

Reaching Bangladesh-the final leg of the journey.

At several stages they did not plan efficiently and did not have enough food or fuel to cook with. "We once did not have anything to eat for three days, and became like zombies barely able to stand," says Luke.

After three whole weeks, Luke and Tom finally conquered the notorious Pamir Highway eventually reaching the Terminus, Osh in Kyrgyzstan. They spent two weeks in Osh recuperating, realising they were not going to be able to secure their road entry visas for China and were forced to fly to Pakistan.

"We both had a certain trepidation regarding Pakistan because of all the negative press in the UK, and we were concerned about our safety," says Tom. "We cycled from Islamabad to Lahore and met some of the nicest people along the way. We grew our beards thinking we would fit in better, but everyone we met in all the villages and cities we crossed were pleasantly surprised to see foreigners passing through."

After the men crossed into India through the Wagha border, it took them almost a month to get through the country, highlights including their time spent in Agra and Calcutta. "Some of the sights and monuments we saw in both Pakistan and India were simply stunning," says Luke.

They finally crossed Bangladesh at the Benapole border, and noticed how much greener and more lush the landscape was in comparison to India. After successfully completing their mission and reaching Bangladesh the men took it easy. After almost 4 days of cycling to reach Dhaka, they crossed Jessore, Faridpur and arrived in Manikgonj, where they were met by a group of forty BD cyclist troupe members. "It was awesome to ride in to Dhaka with almost forty cyclists, what a welcome to Bangladesh !" says Luke.

They cycled directly to their press conference at the La Vinci hotel where they spoke with representatives from leading Bangladeshi radio stations, TV channels and newspapers.

After a few days in Dhaka, Luke and Tom wanted to invest the rest of their time in Comilla with the boys at the Noor E. Farid Nasrine Academy, a unique initiative that has taken 20 under privileged boys, aged between two and three in 2011, providing them with a happy home, food, clothes and good education.

The Academy is committed to take care of these boys for twenty years, up until they graduate from university. The project was first started by late Nasrine Karim and continued by her son, Mishal Karim and her husband, Iftekhar Karim.

With the money raised from the 'Brick Lane to Bangladesh' initiative, a new sports facility was constructed within the premises of the academy. The boys can now play football, cricket, badminton and basketball in their own back yard. Luke and Tom purchased the sports equipment from Dhaka before heading to the academy. They both spent a lot of time with the boys, and helped teach them the fundamentals of sports and fitness.

"It was an incredible and rewarding experience and we were happy to be part of launching a sports programme for the boys," says Luke. "Spending time with the boys made the entire journey worthwhile and very rewarding. "Living in the UK "we sometimes do not appreciate how lucky we are adds Tom," There are so many people who have very little but still remain positive and happy."

"We are focusing on English, sport and fitness, and computer skills so these boys have essential skills to succeed in life," says Mishal Karim. "We are doing well, but we have a long way to go. We survive on product donors. We require clothes, shoes, food, toiletries, cleaning materials, basically anything else that one needs to manage a facility housing 20 boys."

More information about the Noor E Farid Nasrine academy can be found online www.The40.com and on Facebook, the40. The sponsors of the Brick Lane to Bangladesh initiative are BGLOBAL, RENATA, SUMMIT, BEXIMCO and BRAND FUSION. The marketing partners were The Daily Star, G&R, The Daily Ittefaq, Click Ittefaq, Signage, Radio Shadhin and Arkay Group.

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