

FRIENDS OF KOLKTAS' ELDERLY

JANUARY TO JUNE 2013

The journey has been great this past six months! As part of normal life we have faced both happiness and sadness, which only helped us to mature, learn and move ahead. Saying good bye to Jharna our first beloved member who lived with us since 5th February 2004 in Bhalobasha, was not easy for anyone! We believe that Jharna's everlasting smile and spirit will always guide us, as she was more than a member to us. We believe that Jharna's everlasting smile and spirit will always guide us, as she was more than a member to us. As our Guardian angel she will show us our way!

Welcome Home: Hashi: we have not been able to make out her name when she tried to say as she has speech difficulty. Seeing her always smiling face we named her Hashi (meaning smiles). Hashi was identified by the police on the street and was admitted in NRS Government Hospital. After her treatment there was no one to take her home on discharge. As we are now visiting the hospital quite often the Social Welfare Officer approached us requesting a shelter for Hashi. After Tara, Hashi is the second person from NRS Hospital in our homes. A very lively person, Hashi has found her home with all the others in Madhubati.



Mahadev (in Dadur Bari): Is widower and has no children. He had his house which he sold off and lived on the money till he had nothing left. When he became very sick his neighbors admitted him to HOPE Hospital. We had one bed in Dadur Bari so when HOPE requested us, we welcomed Mahadev without any hesitation. He is settling slowly and the women are now enjoying the company of 2 men in the house!

Mr. and Mrs. Lahiri: A very sad case of neglect and irresponsibility by their only son. They lived in a rented flat for the last ten years, but it has been over a couple of years that they were unable to pay the rent which had mounted to more than 50,000 rupees. The request to help the Lahiris was made by their neighbor Mrs. Swarna and her brother Sahadeb who did their best looking after all their needs for several months, till it became a pressure on them. We approached HelpAge India and few others but there was nothing positive. We then found a paid old age home near Bhalobasha and since the 31st of May this home has become the new address for the Lahiri couple. It is costing us 8000 rupees a month (4000



each pm per person) and on request Swarna and Sahadeb has promised to pay 4000 p/m towards their stay. This was a challenge for us and we could not have contemplated it without the tremendous generosity of a very special lady in Ireland. Josephine Doran [80 years young] sent a most generous donation and because of Josephine we are so glad that we have given the Lahiri couple a chance to live with dignity. We are now also in a better position to see if we can get their son legally to take some responsibility. Thank you Josephine.

Our Great Loss: Jharna Das our first member in Bhalobasha sadly passed away on 17th March 2013. Jharna came to us from our food programme in Sealdah Station and her survival way back in 2004 was a challenge. But Jharna was a miracle! She bounced back to life and so much so that at one stage each



morning, she would do aerobic classes and household jobs to keep herself fit and active. Slowly after a few years she started to have problems with pain in her stomach, which at the time of operation had to be closed back because all her organs inside were jumbled up! She had an ERCP done which kept her fit for 3 years. Her last few days were in coma as she had a cerebral attack. From the hospital we brought her home to Bhalobasha where all the staff and members had the last opportunity to bid her farewell with flowers, prayers and tears before the final journey where Michael assisted the Hindu priest for last rites. (Kerry Luxton has written her experience of the funeral, which we are attaching separately)

Short term care: Victor was found near Mother House on AJC Bose Road. He was picked up and admitted in Dr. Fuad Halim Nursing Home where after a thorough medical checkup and cleansing, Victor was send back to Patna where he has friends and relatives. Victor belongs to a good family but for reasons not very well known, he lost all possibilities of belonging to his own family. We have not heard from him since his return.



Medical setup: Champa Chowdhury our medical advisor is continuing with the medical checkups for all the members in the government Hospitals. Most of them are in sound health excepting few who are not so sound mentally. Debika Mukherjee who was referred to us from TRACKs home has been sadly detected with carcinoma. From day one she was being checked for her heart and nerves, but when her stomach started to bloat, it was found that she has carcinoma. However she is in

good medical care and is much better now. Later the Doctors will start the radiotherapy.



Lovely and Khudiram had their cataract operation in HOPE hospital free of cost, as both were referred to us from HOPE. On a regular basis we bring our members in turn and as required for follow up checkups in NRS and PG Medical Hospitals. The geriatric care unit in PG Hospital is good and we take the facilities provided therein. The general hospitals now have generic medicine stall where medicines are sold at half the price. If not all we get most general medicine from these stall.

