

# 15<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2019 -  
MARCH 2020

Friends of  
Kolkata's Elderly



**FOKE**

REGISTRATION NO: SO133406

DATED 8<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2005



## FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

The financial year 2019 - 2020 ended tragically, putting the entire world in a challenging situation. The Covid-19 pandemic is taking away so many lives without differentiating between the rich and the poor; and it looks like the fear will live with us and we will have to live with it in the years to come. The lockdown in India started from 22 March 2020 with only 4 hours notice! This left us all clueless as to what was in store. The entire socio-economic and political structure got affected and we still do not know what the future holds.

Within our field of work all we can say is that our members are totally oblivious to what is going on around them, except a few. It is a blessing in disguise, as their unawareness and total dependence on us make it easier for us to protect them like children. They eat what we can best provide and stay indoors, making no additional demands. They are in good health, thankfully.



Our homes, which are usually abuzz with children, visitors and celebrations, maintain all possible restrictions. We are aware that in the future we will need to keep protecting our beloved members and staff. We gather that the months ahead will see fewer visitors and celebrations, but we are confident that it does not mean FOKE will be forgotten. We are very fortunate for all the friends and well-wishers who care and trust us, unconditionally; and when the time is right, the visits will resume without any fear or hesitation.

We have experienced generosity from groups and friends even during the lockdown, and therefore feel that for most the wellbeing of themembers and staff of the homes is of utmost importance.

Otherwise, this year was full of activities, visitors, welcoming of newmembers, winding up of the Self Help Group Programme and initiating the Women Empowerment Programme with training in tailoring. Kamala's passing away was the greatest loss this year as she was ourvery first member in Charunibash, since 2005.

In Madhubati we came in contact with several helpful people who keep supporting us in this time of need. The contact list is growing from strength to strength and it is mostly by word of mouth, as FOKE is not really invested in promoting itself through social media.

Officially we completed our 15 years' journey on 8th December 2019. We thank each and everyone for the tremendous support throughout this magical and meaningful journey. Everyone's donations, support, friendship and trust kept the journey going on. Special blessings have always been on us and thus when we look back over the years gone by, we feel we have received in abundance and we have overcome many hurdles, and are stronger and wiser now for further development and growth. The staff, as always, is the backbone of FOKE and we pray for their continued wellbeing.

**Sanghita Mondol**  
Secretary





## NEW RECRUITEMENT

Sandhya Mondal joined us from 1st March 2020 in Charunibash. Sandhya is slowly learning the works and is taking up responsibilities alongside the other staff. We welcome Sandhya in the FOKE family.

## MEDICAL VAN

The second hand Tata Sumo van, which got donated to FOKE by way of a gift deed by CRDS, facilitated by Friends of Calcutta (FOC), served us for the last few years. Both FOC and FOKE used the car for medical purposes. However, because of its lifespan of 15 years it became difficult to renew its fitness. The expenses incurred for maintenance was becoming an extra financial burden for FOKE. Hence, it was decided that the vehicle would be handed over / returned to FOC through a gift deed.

## DONATION IN KIND

We are very glad to mention that a donation of worth Rs. 3,60,000 (Rupees 3.60 Lakhs) was received in kind. Other than groceries, food items, educational materials, lunches and other essentials, we received asset donations of washing machines, water purifiers, fans for both homes and a water tank for Bhalobasha.

## REPAIR AND RENOVATION

Septic tank and pipe line installation for the members' bathrooms in Charunibash and installation of a new water tank in Bhalobasha were completed. Regular maintenance is carried out in both homes. We are growing common vegetables in Charunibash which is shared between the two homes, as are the fish from the pond.



## ADMINISTRATIVE NEWS

### **Renewal of rent agreement of FOKE office.**

The three years rent agreement for the FOKE office ended on 31st July 2019. This was renewed on 1st August 2019 for the next three years, until 31st July 2022, at Rs. 5000 per month, excluding electricity.

N.B.: The office still remains to be a drop centre for the street children of the neighbourhood. They come there for various educational activities.

## EXTENSION OF BHALOBASHA

New Man Corporation Inc., a Proprietorship firm, represented by its proprietor Mr. Chiradip Das, was selected by FOKE to carry out the extension project. The construction was supposed to begin from April 2020 but due to the Covid-19 pandemic the finalization of some legal paper works had to be delayed and also the gathering of sufficient labour became a challenge. It may be shared here that we have pledged to use child-labour free bricks (please see [www.brickkilnnews.com](http://www.brickkilnnews.com) for details) and, hence, did our survey to procure bricks from a specific brick kiln. We assure that the donation gathered from friends for the extension will be solely used for this particular purpose and we will keep you updated on the progress. Special thanks to Anik for helping us with the architectural design for the extension.

## VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT

**Surajit Das** who was the co-ordinator of the outreach programmes – which includes the Self Help Group and the Follow-Up School, officially resigned in 2016, but continued on a part-time basis till September 2019. He has now resigned permanently. The members of the Self Help Groups are in the process of returning their loans and Surajit is helping them out as long as they need that support.



**Saraswati Roy** worked with us from 2008 until October 2019. There was a farewell and Saraswati was paid her due severance pack for all the years of service she had put in at Charunibash. We will miss her laughter and sense of humour in the house!



