

**FRIENDS OF KOLKATAS' ELDERLY**  
**NEWSLETTER**  
**JANUARY – JUNE 2016**

I take this opportunity to convey the news that my job with Loreto Sealdah for the last 24 years ended on January 2016. FOKE was born with the blessing of Sr. Cyril Mooney– Former Principal of Loreto Day School Sealdah and the very kind support of all in Loreto Sealdah, especially the Rainbow Children. The dynamic education ambience and the inclusiveness there helped me to become the person I am today. I am also humbled for all the friends I have made over those many years in performing my role as a PRO; many still continue to stand by as a friend and well-wisher. Loreto Sealdah was always my meeting place with all of you but unfortunately I will not be available there anymore. In the future whenever you are in Kolkata, please contact me at 9883339004 and meet me at our new FOKE office at 74 C.S.N. Banerjee Road (close to Loreto Sealdah). Although I am sad that such a significant chapter of my life is now closed, but I am happy to devote my full attention and time to FOKE, something which is much needed in order for FOKE to realise its full potential. I sincerely thank all of you for your kind support to FOKE and to me personally.

Kindest regards – Sanghita

**HOME COMING:**

**Ruma Basak :** Ruma came to us in July 2015. We lovingly called her Ranu. We did not mention her in our last newsletter and we are sorry to have overlooked the very important home coming of Ranu. She was identified in Dum Dum, homeless and with no relations, by our President Mr. Sahadev Some. Although Ranu suffers from dementia and is receiving psychiatric treatment and medication, she has a pleasant demeanour and is a calm person.



**Tara Singh:** Tara was rescued on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2016 from the Ahmerst Street area by the Hive India Rescue team. She was admitted to Hope Hospital and from there she was referred to us. Tara says her son is deceased and her daughter is somewhere in Manicktala (Central Kolkata), but she was not able to locate the house when taken to that area. From what we can tell, it looks like she does not want to go back to her daughter or to any extended family members. Tara however is physically fit. Due to her great mingling ability and wonderful sense of humour she is settling in well.

**REUNITED WITH FAMILY:**

**Ganga:** Ganga returned home to her son and daughter-in-law on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March. Shortly after her return home, we received the information that she loiters around the whole village. However, for Ganga, this is "her freedom". Her son and daughter-in-law are caring but they cannot keep her under much supervision due to her wandering nature. We can only hope that Ganga finds happiness wherever she is.



**Choice to return:** Kamala Majumder chose to return from where she came. She stayed with us since July 2013 and this June she was arranged to dropped back by Champa – our medical Co-ordinator as Kamala came to live in Madhubati with Champa. Kamala is back working in a family and sleeping in a shed nearby.

We hope that Kamala finds happiness wherever she may be or whatever she does. We do keep a watch on her in case she needs any support.

### **DEARLY DEPARTED:**



**Savitri PV:** Savitri was a member of an orthodox Hindu family in Ajmer, Rajasthan. She was found on the street by a Loreto Sealdah associate Mr. Nasim Khan, with a broken femur bone and in total immobile condition. We rescued her and after one and a half months in the hospital for the femur bone and eye operation she came to live in Madhubati home in June 2007. Savitri spoke about the grandeur of the family she belonged to, but after her husband's death, the in-laws did not want to give her the share of the property and we did not hear much about her children. Savitri died of terminal lung cancer on 23rd April 2016; sadly due to the new law with custodial death, we had to let her undergo the post mortem followed by the last rites.

Our experience with the whole process of this unannounced police case between the two police stations (Bhalobasha home under PS-Thakurpukur and Bangur Hospital under Jadavpur), morgue, hospital and the nexus to extract money for normal duties, was a nightmare. It was a full 2 days exercise before we were able to return the dignity to Savitri which she so deserved.

In the future, with the death of any of our beloved members, we have to now deal with the local police stations, hospitals and morgue before their last rituals. It's a sad situation but there is no way we can avoid or escape this law as an organization.

### **A SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE: Case Study 1: Raju**

Raju was identified in Madhubati where he was found dehydrated, malnourished and mentally not well. We took the courage to give him a chance and informed the local Police Station after admitting him to a local private hospital. After 3 days we transferred him to Hope Hospital for further medical treatment, psychiatric checkups and pathology tests; we also networked with an NGO called Iswar Sankalpo which deals with mentally ill patients. Raju is now a resident there under the supervision of professional psychiatric doctors. Once Raju is able to share clearly his address and information about his family we intend to repatriate him to his loved ones!



