer than the UK. Over 80% of the population are mostly subsistence farmers. It's estimated that every second family has a member working abroad usually in construction, warehousing or domestic work; around 25% of the national income comes from such remittances.

Women who are now in their 30s and 40s would have left school in their early teenage years. This was driven by poverty as parents could not afford school fees; the needs of the family for children to work in the home and the fields, collecting firewood or vegetation to feed their goats; the high rate of child marriage and the prevailing view that women did not need much education. Sadly, many of these factors still exist today.

Although now illegal, child marriage is still too common. Village primary schools are basic with few resources other than some shared textbooks. At age 11 children move to secondary school, which for most means a walk of up to two hours to get to school and the same to return home.

Secondary schools are very basic by our standards. Often boys and girls share toilets of simple construction with no hooks or shelves to allow girls to change during their periods. As a result many miss school each month, fall behind in their studies and eventually drop out of education early.

The upshot is a population with scant knowledge and understanding of the facts of menstruation and how to manage monthly periods in a hygienic and healthy way. Various myths and taboos feed into this knowledge-gap. In too many communities menstruating women are "untouchables" not allowed to go to their temple, not allowed to touch food, not allowed to touch men. Some believe if they touch plants, the plant will die. Young women and girls who challenge these ideas are told by their mothers they are bringing sin and shame to the family.

And, although also illegal, Chhaupadi still exists: where young girls from the time of their first period are locked in a hut separate from the family. Every month they must endure this. Lighter forms of this practice exist, but no less harmful and discriminatory.

Consequently, women will use old clothes to make sanitary pads. Often they will be polyester lacking in absorbency so extra bulk is needed making them very uncomfortable. The women do not know to change often or about proper washing and drying – old clothes are put away damp so bacteria proliferate. Women suffer years of infection, discomfort and a lack of dignity. Problems and issues are not discussed openly, solutions easily become a low priority.

The national government gives funds to local governments to provide disposable pads to school girls. And some INGOs provide disposable pads. These programmes have real unintended consequences.

Disposable pads are very expensive in Nepal. They can cost from 12p to 25p per item depending on the difficulty of reaching the village (a significant proportion are more than two hours from a proper road). Typical nominal income is something like 25 times less than for the typical UK person. Imagine the problems we would have if one disposable pad cost from £3 to over £6.

By giving free disposable pads to school girls the government is encouraging a habit the girls cannot afford. We have heard first-hand accounts of young women wearing a disposable pad a whole day and until it is thoroughly soaked and falling apart – because they cannot afford to replace it.

There is no easy way to dispose of a disposable pad in Nepal. In small towns rubbish is collected and then dumped by the sides of rivers. In a village there is no rubbish collection so pads are thrown in the bushes, sometimes buried in shallow pits, sometimes incinerated. Animals have died from eating discarded used pads.

The national government's initiative results in erratic provision, some schools are excluded from the programme, and mostly poor quality pads are provided – girls have told us they do not like to use them. Apart from this there is ample evidence to show disposable pads are environmentally more damaging than alternatives.

Freedom Kit Bags – education and a solution leading to empowerment

We explain the facts about menstruation and its role in reproduction. We discuss common issues like discomfort, aches and pains, and what constitutes 'normal' for each person. We talk about healthy diets and the benefits of less sugar, spice and home-made alcohol.

We teach the need to wash hands and how to use pads correctly. We discuss the need to change often, to wash themselves with clean water rather than strong soaps.

Education is a vital first step, but alone is not enough. We need the women to experience a better way so they are motivated to maintain good practice and teach others. Every woman or girl who attends the education (and sometimes grandfathers, husbands and sons) is given a Freedom Kit Bag containing everything she needs to manage her periods for three years. Finally, we show how they can hand sew replacement pads when needed, using our pads as the template.

Our 'kit bags' are made in Nepal in one of our six sewing rooms giving some income to the women who make them. There are 12 cotton-rich reusable pads plus six thinner liners so women can add more absorbency when needed. We give three panties and three padholders to keep the pad in place with a waterproof lining to prevent leakage.

We include a small dry bag for used pads when changing away from home. There is soap to remind women to wash their hands plus a line and pegs to remind them to dry thoroughly in the sun. There is an attractive carry-purse so women and girls can take spare clean pads with them. Everything is contained in a larger bag made from recycled saris. Everything is colourful and celebratory.

All feedback is overwhelmingly positive. Women, girls, fathers, medics, social workers, local officials, police, teachers all praise our work and have welcomed us to over 300 village events.

Review of activities

During the financial year we made and distributed 5,080 kit bags and, including those distributed to January 2024, the total since we started is now 21,576. It's remarkable and uplifting to think that so many women and girls (and some men and boys) will have a proper understanding of menstruation and the means to stay healthy because of this programme.