Anjali Chakraborty

## WELCOME HOME

Anjali Chakraborty was referred to us by a local NGO from Thakurpukur. Anjali is unmarried and has no relative to whom she can turn to in her time of need. Originally, an inhabitant of Bangladesh, Anjali came to Kolkata at a young age and started door-to-door sale of cosmetics and incense. With age and the inability to work Anjali soon spent all her savings and was on the verge of begging when she was given shelter and food in a primary school in Thakurpukur by a local NGO. However, as a prolonged stay in the school premises was not possible, they kept looking for a permanent home for Anjali. We visited Anjali in February 2019, but were only able to take her home after Kamala passed away.

On 11 May Anjali came to a very happy and happening home, as we were in the midst of our Rabindra Jayanti celebration. Anjali is a dignified lady with a pleasant personality and was well received by all.



**Smritikona Ghosh**

Smritikona Ghosh is an elderly lady, nearly 80 years of age, with extremely poor health conditions. She was rescued by the staff of the Tala Police Station. With support from HIVE India, Smritikona was admitted to Sambhunath Pandit Hospital where she was treated for her injured right limb and general health. Her father died when she was very young and soon after his death Smritikona, along with her sister Gauri, was sent away to live with their maternal aunt and cousin. While Smritikona remained with her cousin, Gauri returned to the village. In later years the cousin left for a job to another city and Smritikona continued her life by providing private tuitions to students and found a job as a teacher in a private Hindi



medium school. A parent from that school offered Smritikona to move in with them from her small rented house. Smritikona looked after their child, but after a few years when they decided to move away to their parental home,



Smritikona was asked to look for alternative accommodations. In fact, while living with the family she took a fall from which she never recovered. She managed to get herself admitted to the hospital with the intervention of HIVE India and the police authorities, but after her discharge from the hospital Smritikona had no home. The Tala Police Station approached FOKE and on 11 September 2019.

The policemen brought Smritikona to Bhalobasha, where she is now slowly settling down. She has a good sense of humour and does not like people doing her jobs for her. Though she uses a walker, she is independent and moves around very cautiously.

We visited Smritikona's friend in Dum Dum on 26 November 2019, with whom she kept all her documents and belongings. Smritikona



was very happy to meet the family and relieved to get all her important documents back. We have also located her sister Gauri, but sadly they do not have any interest in meeting one another.

## LOKKHI SOREN

Lokkhi Soren was seen sitting in a state of unrest near the FOKE office on 11th December 2019. After some conversation it was understood that she belongs to the tribal community. She had been displaced for some reason, and had no home. We contacted the local Taltala PS who supported us with lodging a General Diary. Lokkhi was then admitted in Dr. Fuad Halim's nursing home for a general medical check-up.



On 24 December Lokkhi was taken home to Charunibash, which came as the greatest Christmas gift for all of us. In the first few months Lokkhi was hallucinating and wandered away a few times. She gives information in bits and pieces which we are trying to put together. Lokkhi is under medication and is very quiet in nature. We are hopeful that she will slowly find happiness and peace in the Charunibash family.





## REST IN PEACE

### Madhuri Mukherjee

It was sad to let Madhuri dida go. Madhuri came to us from Vidyasagar State General hospital where she was in the septic ward. She stayed with us for only a few months and for most of that time she was sick.

We visited the shop in the area where she lived and collected all her important documents. Later, we also visited her unmarried elder brother, nephew and niece with whom Madhuri wanted to stay, but sadly that was not to happen. Madhuri had some money in the bank which she was not able to enjoy and it will be forfeited as there is neither claim nor nominee in place. None were able to give the whereabouts of her elder son. In the span of the two months, she was hospitalised thrice and we did as much as we could for her peaceful passing.

The prayer service was carried out in Bhalobasha as her last few months were spent between Bhalobasha and the hospitals. Madhuri Mukherjee RIP 06.08.19

## REST IN PEACE



**Kamala Khatick** Rip 28.04.19

"So happy that we were able to grant her wish to be brought to see the pathway on which she lived in Moulali. She was so happy."

-Michael Hopkins

"I am so sorry to hear about Kamala dida's passing. I think I was lucky to have met such a happy soul. I have memories of stringing beads with her and making necklaces; and she told me two stories. I miss her dearly"

-Rama Gothoskar.

Kamala was on our food programme and was fairly young to be in the old age home. But she was considered for residential care due to her immobility problems. Even after prolonged orthopaedic treatment in the National Institute for Orthopedically Handicapped (NIOH) and elsewhere, Kamala remained with limited movement. Kamala came to Charunibash on 1 December 2005, when the house was still in the making and Charunibash became Kamala's home for the next 13 years. She was transferred to Bhalobasha last year as her health deteriorated and she needed to be in a room with close and easy toilet accessibility, as well as medical assistance.



Kamala was admitted to the hospital twice. The second admission was within one week of the first discharge and within only four days she suffered massive organ failure and sadly passed away on 28 April 2019 in Hope Foundation Hospital. Kamala's passing is the end of an era of FOKE, as she witnessed a lot of what FOKE and our Charunibash home evolved to be. She was fun-loving, witty and alert. With her unstable hand she was able to sew, knit and do crochet work. Her body gave up but her mind was active and enthusiastic till her last breath and she left the world in full consciousness. A prayer service in both homes were performed on May 1 with much love. The children in Bhalobasha were present at the prayer service.

