

# FRIENDS OF KOLKATA'S ELDERLY

NEWSLETTER : JANUARY - JUNE 2021

Dear Friends,

With the pandemic, lives have changed forever and almost every household we know is mourning the loss of their family or friends. Terrible visuals and stories fill our TV and mobile screens. The scenes of people dying outside hospitals, gasping for breath, bodies floating down the rivers and doctors being beaten up have become indelibly etched in our minds.

But all is not lost. Vaccines have arrived in the market. A treatment protocol of sorts has evolved, that seems to be working, and many people are getting well even after being affected by COVID 19. In India, the vaccines were rolled out in an efficient and phased manner. First, the front-line workers, then health care workers, then the elderly and then people in the age group of 18-44 years. But, somehow, a large section of the population, the homeless elderly, was overlooked in the plan because they did not hold any identification documents such as the Aadhar or EPIC.

Our residents of FOKE come to us through referrals from hospitals and police stations. In many cases, they do not remember their names, addresses or age and do not have papers to prove their identity. They are old and helpless and that is the only credential we seek to take them in. Under such circumstances, to get them the Aadhar cards is a humongous task which requires navigating the ominous wheels of bureaucracy with unflinching patience. However, the need for vaccines was urgent and we did not have the time to wait. And, thus, we intensely followed up with officials at the Health department in West Bengal and in Delhi. Three weeks later, the Ministry of Health issued a guideline altering the vaccination policy to include all residents of shelters, old age homes and other such institutions, even if they did not have ID cards, using the institutions' credentials. This decision is a landmark that would help institutions across the country extend the blanket of protection to an immensely vulnerable section of the population, not small in number either. However, despite the guidelines, the process of arranging for vaccines was tough. We patiently navigated the process until finally, several weeks after the guidelines were issued, our residents finally received the first dose of their vaccine. A special word of thanks to the District Magistrate of South 24 Parganas, **Dr P Ulaganathan IAS** and his team of compassionate officers for making it happen.



Another major step of progress has been in procuring ration cards for our residents. The Chief Minister of West Bengal announced last year that all residents of the state would be given free rations of rice, lentils, flour and spices every week to help them tide over the lockdown period.

Unfortunately, FOKE residents were deprived of this largesse because they did not have ration Cards, which can only be obtained if they have other ID documentations- so a Catch 22 situation. Patience and tenacious follow-up, diligent paperwork and the consideration of officials in the bureaucracy have resulted in many of our residents receiving their ration cards.

Here special thanks must be given to **Mr Parvez Siddiqui IAS**, Secretary, Department of Food & Supplies and his officers for responding and acting with consideration and empathy.



- **Radhika Singh**, Committee Member.



## A SPECIAL MESSAGE

Mr. Partha Chatterjee an ardent supporter of FOKE physically visited Bhalobasha for half an hour on 30 January 2021, two months before his unforeseen demise. He used to hear about FOKE from his wife Gaver Chatterjee of Concern India Foundation, who has tremendous faith on our work. His interest in FOKE even during his last moments has linked us with his generous friends who continue to support us. Partha Chatterjee introduced FOKE to Club 41 who are sponsoring Rs. 10,400 every month towards grocery, which started since May 2021.

**Freemason**, also, is helping us renovate the entire first floor of Bhalobasha; the work for which will start after this pandemic situation is under control. Several friends of Partha Da has also made personal donations to FOKE.

**OBITUARY** - Partha Chatterjee, an ardent supporter of FOKE, passed away on 6 April 2021 of a sudden cardiac arrest, swiftly and almost sans suffering, the way only a pure soul can go. Partha went laughing and performing good karma until his last breath. Even on the evening of 5<sup>th</sup> April, the night before he passed away, he was enthusiastically spreading the message that he was raising funds for ration support for Bhalobasha. A Kolkata boy, Partha had spent many years away from the city due to his career. He returned to his home-town upon his retirement in 2019. On his return he came to hear about FOKE and was very much taken by its work. Being the President of an organisation called Club 12 (part of the Club 41 movement) he decided that the club should endeavour to raise funds for ration support for Bhalobasha, as part of its Lunchbox initiative. Partha had put out his appeal on a number of WhatsApp groups on 5 April and was planning a visit to Bhalobasha with other members of Club 12 during that week.