Our Rainbow girls Sunita and Nibedita are still under training with us. Nibedita is doing her basic pathology and nursing training and attends classes each Saturday from Madhubati. Recently we celebrated the birthday of Nibedita and Bela in Bhalobasha.



It was so very nice of Eileen Kenny and family, from Garry hill, Co Carlow [Ireland to send beautiful gifts for all our members. All were happy to receive, lovely soaps, hand lotions, towels and soft toys.

Follow up school: Concern India Kolkata like the previous two years has been very good to us. For 2012-13 we had received RS. 89, 000 towards honorarium fro 3 teachers, Teaching learning materials and food for the children. Annual Report for the year 2012-13 has been submitted and we have received a grant of Rs. 1, 06,600/- for 2013-14. This grant will cover the cost of honorarium for 4 teachers, partly the co-ordinators honorarium and teacher trainings.

This year as we did not received any funds for food from Concern India, Mrs. Lovina Khan – President of Rotary Club of Calcutta Conclave and Principal of St. Peter's Day School, through her organization "Arms Educational and Charitable Trust", granted 18,000 rupees towards food for the children for 6 months.

81 students are on roll and we started the Pre- school with 15 students. All our students have passed in their regular school. We had 2 Parents/ mothers meetings and we have started to collect Rs. 2 per child per month.



All the festivals were celebrated, especially Republic Day, Independence Day and Saraswati Puja. We were

very happy to have Mrs. Maura Allen from Ireland with us for the flag hoisting and celebrating Republic day with the children, members and Staff.

Our students were the Winning Cup in Kabaddi at **Tournament – organized by** Ireland on 17th January 2013. Entally School was packed with children from different NGOs and it was a highlight being the Cricket students along with other a beautiful cultural programme which was enjoyed by all. The most enjoyable experience of our student was the opportunity of staying overnight in Seva Kendra Hostel. It was full of fun and excitement.



recipient of the the **Rajiv Ganguly Friends of Calcutta** – The ground of Loreto with children from real celebration- the tournament. Our NGOs presented

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Our teachers were sent for training at Loreto Sealdah for two days, where they were trained to handle the class I government school books. The teachers were able to learn and share with others present at the training.

Self Help Group: Each of the 4 conducts their meetings twice month when Surajit is present minutes of each meeting is recorded by Surajit, which itself valid document for the bank.



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Statistic at a glance:

1. Our total no of groups- 4
2. Total members - 54
3. Meetings - Twice a month with each group

Fund Raising Idea from Kerry Luxton: Australian Stories

On February 2, 2013 a fundraiser was held in the Longueville Sporting Club, a small and friendly club on the north shore of Sydney, Australia. There were five speakers plus an

excellent master of ceremonies by the name of Dick Marks. Dick, a past Australian Wallaby Rugby player presented a picture of each speaker before they spoke and entertained us with many jokes and stories of his own.

Each speaker gave generously their time and gifted us with an insight into their interesting lives.

Marlene Matthews was a medal winning Olympic sprinter, she told us of aspects of life as an amateur athlete in 1950s compared to athletes of today like Lance Armstrong. It was an insight into a world few of us were aware of until then.

Saxon Graham told us about his life and aspirations. Saxon has met Pope Benedict, participated in Special Olympics been appointed Citizen of the Year in his local area. His speech ended by telling us of what he hoped to achieve in life. They were to be a good brother and son, a good example to other people with disabilities, and to be a gentleman. Saxon is 40 years old and has Down Syndrome.

Michael Chugg is one of Australia's best known musical entrepreneur and promoter. We were prepared for stories wild antics in the Rock n Roll business, some of which we have heard before. Michael presented us with a much more intimate tale of his journey from a small town in Tasmania to the establishment of a worldwide successfully business. The audience had been treated to something you can't read in the newspaper, and we felt very privileged.

Peter Joseph jointly established The Black Dog Institute, a world leader in the treatment and diagnosis of mood disorders. His story was heart rendering, amazing and I couldn't do it justice by retelling it so I won't. I can only say that he is a very special person and we were very lucky to hear him.