## MEDICAL NEWS

**Jini** took a fall and her right arm needed to be plastered.



**Parul** had her cataract operation which was not an easy job as she is diabetic and was not at all cooperative with the nurses and doctors; and in addition, she was unaware of all that was happening around her. The entire medical process with her was challenging.

**Kalyani Das** was admitted in Hope Hospital for check-up and psychiatric treatment.

**Dasumi** is undergoing a long term treatment in Bangur Hospital for swelling of the abdomen.

**Lovely** was admitted in Hope Foundation Hospital twice. The first admission was for psychiatric follow-up treatment and the second admission was due to a swelling in her right foot.



**Anjali** was admitted in S.S.K.M – Bangur Hospital and had a major operation on her right limb. Due to her sodium imbalance she took a fall and sustained a fracture.



**Nemai** and **Maya Adhikari** were taken to Calcutta Rescue clinic for their check-ups.

**Hashikhusi, Ramlati, Dipali** and **Maya Roy** were taken to Diamond Harbour Hospital several times for their follow-up treatments and pathological tests. The other members are on constant medical monitoring and Champa Chowdhury, the medical coordinator, visits both homes on a regular basis for checking each of them physically.

## OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

### FOLLOW-UP SCHOOLS

In **Madhubati**, the total number of children as on 31 March was 48 (26 boys and 22 girls) with 15 new admissions in the pre-primary level. 6 children dropped out because of moving away with family, or, simply, for wanting more time to play. Our teachers visited the families but they were not eager to return. Throughout the year teachers



arranged for evaluation of the students and 3 formal evaluations were conducted. The results are as follows: 9 students – 80%, 13 Students 65%, 9 students -50% and 2 students scored 30 %. Teachers visit homes in case a child is absent for more than 2 weeks or when there is any specific need.



In **Bhalobasha** the total number of students as on 31 March was 20 (12 boys and 8 girls). There were 5 drop outs and 8 new admissions in January 2020. As the number of children are fewer we try to meet the parents every 2 months, so, therefore, six meetings were conducted where the primary emphasis was given on child's education, parents' role in education, safeguarding children,

caring about the environment, use of plastic, hygiene and attendance. Minu Mondal volunteers to facilitate these parents' meetings. Children in Bhalobasha are evaluated every month. The final marks obtained were as following: 1 student- 94%, 2- 76%, 2- 60%, 3- 55%, 4- 45%, 3- 37%. There was no evaluation for the 3 nursery students. Home visits were done at the beginning and end of the year, or, as required. Attendance rate was 53% to 94%.

## CASE STUDY

Sushmita Halder is 9 years old and a student of our Follow-Up School. She lost both her parents and her brother in an accident caused by electrocution when they went out in the field early in the morning. Sushmita was only about 1 or 1/2 years old when this happened and the news was published in one of the leading Bengali newspapers. Since then Sushmita has lived with her grandparents in Madhubati village. From when she was admitted in our Follow-Up School, she never missed a single day in class and always arrived before anyone else. The grandparents provided everything possible to the child within their meagre means. As she was growing up they faced many constraints; financially they were unable to provide for her basic needs. The child also needed emotional help as she craved attention. The grandparents requested us to provide a hostel facility for her and luckily we found a secure hostel and schooling for Sushmita in Sarada Nari-O-Sishu Ashram in Hotor, where the management also managed to find a sponsor for her. Both grandparents are happy and visit her twice a month and also attend the parents' meetings.



## EDUCATIONAL SPONSORSHIP

We are continuing to sponsor the fees and other education costs for Suchismita Das in Loreto Sealdah, Tumpa Naskar in Lee memorial and Anamta Ali in A.K. Fazlul Haque Girls' Higher Secondary School.





## MEDICAL CAMP

Dr. Tutul Chakraborty and Dr. Biva Dutta, both retired from their posts in Belegkata ID Hospital, carried out their annual health check-up through the Indian Public Health Association. On June 29 all the members of Charunibash received medical check-ups. However, due to heavy rain only 9 children were present; and they along with all the mothers present received a check-up. The visit was rescheduled again for 21 July where the rest of the children were screened.

## EYE CHECK-UP CAMP by GKB OPTICALS



Over the past few years GKB Optical conducted, with great efficiency, eye check-up camps for the members in Charunibash and for the rural population in 3 villages around Madhubati. On 8 August we held a camp in which 120 patients were checked. Free spectacles were given out to 82 beneficiaries on 2nd November 2019.

## IDEAS OF ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD FOR RURAL WOMEN



On 8 January 2020 we organised a meeting in collaboration with the organization Behala Sujon Social Welfare Society. In this meeting both local women and all who were in our vocational training group participated. Ideas on making jute products, cloth bags, pickles, jam, etc., were shared by resource persons along with marketing strategies. However, we are yet to see it evolve as the interest is difficult to keep up if not organised in the best possible way. The lockdown has made it difficult to continue for now.

## REVIVAL OF THE TAILORING UNIT

Many of you who have been connected with FOKE for years may remember that in 2009-2010 we used to run a tailoring unit in Charunibash when the 4 sewing machines were kindly sponsored by our long term friend Maura Allen. In 3 batches we had trained more than 30 women from the community and some sewing machines were also provided.