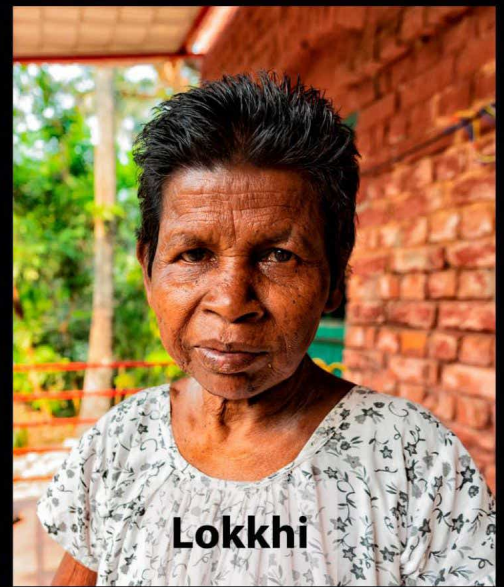
On news of his sudden and shocking demise a number of his friends and well-wishers have come forward to support FOKE. It is said, "To live in the hearts we leave behind is not to die". The same can surely be said about our beloved supporter. May his soul rest in peace. We will forever be grateful to our Partha Da.

- **Gaver Chatterjee**.



**REST IN PEACE**

It has been the saddest time for FOKE, where we lost four of our beloved members of Charunibash within a month. Lokkhi Soreng and Bhubaneshwar Thakur passed away on the same day on 26 April, within a span of 9 hours. While Lokkhi was ill and was hospitalized, she returned home to Charunibash and died of CVA in her sleep; Bhubaneshwar fought well in the hospital for several weeks in March. Such a despairing occurrence of losing two members on the same day has happened in the life of FOKE twice before.



**Lokkhi**



**Bhubaneshwar**



**Nemai**

Within 6 days of losing Lokkhi and Bhubaneshwar, on 2 May we lost our most interesting and loving character Nemai. His absence will be felt for many years to come. He had pneumonia and was a long term COPD patient.

Parul took a fall and though her frail body fought well with it she stopped eating and, eventually, her organs started to give up. While under treatment in Dr. Fuad Halim's nursing home she was transmitted 2 units of blood for her low haemoglobin count. We are most grateful to Subhadip and Abhirup, for donating blood for Parul dida. After a good one month's fight, with her chin up, the battle ended on 22 May 2021.

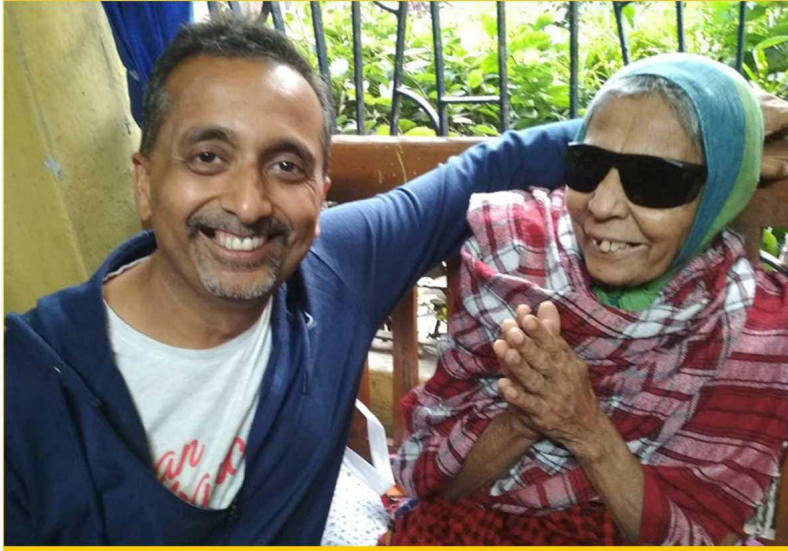
During this pandemic, our members died of natural cause. Prayer Service for Lokkhi, Bhubaneshwar and Nimai was held on 8 May while for Parul it was on 3 June 2021.