**Case Study 2: Bhubaneshwar** ...As he calls himself, is a resident of Nepal. He is not aware that he is now in Kolkata. He was identified by our President Mr. Sahadev Some on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2016 in Dum Dum. After informing the local PS we admitted him to Hope Hospital. Madhubati (dadurbari) is now his home till we succeed in the process with the Nepal Consulate to repatriate him to his family.



**MEDICAL NEWS: Shefali:** Our very first resident since 2004 February, recently suffered a cerebral attack which affected her right limbs. She was immediately taken to the state general hospital and then transferred to Dr. Fuad's Clinic for physiotherapy and medical care. Shefali now is being provided with regular physiotherapy in Madhubati and she has her special water mattress placed in a medical bed. Although badly affected by the stroke, Shefali has tremendous mental strength and 'go' in her which will hopefully help her to stand up again!



Kamala and Khudiram in Madhubati both had their cataract operation. Momota was admitted twice to Hope Hospital. Shakuntala and Shanti were also admitted to Hope Hospital for medical supervision. Most members are under constant medical care and we are happy to have the support

and use of the great facilities at Hope Foundation Hospital. Shanti and Tara Singh had their cataract operation in June. Swati also got her laser treatment done on the eye which was damaged by her son's assault!



### **Repair and Renovation: Painting**

The exterior and interior of Bhalobasha was painted for the first time since 2004. The tin roof above the medical room was replaced with a concrete terrace, making it accessible from the first floor balcony. This has extended the floor space and the children who come to study also use it to play and practice dances, etc. The tiles on the main roof were replaced with concrete, as during the monsoon the entire first floor walls and ceiling would become damp.

**Corporation Water Line Connection:** During February 2016, Bhalobasha was finally connected to the Corporation water supply. It was very long awaited, as for the last 10 years we were drawing drinking water from the local hand pump hence this facility is a real blessing. We have had a large cement reservoir built to store the water which is supplied thrice per day.

Thanks to the generosity of Sean Garvey and friends for donating the entire renovation and refurbishment cost.

### **ACTIVITIES AND CELEBRATIONS:**



Adrienne and Kerry were both here to celebrate the completion of the extension of the terrace. After a huge effort to get all members upstairs and onto the terrace we had a small party with snacks and soft drinks. The members loved it! You would have thought we had taken them on a trip somewhere rather than up a flight of stairs, and we all enjoyed the celebration.

Children of Madhubati once again participated in the **Rajiv Ganguli Tournament** organized by Friends of Calcutta. This time our members - Nemai, Hasikhusi, and Kamala along with the staff joined in the spoon race organized especially for their fun. The winners were presented with medals.



**The Annual Sports Day:** As always, the Annual Sports Day in Madhubati was an entertaining day for all. Along with sports for the children, there were games like throwing the ball in the basket for our members too!



Thanks to Fr. Pat Hogan and all in Calcutta Calling for being part of the day, which was also the celebration of our Republic Day. We all hoisted our National flag, singing both Indian and Irish National Anthems.



**Visit to the Alipore Zoo:** Visiting the Alipore Zoo was an annual plan for the Madhubati follow-up school, included in the proposal to Concern India Foundation. We were glad to provide the students with an opportunity to see Kolkata City and the zoo. The weather was perfect and the children really loved being so close to the animals and nature. They moved around the park-like grounds, seeing all that the zoo had to offer and ended the day with packet lunches and ice cream. An extra thanks to Kerry for making it special with her presence which we all enjoyed.



**Staff Appreciation:** As part of our annual event we did not forget the FOKE associates and gave them a day of fun and time out. We had a relaxing day at Palm Resort with lunch followed by visiting the grand Swaminarayan Mandir (Hindu temple) nearby which the staff really appreciated. Each staff member was also gifted with a small token amount of appreciation.