The second phase of the tailoring classes began when the request came from the local women who are mostly housewives and wish to earn and contribute to their families. As the call was from the women who were in no position to attend the training centre away from the village, it made sense to include it once more under our outreach programme. On 14 July 2019 we started our first session with 10

participants, where the enthusiasm reflected clearly in each one. A very efficient and social minded tailormaster, Md. Saifuddin, who has his own tailoring business, took interest and appointed a young talented girl, Beauty Mondal, for conducting the classes. A nominal fee of Rs.180 was decided to be paid for the 6 months course. The emphasis was more on practical teaching and learning. This batch ended with a written exam followed by a practical exam on 29 February 2020.

The second batch started on 1 March with 21 members and the enthusiasm was so high that the registering of names started while the first batch was still in process. The passing out group welcomed the new group and shared their experiences. Two classes were conducted before the lockdown was announced. The classes will revive as soon as the situation is stable. The trainees pay a nominal fee of Rs. 50 per month for the 6 months course. We have plans to include them all for income generation with their newly acquired skills.



## ANNUAL SPORTS

On 23rd and 26th of January both homes celebrated sports day including the members, staff, and, in Bhalobasha, also the parents, as the numbers are small. In both places the event started with flag hoisting, being Netaji's Birthday and Republic Day, respectively. For sports there were prizes but there were also prizes for best performance and highest attendance. Every child received something. Shefali, who suffered a double stroke, participated in the game of throwing the ball in the bucket.



### Blanket Run

On 27 December we did our annual blanket run on the streets of Kolkata. Here is Jhinku Banerjee's (committee member of FOKE) thoughts, who has enriched FOKE by gifting many professional and beautiful photos:



*"It's heart-wrenching to see people sleeping under the open sky on such cold nights. FOKE, through a humble measure, extended some warmth to those people on the streets of our city. Adrienne, Sahadeb, Arundhati, Amit, Nazma (Saira's daughter), Raghavendra and Sanghita led the program and I got the chance to witness the sheer joy in people's eyes and to feel the warmth of hearts. I believe it was the touch, not the blankets, that brought glitters in the eyes of those people"*

We are very grateful to Mr. Pradip Arora for donating us 50 beautiful soft blankets which we were happy to present to the nuns of Sarada Nari- O-Sishu Ashram in Hotor and to the very needy villagers of Madhubati.

## OLDAGE HOME IN BODH GAYA

"Last year a few members from FOKE visited a home for the destitute elderly on the outskirts of Bodh Gaya. This home has very basic amenities and every bit of support was welcomed. Winters in this area are severe and the members of this home did not have enough winter clothing to fight the cold. The temporary structure and the vast open space

around the home made it very tough for them every winter. This year FOKE shared the blankets donated by Wrap With Love (Australia) to these members. They really appreciated this and accepted them gratefully. We would like to thank 'Wrap with Love' for their support on behalf of FOKE and Ms. Veda and her organisation, Sujata Buddha Welfare Centre in Bodh Gaya. We were also happy to extend our support with rations which was sponsored by a long-term friend Sorcha Saidlear."

- Rajeshwari S.



## SELF-HELP GROUP (SHG)

The SHGs started in 2008 for the rural women in and around Madhubati. We conducted an evaluation of this programme on 26 August 2019. The Resource Person was Satyajit Jana from Kajla Janakalyan Samity – an organisation which is expert in running more than a thousand SHGs in Midanapur District. The SHGs are a strong financial support system for the women as it provides loans for business, medical crises and personal needs. The three groups did very well with individual loans and timely returns, but didn't strive to turn it into group production. It was decided have that the groups

## PENSION PROGRAMME

We continue to support Mita Dey and Manju Halder with Rs. 500 per month along with any prescribed medication they require.

would become independent of FOKE, as they now have enough experience to run it on their own. Each group leader contacts Surajit as and when required by them. The groups are continuing now by themselves and they have taken their ownership making it independent of FOKE.



## RESCUE PROGRAMME

### A better option for Shyamoli

Shyamoli was taken from the Vidyasagar State General hospital. We found her to be fairly young and could more accurately be described as a middle-aged woman than an elderly, and therefore would have seemed a little out of place in an old age home. We discussed this with Dr. Brahma of AVIEW, who willingly took Shyamoli on 6th April 2020 to their home for younger psychiatric female patients. This is our small effort to give Shyamoli a chance to enjoy once more the life of a younger person and to earn her dignity by contributing to society.



Being a diabetic patient, Shyamoli is monitored strictly. She is also working along with the other resident patients and has lost weight, which was required. However, it must be admitted that since Shyamoli has a personality disorder and for that reason is very stubborn, it is a great challenge to keep her within a set norm.

### Finding a Home

On 25 September a gentleman named Sudipto Roy found us on social media and contacted us to help an elderly couple, who were helpless and living in Howrah Railway station. On receiving the information action was taken and Radhika, our friend and well-wisher, later shared her following thoughts:

“So finally this old couple has found a permanent home, in the safety and security of Kosish, the hospice, under Dr Dam’s eagle eye. Sanghita and I saw them off on a train last night, and, they have reached and got settled this morning. An entire community of socially responsible citizens, from the gentleman who posted the original story, to Sanghita Mondal, of FOKE, who found them a temporary, immediate shelter, and managed to remove them from the horror of living in a railway

station, to Dr Brahma, in Jibantala, who generously gave them that shelter, to my friend who chooses to remain unnamed, but whose generosity and kindness re-establishes my hope in humanity, to a colleague who braved the weeknight traffic in a crowded bus to deliver their bags for them at the Howrah station, to Dr Dam who went out on a limb to arrange for a residence for them and took time out of his busy day to receive them at the station, made this endeavour a success. A huge thank you to each person who stepped in to make their lives a bit better, who has believed in their genuine need and who has not indulged in long lectures on how one should save for old age and stay friends with relatives in the hope of them stepping up when the time comes.