We often convert this to a 'days of dignity' figure using averages from some UK research (average period of 4.5 days). Our kit bags are lasting at least three years - at least 39 periods. That's over 3,786,000 days of comfort, confidence and dignity directly attributable to our Freedom Kit Bags.

Every place we visit we see the need for education, greater understanding and inexpensive, environmentally friendly products for women and girls to manage their periods. There are still far too many taboos and practices that are harmful. It is common to hear that girls are sent away to a relative, or locked in a room, during their first periods. Women are barred from family events, such as weddings and funerals, if it is known they are having a period. Menstruating women are not allowed in their temple.

In all these places we are warmly welcomed and everyone is keen for the education. Change is happening. Local government and health officials are receptive but reticent to take the next step - purchasing Freedom Kit Bags for school girls and promoting them to women.

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When we were in Nepal in April and, with our Sewing Room partners in Butwal, we arranged a conference of local politicians, officials, health and social workers. Around 30 people. We presented our programme, compared the cost to a lifetime of disposable pads, considered the environmental impact of disposables, and discussed the health issues arising from current practices. We invited half a dozen women who have been using our kit bags to give their testimony and they spoke powerfully in our favour.

All the officials were impressed. However, there were some unspoken barriers to switching away from disposables to our kit bags for their schoolgirl programme. The finance minister spoke of needing higher approval and national guidelines. But these are early days, progress has been made and we will follow up with more discussion and persuasion when we visit in 2024.

Our Butwal Sewing Room have recently trained 20 older school girls (17/18 year-olds) to be advocates for healthy menstruation. This is a new, small initiative to promote healthy attitudes, proper understanding and to develop links so girls have someone to talk to should they have concerns or worries.

Support from many organisations has helped to make this happen. The trustees wish to acknowledge this tremendous support and say "Thank you" to all who have given.

This support has also helped our Chautara Sewing Room. This is on a smaller scale than Butwal. Sarita, Radhika and Gita between them now make up to 75 kit bags a month, working part time. They have now become very proficient and if funds allowed could easily double their production.

Elsewhere some notable distributions include to Charikot hospital where new mothers are given a kit bag after childbirth. In Melamchi we gave over 100 kit bags in a small settlement several hundred metres above the river floor, a difficult place to reach. In Rasuwa we distributed 400 kit bags in several villages and schools - they had been asking for more than two years for us to come.

In Kathmandu Valley, Kapan is well known for its monasteries. It is also becoming known as a place for internal refugees. We did a distribution in Payuitar, Kapan and our Ambassador Sumi wrote:

'Here people have come from their own different villages hoping for a better life and better times for their children's future. They have made tin-shack-houses out of metal roofing, where we see no proper facilities of toilet or water supply. They work mostly in low-skilled, hard labour work like in house building, carrying things in baskets on their backs.

All the people were so happy and delighted to come and sit and get education and FKBs. They thanked us for coming to their place, I too am delighted to know that with our Freedom Kit Bags, we have made their lives so much better... more comfortable, more healthy, and more dignified.'

28 May 2023 was Menstrual Health and Hygiene Day. Working with three other like-minded organisations we went to Shree Krishna Ratna Ganga Higher Secondary School to educate, discuss, share and celebrate with boy and girl students. Led by Nirmala (our Ambassador) they talked about - your body and how it changes; of menstrual health and hygiene and its importance to reproductive health; about molestation, bad touch, abuse, harassment, and negative remarks linked to menstruation. The day was greatly enjoyed by all.

Our largest distribution took place in the summer. In Gorkha district we distributed 1,000 kit bags in two villages - Gumba and Larpak. This involved a 10 hour drive to Machhakolha followed by an 8 hours walk to Gumba and a further 4 hours walk to Larpak. All in very steep, tricky terrain. It needed 13 porters to carry the kit bags, mostly women keen to earn some money.

In Gumba the distributions started at 6am because of the women's fieldwork, even so some of the women were too busy planting potatoes to attend. Our team went to the fields to do a presentation during a break from the women's work. They were thrilled.

Feedback from the women receiving our education and kit bags is important to help ensure our work is appreciated and meaningful. Below are some extracts from our field reports.

Maya Devi Magar (name changed) says:

"After the earthquake devastated our homes and dreams, life has been a challenging journey for me. I am Maya Devi Magar, living in Ward No. 14 of Aathbiskot Municipality in West Rukum. At 26, I got married at the age of 15, I am a mother of three girls, who used to attend school until the earthquake disrupted everything. Surviving here is tough, especially since my source of income, goat husbandry, was wiped out in the earthquake. I used to sell goats during Dashain to make a living and worked on others' fields since we don't have our own. My husband, working in India, sends money occasionally. Amidst these struggles, a ray of hope comes through relief teams. Your organisation is the fourth to visit, and surprisingly, no one had provided me with a menstrual bag before. It's strange how menstrual products are often overlooked as essential supplies. This thoughtful gesture is overwhelming; it ensures I can manage my menstruation for the next three years, providing a sense of relief in these challenging times."