**Eye Check up Camps:** On the 28<sup>th</sup> of January GKB Optical visited Madhubati for their free second eye camp where 130 locals were tested.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February in Bhalobasha, GKB Optical with our support conducted a free eye check-up camp for the locals in Thakurpukur. 121 people were tested and 33 locals received free spectacles. This benefitted the poor people around the area and we have request to conduct few more such camps



**Farewell to the Teachers:** On the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, it was with a heavy heart we said good bye to our two teachers Chandana Bayen and Madhumita Mondal. The students performed songs and dances and the programme was anchored by Rama Pal and Surajit Das. The staff contributed for gifts and from the organization they both received a severance cheque. Both teachers assured us their support during festivities, celebrations or in any other need of the home. They promised to visit the members and keep the relation going.

**Medical Camp:** On the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, our Medical Co-ordinator, Champa Chowdhury, arranged for a medical camp by the doctors of Indian Public Health Association. The follow-up school children were given a general medical checkup as were the members and staff in Madhubati. The doctors were satisfied with the way the medical files for the members were maintained. The children were advised mainly to maintain their hygiene which can combat several easily preventable illnesses.

**Outreach Activities: Self Help Group in Madhubati:**

Name of SHG	Started	Total members	Monthly subscription	As on June 2016	Bank loan
Pronoti	May '08	14	Rs. 30/-	Rs.56,580/-	Rs.40,000/-
Jyoti	May '08	14	Rs. 30/-	Rs.56,930/-	Rs.40,000/-
Minoti	Jan '09	14	Rs. 30/-	Rs.50,770/-	
Total				Rs1,64,280/-	

A total of 42 group meetings were held this term.

Other than loans for developing grocery shops, repairing houses, buying water pumps, etc. this term is marked with **Medical Loans** to Sridevi Mondal and Tinku Mondal of 10,000/- and 11,000/- respectively. Both loans were for the treatment of their husbands after they met with an accident on a building site. Laxmi Mondal also took a loan of 5000/- for treatment of her husband who suffered a serious infection. These medical loans helped them to carry out the necessary treatment and the men are now actively involved in their jobs again.

**Follow Up School: Madhubati** presently has 46 students from class N–IV. With the resignation of our two teachers we now conduct the school only in the afternoon. The very young children who attended in the morning now attend the afternoon session.

Concern India Foundation has expressed their regret for their inability to carry on the funding of the follow-up school at present due to budget constraints but has assured future support. With their support we were able to carry out 4 teacher's training conducted by Mrs. Anita Deb, 17 art and craft classes conducted by Mr. Raju Gyne, 2 external evaluations conducted by Mrs. Dipmala Saha, teaching learning materials and a visit to the Alipore Zoo.

During this session, 3 art and craft classes, 1 teacher's training and the external evaluation of the students were completed. The students' grade is as follows: 25-A; 21-B; 14-C as evaluated in March 2016.

**Bhalobasha** has about 10 children. We are still working to increase the numbers. We had a parents meeting and the teacher is conducting home visits as well.

The students had the opportunity to visit the Indian Museum as part of their educational tour.



**Non-Residential Support:** We continue to provide medical, food and pension support to six elderly members. Manju Halder underwent a cataract operation in NRS Hospital recently which we were happy we were able to provide.



*Rabindra Jayanti in Bhalobasha*



*Saraswati Puja : First time celebrated in Bhalobasha*



*Holi was made very special this time with the loving presence of Adrienne and Kerry. Children, members and staff all enjoyed and for Adrienne it was a life time experience.*

### **FRIENDS AND VISITORS:**

- Visit from Concern India – The new Co-ordinator Ms. Samapti visited the follow-up school and conducted home visits as part of her monitoring visit. An audit visit to the Accounts office was also made in March 2016 as part of their financial monitoring.
- It was our great pleasure to welcome Jenny from the Hope Foundation to visit both homes. It was her desire to meet all those members who now have a home with us after being referred from the Hope Hospital.



Kerry Luxton and Adrienne Miller both played very important roles during their visits. Adrienne kept the teachers, students and the members busy with art and craft in Madhubati, while Kerry encouraged all members to keep themselves



occupied making bead necklaces and woollen items. Kerry already paid 1500 rupees to the members which she raised by selling the products back home in Sydney.