As this episode comes to an end, I cannot help but share one observation. Every day, many of us come across many depressing incidents and images on the streets. From homeless old people to abused children, a sick and injured animal to domestic violence spilling onto the public domain – the list is endless. We certainly cannot address all of them. We can put the information out on social media, in the hope of someone else taking the responsibility of stepping in. We can call NGOs and CSOs, requesting help. And these are indeed powerful platforms which can transform lives.

But somewhere, somehow, are we shying away from our own social responsibility by posting on social media and hoping someone else will take up the job? If we can, should we not do a little more? Think about it. I am thinking as well about how we can change the way we do things.

-Radhika Singh

## SHORT-TERM CARE AND SHELTER

We were contacted by the councillor of Ward 140 to provide residential support and medical treatment for a middle-aged lady called Rani Bose. Her left foot looked extremely bad, as if gangrenous, which needed immediate surgery. If it was not treated in time an amputation might have been the only option. With the help of a representative from the councillor, she was hospitalised, and, after her discharge, she was provided with all the necessary dressings, medication and a comfortable stay in Bhalobasha. She was too young to



be a resident in Bhalobasha. Sadly, Rani broke our trust with a lot of false information and we were very disappointed when we were not able to locate the family she claimed to have worked for and who, - according to her-, had thrown her out of their home. When we looked further into the matter, we were able to contact her son and sisters with whom she eventually settled, but about whom she didn't want to share any information initially.

## BRIEF REPORT ON THE VARIOUS RESCUES IRRESPECTIVE OF AGE OR GENDER OF THE PERSON IN NEED



A very young and beautiful girl was kept under supervision for more than two months before we were able to rescue her from Diamond Park on 6 April 2019. With Dr. Brahma's guidance we monitored the girl, provided her with a meal and medication every day, which Biplab, - coordinator of Bhalobasha old age home -, carried out diligently. It was not an easy process to pick her up, as she was not cooperative. Finally, in the presence of Dr. Brahma, our team did manage to put her straight into our medical van and drive to Jibontala rehabilitation centre, run by AVIEW, where we had placed Barsha and Uma previously. She is progressing well and is much calmer and cooperative now.



On August 5, 2019 we received a phone call with the request to rescue an elderly man from Bansdroni. This was immediately followed up by our phone calls to the local police and respective officials, and during the next few hours of all this activity and reaching out made it possible for the man to be taken off the street. During the night he was admitted to Bangur Hospital and within a day the police located his family. His son said that he had wandered away from the house.

On 22 January 2020, on the way to the FOKE office, a very sick middle aged man (his name was later found to be Manoj Tanti) was rescued from Moulali. After several hours between Munchipara Police Station and Premdaan home (MCs), he was finally admitted.



On 8 February 2020, Sahadeb Some, our President, rescued a young man from Dum Dum with the help of the NGO Apna Ghar and he is now in their care. We visited him and he is slowly improving. Hopefully this is a great chance for this young man to once again enjoy a normal life.



On 21 March, the day before the lockdown was announced in India, a young man called Niraj Kumar Dubey was rescued from near Taratala. His mental condition was not sound and gave us the impression that he was lost. With the help of the Parnasree Police we were able to admit him in Vidyasagar Hospital and within a day we were able to contact his family. Sadly, due to the lockdown the family was not able to travel and Niraj was not willing to stay in the hospital. When he became violent, the hospital authority released him as he was a threat to the other patients and staff. It was heartbreaking as we failed to unite him with his family, and, specially, knowing that Niraj may never get the chance to return to his family again, due to his unstable mental condition.



A young woman named **Parbati**, who was paralysed on the left side, as a result of a brain stroke, was abandoned by her husband and in-laws. Her two children live with her sister-in-law, while Parbati ended up in Sealdah railway station. She couldn't settle there and soon found a spot near the Moulali Masjid, opposite the FOKE office. The local women protected her, but



there was no shelter for her on the street. We contacted Calcutta Rescue (CR), who promised all medical support. Our friend and Assistant Secretary Arundhati opened her heart and home for Parbati and since 29 February Parbati found a home and family with Arundhati. The location of the CR clinic is in close proximity to Arundhati's home, which works perfectly for follow-up treatment. We are very thankful to Asif, the co-ordinator of the CR unit, for extending all medical support, including physiotherapy, cardiac treatment and other related medical examinations. Parbati was also hospitalised in between and is receiving physiotherapy in her present accommodation. The treatment is long term and we are hopeful to find a permanent place for Parbati. Thank you Arundhati and Asif for giving Parbati another chance.

## FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS

The members and children in both centres celebrated Holi, Raksha Bandhan, Independence Day, Diwali, Bijoya, Christmas, New Year and Republic Day. Special days like Children's Day, Teachers' Day and the World Elderly Day were also celebrated. Both centres had their annual sports day and planted trees on World Environment Day. Shiva Ratri was celebrated for the first time in Bhalobasha by offering a glass of warm milk to everybody by a group of local ladies. Bengali New Year was made special by **Bangali Vaidya Samaj** where there was lunch, gifts and a special treat for the children too. Bijoya Sommiloni, a cultural programme, was organised by **ABHOHIKAR** band and students of the **Global Academy of Fine Arts** in Bhalobasha; while **Sevayan - Hands for All**, celebrated Bijoya Sommiloni in Charunibash.

**The Diamond Harbour Lady Police Cell** celebrated Women's day and Holi in Charunibash. The **Falta Police** celebrated Raksha Bandhan in Charunibash for the first time. A group of friends called **Sahajer Haat** celebrated Women's Day with lunch in Bhalobasha. As always, Durga Puja was very



special. All our members got to go out together, with the staff and friends volunteering, so that each member was well taken care of. Bobby, a young friend, celebrated Christmas this year with the members and children in Bhalobasha.



The birthdays of each member is celebrated with cake cutting and children play a big role in each individual's life on their special day.



## STAFF APPRECIATION

"Sanghita gathered all of the staff, plus our President Sahadeb Some and consultant committee members Michael Hopkins and myself for a day to show gratitude to our hard working staff.

This year, unlike all the others, instead of a single destination spot we had several. This year the day was a little different First, we went to Alipore Zoo for breakfast, followed by a walk around the exhibits. We each had our favourites



but the national symbols were loved by all. The peacocks for their stunning colours, and the Bengal Tiger for its sense of power and size (they're huge). Surprisingly, their roar is not as loud as a lion's. It's more like a growl. We had a shared lunch in the zoo restaurant "Little Sisters" and afterwards celebrated our beloved staff member Bela Barla's 15 years of service to FOKE. It seems too simple to say that she is the nurse in attendance for Bhalobasha. She helps wherever needed with love and care. When other staff members were invited to speak about Bela, they commented about her love and support in very many ways. We are very lucky to have her as part of our FOKE family. Then we set off for the Victoria Memorial and a stroll around the beautiful gardens. Some went inside to look at the museum. After photos (with the Victoria Memorial in the background) we walked to the nearby Saint Paul's Cathedral. Everyone sat inside the church to enjoy the surroundings and ambience. To end the day we crossed the Vidyasagar Bridge to Mandirtala for tea at Sanghita's mother's, who usually joins us for this day. It was dark when the cars left Mandirtala making it a very late return to the homes. But all agreed it was a most enjoyable day"- Kerry Luxton.

## OUR VOLUNTEERS

"I started my teaching at Bhalobasha after Class X Board exams and now I am in Class XII. As a volunteer, once a week (mostly on Saturday evenings) I teach English to the students of Class II to V. Besides, I also teach them basic computer and try helping them with cultural programmes, training them in songs,



dance, poems, etc. The students are interactive and do their regular homework. Once a month I arrange quizzing and debates on provided topics, so as to increase their vocabulary and encourage them to speak in English. The students show keen interest in learning and have performed well in their exams. This energises me to put in more effort so that in future these saplings grow into healthy trees. I hope each one grows up well and becomes well established citizen and above all as good human being.

As a student I am well aware of the current situation of my country and feel blessed to help some of these children. Teaching them helps me to increase my knowledge and I love to teach, it is my passion!"

- Chandreyee Saha



**Exposure Visit :** The Future Institute of Engineering and Management placed four students to complete a survey of NGOs in Kolkata as part of their MBA curriculum. The students had some exposure to care for the elderly in our country and a good few hours with our members.

**Taposhi Mukherjee from Sevayan** – Hands for all - since 15 November carried out yoga and free hand exercises for the students in Bhalobasha, every Friday. The children loved this and Alisha turned out to be excellent. Sadly, due to the lockdown this opportunity got cut short. We hope it will resume in the future.





**SUAS** – a group from Ireland divided themselves into two groups of 10 and 12, respectively, and volunteered for 2 days in both the homes and did lovely story-telling sessions, dancing, drawing and music with the students. They entertained the elderly members and staff, as well. Thank you for your time.

**Kerry Luxton**, as always, helped with the administration, mostly, and did not forget to leave behind beads and other handicraft materials for the members to be kept busy with. Kerry paid for the necklaces from the sale last year to the members' account, which they can spend as per their wish.



**Adrienne** visited both homes and stayed in Charunibash for 4 nights and helped the staff with the household chores. There were special New Year lunches for nearly 100 people in Charunibash and for 50 in Bhalobasha; both sponsored by Adrienne.

**Suchismita Das** and her mother Sudipta Das helped with the Annual Programme while Minu Mondal facilitated all the parents' meetings in Bhalobasha.



## VALUED DONATION

**Donation of assets** - We purchased 12 medical iron beds with mattresses sponsored by WISE, IITD, Behala Agrani Sangha, Dipen S. Sanghvi, Neeru, Soma Chowdhury, Paromita Neogy, Sharmila Ghosh, Satish Shenoy, Papiya Das, Abhishek Mishra, Parveen Agarwal, Rajiv Jain, Rajesh Arora and Rajeshwari S.