One of our Ambassadors writes:

"In our conversations with the locals, it became evident that discussing menstruation was a taboo, met with embarrassment and shame, especially among men. The community members revealed that nobody in the village had initiated discussions or organised programmes addressing menstrual health. For them, menstruation was considered solely a woman's concern, limited to discussions about menstrual cramps and rarely extending beyond that."

However, as we delved into broader conversations about sexual health, women gradually opened up about the previously unshared challenges they were facing. Issues such as vaginal infections, unbearable lower abdominal pain, and uterine prolapse (one woman described a overhang from her vagina but not been seeking medical help due to lack of money and hesitation) were disclosed. This condition, uterus prolapse, added a significant layer of physical discomfort and highlighted the lack of access to healthcare resources. Within the group, seven women were identified to be experiencing some form of prolapse, and regrettably, they are unaware of their condition, enduring considerable pain in their daily lives."

Another Ambassador writes:

"During our visit, in a discussion session, we invited women to privately share their concerns. Astonishingly, 19 women and girls raised their hands, indicating a pressing need for a safe space to discuss their problems. Among them was a 27-year-old woman married at the tender age of 13 and already a mother of three by the age of 20, shared a harrowing account of her deteriorating health. With teary eyes, she bravely shared her ordeal, detailing the pain experienced during intercourse and the added suffering of a prolapse. She described how it felt pushed inside, leaving her numb with pain each time. Heartbreakingly, when she communicated her discomfort to her husband and sought support, she was met with a threat of a second marriage. Her sobs echoed the profound challenges faced by these women, stirring deep emotions in all of us present."

Shanta Nepali (name changed) says:

"I'm Shanta Nepali, a 38-year-old working woman. I encountered issues with disposal pads as they caused irritation and itching. When I switched to homemade pads, they tended to slip, leading to embarrassing situations where others noticed. This shame kept me from going to work for several days, causing stress and a loss of dignity. The absence of suitable pads also resulted in anxiety during menstruation. Fortunately, I now use Freedom Kit Bags, ensuring the safety of my reproductive and mental health, as well as preserving my dignity. This invaluable gift has brought me peace, and I will always cherish it."

Freedom Kit Bags – the cost

The cost of one Freedom Kit Bag is just £25.

This covers all the costs of:

- Buying all materials in Nepal
- Making the kit bags in one of our sewing rooms and paying the ladies who make them
- Arranging village events where education and distribution take place
- The cost of transporting the kit bags, often to hard-to-reach places
- Keeping records, including local financial records (overseen and checked by the volunteer UK trustees)

A Freedom Kit Bag will last a woman three years.

During this time:

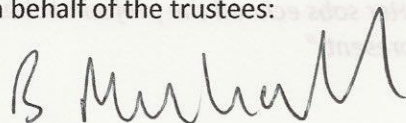
- She will have 39 periods; the education and kit bag will cost just 64p a period
- She should change her pad 22 times each period; the education and kit bag will cost 3p per use
- And during this time she will have 176 days of comfort and dignity
- Which is why our work to date provides 3,786,000 days of comfort and dignity

We now have a proven track record of delivering a quality sustainable solution, remarkable value for money, education and community understanding, and above all – we are changing lives, improving equality and health for thousands.

All our funds are from donations achieved through the efforts of the un-paid trustees and volunteers. A further two individuals are paid to identify and help contact grant giving foundations and trusts across the UK. Our accounts are set out in a separate document.

Our work continues. We are making real progress

Signed on behalf of the trustees:



Mr Brian Mildenhall

28 January 2024

Freedom Kit Bags

*eco-friendly, sustainable, hygienic
sanitary wear*

Financial Accounts to 30 June 2023

Freedom Kit Bags (FKBs) is a registered UK charity (1173656), established in July 2017.

The aim of the charity is to provide eco-friendly, hygienic, reusable sanitary wear to the women and girls of Nepal, alongside health and hygiene education so the wider community, including men and boys, understand menstruation, its role in reproduction and how everyone can stay healthy. The Trustees Annual Report will be available November 2023.

Funds

The charity's reserves at 30 June 2023 reduced again to £60,816. The trustees intend to hold a reserve to enable production and distribution to continue for around nine months.

Our income for the year was similar to last year at £75,259. Our expenditure at £89,823 was also similar to last year and reflects our planned reduction in reserves built up during the pandemic years. Currently we are benefitting from a strong exchange rate of around £1=165npr; in 2019 it was closer to £1=145npr.

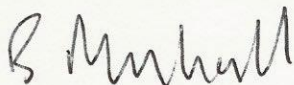
The Other Expenses shown in the accounts include bank charges transferring funds to Nepal and print costs for our annual newsletter.