Ramin Marzbani was at the forefront of internet technology establishing a successful market research company. Since selling his business to AC Nielson in 2000, he has been busy as an angel investor, financing and mentoring other entrepreneurs.

The night was a great success and we plan to make it an annual event. Not only were the audience privileged to hear the speakers story, but they also learned a little more about the work of FOKE and the members being cared for.

Perhaps it's something other fundraisers would also like to do and I would love to hear about it if they do. My contact details are kpluxton@gmail.com

Friends and Visitors: We are very grateful to Kerry Luxton who made huge efforts to raise fund in Sydney, through story telling idea. (Mentioned above) Her contribution



along with the contribution from Michael Symonds is much appreciated.

Maura Allen like all years paid her visit this year inspite of suffering from a severe hip pain. Soon after her return she had her hip replacement in Ireland and is already planning her trip for 2014. This year also she purchased all the necessary items for both the homes, sufficient to last us for a year.



Shona Cahill and her students from St. Flannan's College - Ireland, visited the homes for a day and had a great day with all and gave us a generous donation. Thanks to Michael and all the staff who looked after them so well.

Brian Kelly, Chairperson of Friends of Calcutta, visited our homes several times and before leaving both he treated the members and staff with delicious food which he cooked himself.

Thanks to Michael O'Reilly, Secretary of Calcutta Rescue [Ireland] for visiting our homes in the very few days he had in Kolkata.

Head of Concern India visited to see the school in action.

Local contribution:

Raju Buxani is continuing to provide us with the rations for the homes, worth Rs. 15000 or more per month. Thanks Raju. Thanks to Punit Agarwal for arranging all purchase and delivery to Bhalobasha.

Rajesh Shah is also helping us by providing free basic medicines/ calcium tablets for our members from his wholesale medical shop. Through our website we had received 2 membership of Rs. 500/- . The Donation box have not made as much as we had earlier hoped which means we have to try other ways of raising funds locally.

We have our own vegetation and eggs in Madhubati which is also helps.

Non- residential Programme:



Baren has visited an elderly lady who was identified begging in Sealdah Railway Station. We also identified an elderly man and his wife. They need medical support from us which we are trying to provide.

We continue to pay Rs. 500 per month and provide necessary medicines to 3 elderly ladies.

Latest development:

We are very grateful to FOC for sharing their medical vehicle (previously owned by CRDS) with FOKE. The running cost of the vehicle and salary of the driver is being supported by Calcutta Calling, C/o Fr. Pat Hogan- Limerick- Ireland. The vehicle is of great value as we can now bring our members to the Hospitals and elsewhere rather than getting taxis or ambulance. The legal transfer is in process but sincere thanks to all who made this possible.



We completed the refurbishment of Dadur Bari and thanks to the tremendous generosity of Sean Garvey, we completely rewired Bhalobasha which now has a beautiful fresh look thanks to 'Calcutta Calling' painting all the interior.

New staff: We have a new cook, Gita Singh in Madhubati since January 2013. She is local and stays overnight as per requirements and within a week it felt that she had been with us for years.



We have our own chickens now in Madhubati. They are well looked after by the members. One hen specially is Khudiram's pet. The house now has sufficient eggs. The pond in Madhubati was drained and we now have fresh rain water in. Loads of fishes were taken out which was shared in both the homes. We have also made new furniture for storage and dining table for Khudiram and Mahadeb.

Vote of Thanks:

Thank you Michael for all your help with the rewiring and painting of Bhalobasha and the refurbishment of Dadurbari, while you were here for the last 6 months.

We are thankful to Kerry Luxton, Vincent Jones, Calcutta Calling, Sean Garvey and friends, FOKE Support Ireland, Shona Cahill, Concern India, Raju Buxani, Rajesh Shah, and all who supported us this term in every possible way. Thank you all for your trust and support.

An NGO is only as good as its staff and we are proud that our staff has developed a lovely spirit of teamwork and we are very grateful to them for their constant care and commitment toward their work. Without them nothing would

have been possible. Thanking you Susila, Bela, Surajit, Sridam, Baren, Saraswati, Biswanath, Geeta, Mashi, Sunita, Nibedita, Bubai, Raghavendra (Driver) Champa and our teachers, for your immense contribution which money cannot buy. May God bless you all in a very special way.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

With warmest regards and prayers.

FOKE Team.