- 12 Students and 4 teachers from Colaiste Eanna CBS in Dublin visited Madhubati as part of their Immersion Programme. The visit was conducted and encouraged by Brian Kelly and we thank them for their kind donation to FOKE.
- Fr. Sean Sexton visited Bhalobasha and we appreciate his donation and the time he spent there with us. Thanks to Liam Ashe also for his yearly contribution.
- Fr. Pat and his group also made their visit twice to both homes during their stay here in Kolkata.
- Melbandhan – A registered social and cultural group, c/o Rina Deb with her friends, provided lunch in Bhalobasha and also had gifts for all.
- Michael Symonds, like all years, took the time to visit both homes.
- Locally we had visits from Sujit Kumar Roychowdhury and friends.



### Volunteering:

It was our great pleasure to enjoy the company of Adrienne Millar again during this term.



On her second visit in March 2016 she particularly concentrated on and helped the elderly members with art and crafts. At the end of her visit, Adrienne said the following: "It was really amazing to get the opportunity to return to FOKE homes at Easter. The members took part in painting making jewellery using larger colourful beads. Earrings, bracelets and necklaces supplied by the elderly club in Darndale village in Dublin, Ireland. But the most amazing part of this activity was the inclusion of



staff, teachers, children and more importantly the members. This was like a big art centre...painting in one area, card making in another and jewellery in another. They couldn't wait to do [them all]. These activities occurred during morning and evening for three days. The best bit was the members hanging up their own work with the children's with pride!!! Art is very therapeutic, done at leisure and very inclusive. Hope it continues" - **Adrienne.**

**Fund Raising and Supporters:** Kerry Luxton raises funds each year in Sydney, Australia by holding an event where an audience of about 130 people listens to the stories of five interesting people. The evening is hosted by Dick Marks, an ex (old) Australian Wallaby and a jovial entertainer. The community that supports Kerry's work have very much taken FOKE to their hearts and are aware that their role in supplying the running costs for the homes is vital to our continued success.

A group of ladies from Avondale Golf Club have, for the past three years, been hand knitting colorful blankets which are given to members in preparation for the coming winter. Once again, it's a link between the two communities and a little more understanding of each other's world.

Adrienne also worked very hard to fund raise and support the follow-up school costs in both homes. Pobalscoil Neasain (the school where she works), friends and the elderly club in Darndale village supported her tremendously in her effort.



Maura Allen was not present physically in January 2016 but was ably represented by our wonderful friend Helen Cussen. She made sure,

by kind favour of Fr. Pat Hogan, to deliver the donation for the purchase of the yearly toiletries and necessities for both homes.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE NEWS:**

#### **New recruitment:**

Mr. Biplab Mondal joined as Assistant Manager of Bhalobasha from 4<sup>th</sup> January 2016. To date he has proved himself efficient and is well tuned with the responsibilities in the home.



**Resignations:** Mrs. Madhumita Mondal, the fourth teacher in Madhubati, resigned as she has a very young son who needs minding at home. Mrs. Chandana Byen, one of our most brilliant teachers, also resigned due to personal reasons.

Mrs. Dipmala Saha, Co-ordinator of Bhalobasha Follow-up School, worked from August 2015 till March 2016.

Mrs. Nibedita Mukherjee - Physiotherapist - worked from August 2015 till March 2016.

FOKE has established its city administration office at 74 C.S.N. Banerjee Road. This is because the building of our previous registered office at 121 Lenin Sarani will soon be demolished for construction of apartments. All official and administrative work will be carried out from the new office which is located centrally (close to the previous office) and as such, will be most convenient for all elderly members and others to visit. A lease rent for 3 years has been made starting from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016 till 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019. Many thanks for the kind gesture of Mrs. Aroti Mondal for offering FOKE this extremely accessible city centre space at a substantially subsidized rent of Rs. 4000/- per month.

Audit of the accounts for the year 2015-16 is in progress. It will be soon finalized and the returns will be submitted in August. Designing and printing of the annual report is also in process. Thanks to Stacia Beiniks and Kerry Luxton for helping in editing, advising and correcting the annual report. A massive thank you to the generous donations of Fr. Sean Sexton, Liam Ashe, Geraldine Cullen, Colaiste Eanna India Immersion Project, Michael Symonds, Raju Buxani, Rajesh Shah for their continuous support and trust.

We appreciate and value the support and trust bestowed on FOKE by all our friends, well-wishers and supporters. May God bless each of our associates and well-wishers with good health and peace.

Kindest regards and prayers,

From all in FOKE