Our need for financial support is greater than ever. We are immensely grateful for the fantastic support we have received from many different organisations and individuals. On behalf of the thousands who have benefitted, we say "dhanyabad".

We have a proven track record of delivering a quality sustainable solution, remarkable value for money, education and community understanding, and above all – we are changing lives, improving equality and health for thousands.

All our funds are from donations achieved through the efforts of the un-paid trustees and volunteers. A further two individuals are paid to identify and help contact grant giving foundations and trusts across the UK.

Signed on behalf of the trustees:



Mr Brian Mildenhall

19/09/23

Accounts

For the period 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023

	2022/23	£	2021/22	£
Receipts				
Grants and donations		75,260		76,322
Payments				
Charitable activities		79,715		80,123
Cost of Fundraising		9,423		9,345
Other expenses		686		860
Total cost		89,823		90,327
Surplus/(Deficit)		(14,563)		(14,005)
Cash and bank at 1 July 2022		75,379		
Total reserves		60,816		
Represented by				
Cash and bank at 30 June 2023		60,816		

Notes to the Accounts:

None of the trustees received a remuneration or personal benefit from the charity

The charity has no UK employees

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Freedom Kit Bags

On accounts for the year
ended

30th June 2023

Charity no
(if any)

1173656

Set out on pages

Financial statement attached

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30/06/2023.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

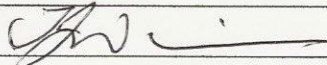
Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Date:

24/8/23

Name:

Terry John Williams

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

Retired accountant

Address:

36 Bydemill Gardens, Highworth, Swindon, SN6 7BS.

Freedom Kit Bags

*eco-friendly, sustainable, hygienic
sanitary wear*

Financial Accounts to 30 June 2023

Freedom Kit Bags (FKBs) is a registered UK charity (1173656), established in July 2017.

The aim of the charity is to provide eco-friendly, hygienic, reusable sanitary wear to the women and girls of Nepal, alongside health and hygiene education so the wider community, including men and boys, understand menstruation, its role in reproduction and how everyone can stay healthy. The Trustees Annual Report will be available November 2023.

Funds

The charity's reserves at 30 June 2023 reduced again to £60,816. The trustees intend to hold a reserve to enable production and distribution to continue for around nine months.

Our income for the year was similar to last year at £75,259. Our expenditure at £89,823 was also similar to last year and reflects our planned reduction in reserves built up during the pandemic years. Currently we are benefitting from a strong exchange rate of around £1=165npr; in 2019 it was closer to £1=145npr.

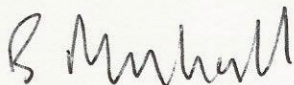
The Other Expenses shown in the accounts include bank charges transferring funds to Nepal and print costs for our annual newsletter.

Our need for financial support is greater than ever. We are immensely grateful for the fantastic support we have received from many different organisations and individuals. On behalf of the thousands who have benefitted, we say "dhanyabad".

We have a proven track record of delivering a quality sustainable solution, remarkable value for money, education and community understanding, and above all – we are changing lives, improving equality and health for thousands.

All our funds are from donations achieved through the efforts of the un-paid trustees and volunteers. A further two individuals are paid to identify and help contact grant giving foundations and trusts across the UK.

Signed on behalf of the trustees:



Mr Brian Mildenhall

19/09/23

Accounts

For the period 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023

	2022/23	£	2021/22	£
Receipts				
Grants and donations		75,260		76,322
Payments				
Charitable activities		79,715		80,123
Cost of Fundraising		9,423		9,345
Other expenses		686		860
Total cost		89,823		90,327
Surplus/(Deficit)		(14,563)		(14,005)
Cash and bank at 1 July 2022		75,379		
Total reserves		60,816		
Represented by				
Cash and bank at 30 June 2023		60,816		

Notes to the Accounts:

None of the trustees received a remuneration or personal benefit from the charity

The charity has no UK employees

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Freedom Kit Bags

On accounts for the year
ended

30th June 2023

Charity no
(if any)

1173656

Set out on pages

Financial statement attached

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30/06/2023.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

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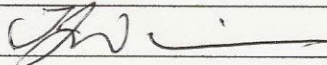
Independent
examiner's statement

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- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Date:

24/8/23

Name:

Terry John Williams

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

Retired accountant

Address:

36 Bydemill Gardens, Highworth, Swindon, SN6 7BS.

FREEDOM KIT BAGS

England & Wales - Charity number 1173656

Accounts

Freedom Kit Bags

*eco-friendly, sustainable, hygienic
sanitary wear*

Trustees Annual Report to 30 June 2022

Freedom Kit Bags (FKBs) is a registered UK charity (1173656). The Freedom Kit Bag project began in late 2016 and it was quickly obvious it had great potential so the trustees decided to manage it through a charity, established in June 2017.