The water purifier for Bhalobasha was donated by Sunny Mukherjee while WISE donated one for Charunibash. A washing machine was donated for Bhalobasha by Mr. T.K Mitra and another washing machine for Charunibash was donated by Capt. V H Anand. The water tank for Bhalobasha was donated by Dakhiner Baranda Ladies club. Steel water drums were donated by Piyashee and Paromita Neogy. Vikram Dasgupta donated a stand fan and Bangali Baldya Samaj donated 5 ceiling fans for Charunibash. Swarnalata Das and Rajesh Shah sponsored two second hand sewing machines for the tailoring unit. Wheel chairs were donated by Open Arms and Jagorani.

**Groceries, Toiletries and household requirements or personal gifts** to members/children were donated by Muktodhara, Concentrix Daksh (for both homes), WISE, Behala Agrani Sangha, Help Us to Help You, NEER, Icchedana, Sebok, Milan Sangha Club, College Friends-1980, DISHARI, Dakhiner Baranda, Sahajer Haat, Mr. T. B Chakraborty, Ms.Boilla, Mr. T K Mitra, Mr. & Mrs. Mukti Agarwal, Gopa Das, Shampa Bhtacharya, Sujit Choudhury, Rekha Roy, Anubhav Das, Pallabi Basu, Dolly Dabriwal and Bhaskar and his family.

For the first time Puja garments were supported by Behala Sujon-Social Welfare Society for members of both homes. Pratyasha Welfare gifted for the members and staff of Charunibash with lunch. DISHARI sponsored Mahalaya lunch and medical equipments. JAGORANI sponsored the saplings for Charunibash which were planted by the group members and children. They also donated many specimen books for our follow-up schools. Kolkata Corporation donated night dresses, petticoats and blouses during Durga Puja as part of their annual donation.

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## MUSICAL EXPOSURE



### **Musical Exposure for students, members and staff:**

This is an area in which Veda Aggarwal (committee member) takes special interest. She encourages both international and national musicians to perform, especially in Charunibash, so that the musicians have an exposure to rural life and in return the residents and children can enjoy music which otherwise they would never have the chance to experience.

On 27 May **Paul Cesarczyk** performed beautifully under unusual circumstances – outdoor in the muggy heat, with the audience consisting of elderly and the local rural children for whom classical music is not so common. The children also offered a cultural exchange of dance and a game of carrom. Our member Tara, entertained all with her famous dance. Paul was accompanied by Tara and Antara, two young interested girls, who got very involved and expressed their interest to return.

**Arko Mukherjee** and his musicians enthralled all in Charunibash and the villagers with his songs. They thoroughly enjoyed the day and made it so very special.

**Moa Edmunds** and **Tomas Carraasco**, a duo named Ser o Duo, from Chile, gifted us with beautiful music.



**Kabir** from Bangalore was in Kolkata for his summer holidays when he visited the homes with **Antara** and played for the children and members in both homes. There was some fun interaction with the students in Bhalobasha too.





## THANK YOU

Our friends and well-wishers from Ireland and Australia continue their support. We were very happy to welcome the members of Edmund Rice Education Australia for the first time, and, are very thankful for their donation towards the extension of Bhalobasha. Fr. Pat and all our friends in 'Calcutta Calling' visited in November and as always supported FOKE. Michael Symons and all members of 'Cobra and Mongoose' remembered us this year too. Sean Garvey was not able to visit this year due to health issues, but Lorraine carried his flag and visited us and continued their support. Kerry, as always, spent time in helping with the administration. Adrienne, like all the other times, helped the follow-up school's students of both homes.

We are thankful for the financial donations received from - Sean Garvey family and friends, Margariet Jansen, Pat and Margaret Finnerty, Kerry Luxton, John Mc Quaid, Gabriel Brydon, Majella Curtin, Eleanor Gallaher, Margaret Larkin, Adrienne Miller, Aine and Norah, Liam Ashe, Fr. Sean Sexton, Ciara Doren, Eleanor Gallahar, Sorcha Saidlear, Calcutta Calling, Edmund Rice Education Australia, Cobra & Mongoose Charity, Belvedere College and Pobalscoil Neisean School, Dublin.

The local support is growing and we keep encouraging the donation in kind as it feels comfortable and is greatly valued. We are grateful to all our local friends for your financial donations and though it is not possible to mention everyone's name, you know who you are. We feel blessed when someone decides to remember their loved ones in any of our homes by way of 'Memory Donation'. We try to be with the bereaved family by sharing the moments with our members and staff. Our members extend their condolences and help to make the person feel better. Amongst them were Mr. Ruma Ganguly, Dr. K.Sharma, Keya Basu, Debi Prasad Mukherjee, Sutopa Dasgupta, Mr. Partha Pratim Mukherjee, Sampa Chaudhury, Ratna Bagchi, Mr. Vikram Dasgupta, Sunistha, Mrs. Rini Banerjee, Soma Sen, Arundhati Choudhary,

Mrs. S. Sen, Mrs. Saheli Majumder. While we celebrated the birthdays of Mou Das, Prayashee Sah, Chandrayee, Tathoi, Subhamita and Samriddhi. Thanks to their parents for giving their children this opportunity.