The main aim of the charity is to provide eco-friendly, hygienic, reusable sanitary wear to the women and girls of Nepal, alongside health and hygiene education so the wider community, including men and boys, understand menstruation, its role in reproduction and how everyone can stay healthy.

Over 80% of the population of Nepal live in the countryside and many are below-subsistence farmers and are very poor. Disposable sanitary wear is considerably more expensive than in the UK, besides which there is nowhere to dispose of used pads. Consequently, most women use old rags leading to years of persistent infections, interrupted education for younger girls, loss of dignity, exclusion and lost opportunities. In some communities there are still widespread beliefs that women are unclean.

Freedom Kit Bags provides a solution.

Trustees and Structure

The current trustees, who served during the year, are:

Dr Rosa M Matheson
Dr Ian Matheson
Mr Brian Mildenhall
Mrs Anne Fisher
Mrs Hanna-Gael Darney

The governing document is a deed of trust and the charity is unincorporated. None of the trustees receive a salary or personal benefit from the charity. The trustees meet regularly and are in constant discussion to raise funds, develop and manage the programme. We talk weekly with our ambassadors in Nepal via the internet.

Three of the trustees visit Nepal twice a year (about 10 weeks each person) enabling us a first-hand review and management of the programme. The trustees personally pay around one half of the costs of these visits.

Due to Covid restrictions no visits were possible in 2020 and 2021. We were in Nepal for six weeks in March 2022 and will visit again in October 2022.

The trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and have taken this into account when carrying out their work. Likewise, risks are identified and mitigated. One of the key risks is to ensure our funds are well spent and fully accounted for and our regular visits to Nepal and working through trusted individuals known to us for many years helps to ensure this.

We have four Nepalese ambassadors based in Nepal, essential to the programme. Their role includes – identifying community groups in need, planning distributions with local representatives, maintaining quality control, delivering education and empowerment talks, distributing kit bags, maintaining detailed accounts, raising our profile, providing information, keeping detailed records of recipients of our kit bags, and carrying out follow up interviews to gain feedback from users. The cost of this work is about £500 a month.

The trustees have significant experience of supporting work in Nepal. They have a good network of contacts engaged in health and education fields of work in the UK and in Nepal.

Review of activities

A Freedom Kit Bag provides everything a woman needs to manage her periods and stay healthy for 36 months. The cost of a freedom Kit bag is just £25.

The materials are bought in Nepal and the Kit Bags are made locally in Nepal bringing employment to those who need it most. Just as important, our Education Programme (for sexual health and personal hygiene) is often the first time a community has heard the facts about menstruation. This is helping to break down barriers and taboos; bringing greater respect and equality of opportunity for women and girls.

Covid-19 had a big impact on our work. Nepal instigated a number of lockdowns making travel and local village meetings difficult, if not impossible at times. During the early months of 2021 the local situation began to improve and we were able to resume distributions at a significant rate.

The ever increasing demand can be seen in the figures for Kit Bags distributed by financial year:

- to 30 June 2017, **729**
- to 30 June 2018, **2089**
- to 30 June 2019, **2132**
- to 30 June 2020, **1917**
- to 30 June 2021, **2599**
- to 30 June 2022, **5347**

Making the total almost 15,000 Freedom Kit Bags made in Nepal, distributed in Nepal, mostly by Nepalese women. And every one of these has been accompanied by a full education programme.

It is sobering to dwell on these figures for a moment. A Kit Bag will last at least three years. During that time a woman will have 39 periods, typically lasting an average of 4.5 days each. Before a woman would use old rags or nothing. These women will have 585,000 periods, lasting over **2,632,500** days – now in comfort and with dignity.

During her period a woman should change five times a day, on average. Before she didn't because she didn't know – and suffered poor health as a result. Our education has taught her that. So, our Kit Bags to date will give more than 13,000,000 changes of pad.

The cost per change of pad of a £25 Kit Bag is just **2.85p**. Remarkable value.

These figures are important for another reason. The Nepal Government has a programme to give some (but not all) schoolgirls some (but not enough) disposable pads. The retail cost of a disposable pad in Nepal varies from 9p to 25p (remote locations incur higher costs), much more expensive than a Freedom Kit Bag. Even so, Nepal does not have the resources to dispose of used pads; they are thrown in bushes, block rudimentary toilets, or add to pollution by burning.

What's more, it risks developing a habit that rural women cannot sustain. Economically, the typical Nepalese is about 12 times poorer¹ than the average UK resident (¹GDP per capita Purchasing Power Parity, IMF estimates). In other words, it's like asking a woman in the UK to pay between £1.08 and £3 for one disposable pad; currently she can buy one for about 8p. The trustees make this point at every opportunity to Nepalese Education and Local Government Officers.

In the summer of 2020 we carried out telephone based research with 100 women who had one of our Kit Bags. We asked each 117 questions to get an extensive understanding of their views, use and care for the Kit Bags. Amongst other things, this told us that 99% were happy with their Kit Bags and 98% said it was better than what they had used before. We will repeat this feedback exercise in the near future.

Our four Sewing Rooms in different village locations (where we are training local women to make the Kit Bags) were making steady progress. Covid-19 was a set back as the women could not meet and the financial pressures meant some had to take what labouring jobs they could or move to larger towns. As a consequence we have closed one Sewing Room.

The three remaining Sewing Rooms are beginning to get back on their feet and production has started strongly in one and tentatively in two. A "new fourth" Sewing Room set up in Kathmandu in March 2021 has already produced 1,330 Kit Bags.

Our relationship with two well established Nepalese women's groups in Butwal and Sangfebagar has developed quickly since early 2021. Both groups are very energetic and active in their local areas, engaging with local decision-makers and raising our profile. We trained them to make the Kit Bags and to manage and deliver the Education Programme. So far, more than 2,000 Kit Bags have been made and distributed by these two women's groups.

All other Kit Bags are made by a small family business in Kathmandu.

We continue to support other communities, such as working with local Police to give Kit Bags to women on remand. We have joined flood relief programmes to give Kit Bags to displaced women. We go to "safe houses" for women and girls fleeing domestic violence and sexual abuse. Our work is reported in our Annual Newsletter available from the trustees.

To give a sense of the impact, here's an extract from a report by one of our Nepali ambassadors:

"Maya (not her real name) is about 35 years old, her story left us with tears. She is a working woman with two kids. She works as a labourer, daily basis. Sometimes she finds work and sometime not. Her family have been struggling she said.

In this situation, management of menstruation is challenging for her, but she never seriously thought about it. She has added about using single pad for 3 days for many times, and also using unwashed clothes. She did not know about the menstruation hygiene and sanitation.

She added more, that from the childhood till now nobody has told her about this thing. Being born in the poor family deprived her from the school as well. That is why, she assumed not knowing anything like this. She already has been through reproductive health condition. For which she has been visiting government hospital. But even in there nobody told her about harmful practice. The hospital just issued some medication.

Her situation seems painful to us, after the program we have provided counselling regarding her health and other situation. She has said, 'I always been happy whatever the situation I came through and always wear smile in my face. Today my heart melted and tears rolled down and my eyes conveyed my cry to others, but my soul felt real happiness sharing my situation with all and having my first ever gift, a Freedom Kit Bag.'

Funds

The charity's reserves at 30 June 2022 reduced markedly. The trustees normally intend to hold a reserve to enable production and distribution to continue for at least nine months in the event of a significant short term drop in income.

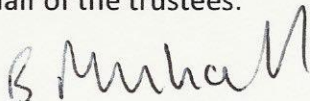
Over the past few months we have seen a large fall in income possibly due to world events and increasing financial concerns here in the UK. Our reserves are expected to fall considerably in the next six to nine months.

Our need for financial support is now greater than ever. We are, of course, immensely grateful for the fantastic support we have received from many different organisations and individuals. On behalf of the thousands who have benefitted, we say "dhanyabad".

We now have a proven track record of delivering a quality sustainable solution, remarkable value for money, education and community understanding, and above all – we are changing lives, improving equality and health for thousands.

All our funds are from donations achieved through the efforts of the un-paid trustees and volunteers. A further two individuals are paid to identify and help contact grant giving foundations and trusts across the UK.

Signed on behalf of the trustees:

 1/9/22

Mr Brian Mildenhall

Accounts

For the period 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022

	2021/22	£	2020/21	£
Receipts				
Grants and donations		76,322		90,289
Payments				
Charitable activities		80,123		53,598
Cost of Fundraising		9,345		22,784
Other expenses		860		584
Total cost		90,327		76,966
Surplus/(Deficit)		(14,005)		13,323
Cash and bank at 1 July 2020		85,269		
Debtors (1 July 2020)		4,127		
Total reserves		75,392		
Represented by				
Cash and bank at 30 June 2022		75,379		
Debtors (1 July 2022)		12		
Total		75,392		

Notes to the Accounts:

None of the trustees received a remuneration or personal benefit from the charity
The charity has no UK employees

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Freedom Kit Bags

**On accounts for the year
ended**

30th June 2022

**Charity no
(if any)**

1173656

Set out on pages

Financial statement attached

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30/06/2022.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

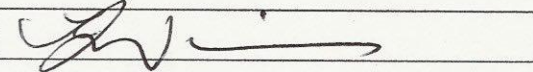
**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Date:

17/8/22

Name:

Terry John Williams

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

Retired accountant

Address:

36 Bydemill Gardens, Highworth, Swindon, SN6 7BS.

FREEDOM KIT BAGS

England & Wales - Charity number 1173656

Accounts

Freedom Kit Bags

*eco-friendly, sustainable, hygienic
sanitary wear*

Trustees Annual Report to 30 June 2021

Freedom Kit Bags (FKBs) is a registered UK charity (1173656). The Freedom Kit Bag project began in late 2016 and it was quickly obvious it had great potential so the trustees decided to manage it through a charity, established in June 2017.