Our members enjoy the presence of the children around. Special thanks to MCKS Food For Hungry Caring Heart India for sponsoring, once again, the medical cost for Jini who took a fall and needed orthopaedic surgery. Dr. Fuad Halim always kept his door open for us. Calcutta Rescue, especially Asif Iqbal, extends tremendous support. Hope Kolkata Hospital provides the best medical care to all our members when admitted. HIVE India tries to find a home for the elderly with us. Thanks to GKB optical and Indian Public Health Association for conducting the medical camps each year. Dr. S. Brahma for giving another chance to Shyamoli; Suprokash who has to deal with Shyamoli most, needs special mention. Vidyasagar State General Hospital and the assistant superintendent have always extended their support. Raju Buxani, Rajesh Arora, Rajesh Shah, Punit Aggarwal, Gaver Chatterjee extended their support whenever required. Pallavi Basu, a young energetic girl, always helps FOKE in many areas. Raju Gain keeps connecting us with the right people who supported our work. The blessing of the Mukherjee family is always with us.

We specially thank all those who made contribution towards the extension of the building and we assure all that it will be a beautiful home. We thank each one who donated newspapers for making the paper bags, including our Banker – Canara Bank, Sealdah Branch. Throughout the year we have received recycled clothes in good condition which we have shared as far as in Purulia, amongst the poorest tribal families and amongst children and workers at brickfields in Hoogly.

Thanks to Eirin for editing, Suparna Mondol for the designing and Jhinku Banerjee and Ashim Datta for the printing of this annual report. Sudit Bhattacharya volunteered with the designing of our newsletters and helped with possible administrative works.

The committee members and general members of FOKE shared ideas, plans and helped in every possible way. Arundhati went beyond her capacity to provide home support to Parbati. Rajeshwari always supported FOKE with her tremendous analytical views and efficiently put FOKE in contact with different organization; Veda works hard on



all our reports and offers us good music. Jhinku enhanced our documents with her brilliant photos. Sahadeb chipped in whenever there was a crisis. The staff members kept themselves available at all times and did their very best. The year ahead for each one of us is a challenge but let it be filled with hope and faith. "If you carry one thing, throughout your entire life, let it be hope. Let it be hope that better things are always ahead. Let it be hope that you can get through even the toughest of times. Let it be hope that you are stronger than any challenge that comes your way. Let it be hope that you are exactly where you are meant to be right now, and that you are on the path to where you are meant to be. For during these times, hope will be the very thing that carries your through". -Nikki Banas/ Walk the Earth.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Name	Description
Mr. Sahadeb Some	President
Ms. Sanghita Mondal	Secretary
Ms. Arundhati chaudhury	Assistant Secretary
Mrs. Shukia Rebeiro	Treasurer
Rajeshwari S.	Member
Veda Aggarwal	Member
Jhiku Banerjee	Member

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Name	Country
Mrs. Maura Allen	Ireland
Mrs. Kerry Luxton	Australia
Mrs. Michael Hopkins	Ireland
Dr. Fuad Halim	India
Dr. Avijit Dam	India
Advocate Setu Das Roy	India

## FOKE LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Document	Reference	Validity
Society Registration Act XVI 1962 West Bengal	Registration No. SO133406 dated 8th December 2005	One Time
Section 12A of the IT Act 1961	DIT (E)/S-219/BE/ 276/ 09-10	One Time
Tax Account No. (TAN)	CALF01092A	One Time
Permanent Account No. (PAN)	AAAAF0865H	One Time
Under Foreign Contribution (Regulation Act 1976 (FCRA)	Registration No. 147120947	To be renewed in 5 years w.e.f 07.03.2017
Section 80G (5) (VI) of the IIT Act 1961	DIT (E)BE/276/09-10	One Time
Darpan Unique ID	WB/2017/0171110	One Time

## OUR BANK DETAILS

### FCRA Account

For donations from outside India

Bank Name	Canara Bank
Branch Name & Address	Sealdah Branch, P.B. No. 10820 14 & 15 APC Road, Kolkata - 700009 West Bengal Branch Code : 000396
Account No.	0396101025998
Name of Account (Cheque to be made in the name of)	FRIENDS OF KOLKATA'S ELDERLY
9 digit number (MICR number)	700015024
Current/Savings Account	Savings
Swift Code/Remittance Instructions	CNRBINBBCFD
IFSC CODE	CNR80000396 (used for RTGS, IMPS and NEFT transaction)

### Local Account

For donations from within India

Bank Name	Punjab National Bank
Branch Name & Address	Dharmotolla Branch, Sunidhi Building, 120 Lenin Sarani, Kolkata - 700013 Branch Code : 052800
Account No.	0528000100106434
Name of Account (Cheque to be made in the name of)	FRIENDS OF KOLKATA'S ELDERLY
9 digit number (MICR number)	700024013
Current/Savings Account	Savings
IFSC CODE	PUNB0052800



*A very happy Hasikhusi at Veda's visit to Madhubati.*



## Friends of Kolkata's Elderly : **FOKE**

C/o Studi Plaza, 74C, S. N. Banerjee Road,  
Kolkata - 700014

## **BHALOBASHA**

61, Bakrahat Road, Sreebardhapalli,  
Thakurpukur, Kolkata - 700104

## **CHARUNIBASH**

Vill: Madhubati (on Usthi-Dostipur Road),  
P.O. Dostipur, South 24 Parganas ,  
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