The main aim of the charity is to provide eco-friendly, hygienic, reusable sanitary wear to the women and girls of Nepal, alongside health and hygiene education so the wider community, including men and boys, understand menstruation, its role in reproduction and how everyone can stay healthy.

Over 80% of the population of Nepal live in the countryside and many are below-subsistence farmers and are very poor. Disposable sanitary wear is considerably more expensive than in the UK, besides which there is nowhere to dispose of used pads. Consequently, most women use old rags leading to years of persistent infections, interrupted education for younger girls, loss of dignity, exclusion and lost opportunities. In some communities there are still widespread beliefs that women are unclean.

Freedom Kit Bags provides a solution.

Trustees and Structure

The current trustees, who served during the year, are:

Dr Rosa M Matheson
Dr Ian Matheson
Mr Brian Mildenhall
Mrs Anne Fisher
Mrs Hanna-Gael Darney

The governing document is a deed of trust and the charity is unincorporated. None of the trustees receive a salary or personal benefit from the charity. The trustees meet regularly and are in constant discussion to raise funds, develop and manage the programme. Three of the trustees visit Nepal twice a year (about 10 weeks each person) enabling us a first-hand review and management of the programme. The trustees personally pay around one half of the costs of these visits.

Due to Covid restrictions no visits have been possible since our last visit in November 2019. Our next visit is planned for March 2022.

The trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and have taken this into account when carrying out their work. Likewise, risks are identified and mitigated. One of the key risks is to ensure our funds are well spent and fully accounted for and our regular visits to Nepal and working through trusted individuals known to us for many years helps to ensure this.

We have four Nepalese 'ambassadors' based in Nepal who help in many ways, such as – dissemination of information, profile raising, facilitating payments, distributing the Kit Bags, documenting recipients of the Kit Bags, delivering education and empowerment talks and workshops, and the follow up of recipients to gain feedback.

The trustees have significant experience of supporting work in Nepal. They have a good network of contacts engaged in health and education fields of work in the UK and in Nepal.

Review of activities

A Freedom Kit Bag provides everything a woman needs to manage her periods and stay healthy for up to 36 months. The materials are bought in Nepal and the Kit Bags are made locally in Nepal bringing employment to those who need it most. Just as important, our Education Programme (for sexual health and personal hygiene) is often the first time a community has heard the facts about menstruation. This is helping to break down barriers and taboos; bringing greater respect and equality of opportunity for women and girls.

Covid-19 has had a big impact on our work. Nepal has instigated a number of lockdowns making travel and local village meetings difficult, if not impossible at times. We remain acutely aware of our responsibilities to protect our 'ambassadors' and to encourage social distancing in villages where many will not be vaccinated.

The trustees have not been able to visit Nepal since Nov 2019. Like so many, we have discovered "zoom" and internet communications and have had almost daily contact with our 'ambassadors' throughout. When circumstances allowed we have been able to distribute our Kit Bags and the pace of distributions has picked up markedly in the last twelve months. The ever increasing demand can be seen from the following figures for Kit Bags distributed by financial year:

- to 30 June 2017, **729**
- to 30 June 2018, **2089**
- to 30 June 2019, **2132**
- to 30 June 2020, **1917**
- to 30 June 2021, **2599**
- six months to end 2021, **2678**

Making the total over 12,000 Freedom Kit Bags made in Nepal, distributed in Nepal, by Nepalese. And every one of these has been accompanied by a full education programme.

It is sobering to dwell on these figures for a moment. A Kit Bag will last at least three years. During that time a woman will have 39 periods, typically lasting 4.5 days each. Before a woman would use old rags or nothing. These women will have more than 470,000 periods, lasting over 2,100,000 days – now in comfort and with dignity.

During her period a woman should change five times a day, on average. Before she didn't because she didn't know – and suffered poor health as a result. Our education has taught her that. So, our Kit Bags to date will give more than 10,000,000 changes of pad.

The cost per “use” of a £25 Kit Bag is just 2.85p. Remarkable value.

These figures are important for another reason. The Nepal Government has a programme to give some (but not all) schoolgirls some (but not enough) disposable pads. The retail cost of a disposable pad in Nepal varies from 9p to 25p, much more expensive than a Freedom Kit Bag. The real problem, though, is Nepal does not have the resources to dispose of used pads; they are thrown in bushes, block rudimentary toilets, or add to pollution by burning.

What's more, it risks developing a habit that rural women cannot sustain. Economically, the typical Nepalese is about 11 times poorer¹ than the average UK resident (¹ GDP per capita Purchasing Power Parity). In other words, it's like asking a woman in the UK to pay between 99p and £2.75 for one disposable pad; currently she can buy one for about 8p. The trustees make this point at every opportunity to Nepalese Education and Local Government Officers.

In the summer of 2020 we carried out telephone based research with 100 women who had one of our Kit Bags. We asked each 117 questions to get an extensive understanding of their views, use and care for the Kit Bags. Amongst other things, this told us that 99% were happy with their Kit Bags and 98% said it was better than what they had used before.

Our four “Sewing Rooms” in different village locations (where we are training local women to make the Kit Bags) were making steady progress. Covid-19 has been a set back because the women could not meet and the financial pressures meant some had to take what labouring jobs they could or move to larger towns.

However, we are confident that three of the Sewing Rooms will get back on their feet and we will progress this on our next visit in March 2022. We have also set up two new Sewing Rooms with two well established Nepalese women's groups in Butwal and Sangfebagar. We have trained them to make the Kit Bags and to manage and deliver the Education Programme. So far, more than 1,000 Kit Bags have been made and distributed by these two women's groups.

Additionally, we have set up a Sewing Room in Kathmandu and this, too, has already produced more than 1,000 Kit bags.

Often we are invited to support other community programmes. The local Police asked us to give Kit Bags to women on remand and to attend rural programmes addressing mental health, where we were able to give Kit Bags. We have joined flood relief programmes and given Kit Bags to hundreds of displaced women. We have been to “safe houses” for women fleeing domestic violence. Many of these stories and the full range of our work is reported in our Annual Newsletter 2021 available from the trustees.

Funds

The charity's reserves at 30 June 2021 are higher than the trustees intend due to the delaying effects of Covid-19. The trustees normally intend to hold a reserve to enable production and distribution to continue for at least nine months in the event of a significant short term drop in income.

As at the end of 2021 reserves have reduced by around £15,000 reflecting the significant pick up since the summer as Covid concerns abate. With our existing and new Sewing Rooms we are able to maintain a high level of production and distribution, and our reserves should continue to fall over coming months.

Our need for financial support is now greater than ever. We are, of course, immensely grateful for the fantastic support we have received from many different organisations and individuals. On behalf of the thousands who have benefitted, we say "dhanyabad".

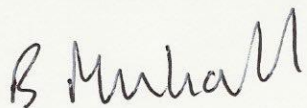
As well as the costs of materials and manufacture, other costs include training and education, and follow up. Our Nepalese ambassadors are paid a small amount in keeping with local rates for this work.

Transport is a high cost. Many of the locations take a whole day or more to reach often over rough tracks. Where it is feasible we use local buses but often we must hire a jeep capable of these tough journeys.

The debt identified in the Accounts has now been fully repaid.

All our funds are from donations achieved through the efforts of the un-paid trustees and volunteers. A further two individuals are paid to identify and help contact grant giving foundations and trusts across the UK.

Signed on behalf of the trustees:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Mildenhall', written in a cursive style.

Mr Brian Mildenhall

Accounts

For the period 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021

	2020/21	£	2019/20	£
Receipts				
Grants and donations		90,289		80,606
Payments				
Charitable activities		53,598		33,425
Cost of Fundraising		22,784		16,232
Other expenses		584		1446
Total cost		76,966		51,102
Surplus/(Deficit)		13,323		29,505
Cash and bank at 1 July 2020		71,061		42,768
Debtors		5,012		
Total reserves		89,396		72,273
Represented by				
Cash and bank at 30 June 2021		85,269		
Debtors		4,127		
Total		89,396		

Notes to the Accounts:

None of the trustees received a remuneration or personal benefit from the charity

The charity has no UK employees

The debtor amount shown in the accounts has been cleared in the 2021/22 year

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

I report on the financial statement of Freedom Kit Bags for the year ended 30th June 2021.

Respective responsibilities

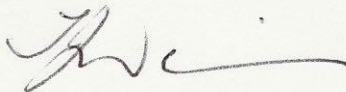
The charity is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements, and considers that the audit requirement of Section 43 (2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act does not apply. It is my responsibility to state , on the basis of procedures specified in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners under Section 43 (7) (b) of the Act, whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of the Independent Examiner's Report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions of the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements, and seeking any explanations concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the financial statements.

Independent Examiner's statement.

In connection with my examination of the charity funds, nothing came to my attention which gave me cause to believe otherwise than that the financial statements accord with the accounting records of the charity, and that those records satisfied the requirements of the Act. I am not aware of any matter to which attention should be drawn in order to enable proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.



Independent Examiner

07 February 2022

Terry John Williams
36 Bydemill Gardens
Highworth
Swindon
SN6 7BS