**Parul**



**WELCOME HOME**



**Jyostna Mukherjee**, aged about 65 years, was rescued by Hope Kolkata Foundation Hospital, on our request, from near Charaktala auto stand, Behala, on 20.12.20. We received information from the locals, namely, Mr. Biren Biswas & Sushil Mondal, who requested us to find a home for Jyostna. A GD was lodged at Behala

PS GD, no. 3583 and she was admitted right away to Hope Hospital. Jyostna has been residing in Bhalobasha old age home, from 9 January 2021, ever since her medical checkups and cataract operation. She misses the street life but is slowly settling.



## ADMINISTRATIVE NEWS

### Change of FOKEs Registered office address :

We have applied to change the present registered office address of FOKE from 121, Lenin Sarani, Kolkata 700013 to Bhalobasha Old Age Home, 61 Sreebardhanpalli, Bankrahaat Road, Kolkata 700104. Since, the property, Bhalobasha, is registered in the name of FOKE it was decided by the committee to transfer the registered office address to Bhalobasha.

**Information for our foreign donors:** Our New FCRA Account: As per the FCRA amendment, we now have our new FCRA account in the State Bank of India, New Delhi.

All donation from overseas will be received in  
**Account Name : Friends of Kolkata's Elderly**  
**Account number : 40106532915**, (FCRA Current Account);

**Branch Code: 00691; Purpose Code: P1303;**

**FSC Code : SBIN0000691;**

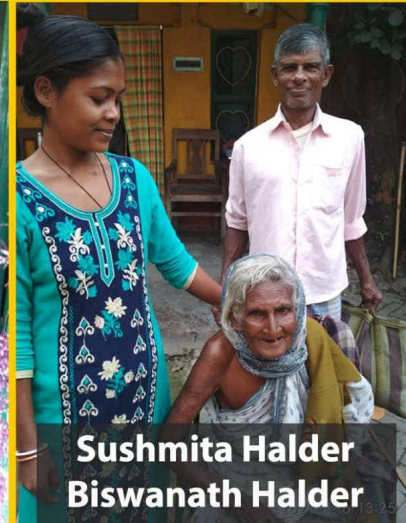
**SWIFT Code : SBININBB104;**

Address: FCRA Cell, 4th Floor , State Bank Of India, New Delhi Main Branch, 11 Sansad Marg, New Delhi 110001. We request all our friends abroad to update the bank transfer details of FOKE.

**New Recruitment :** We now have two young staff members. **Sushmita Halder**, who is the care giver to the members, and **Sipra Goldar**, the new cook. **Biswanath Halder** is our new gardener in Charunibash.

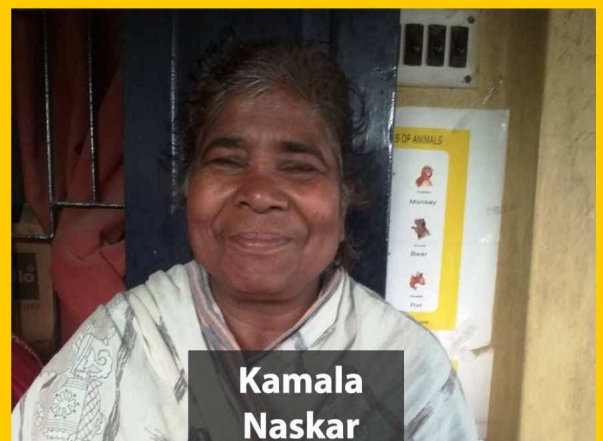


**Sipra Goldar**



**Sushmita Halder  
Biswanath Halder**

**Kamala Naskar** has joined as a cook in Bhalobasha.



**Kamala Naskar**

## Support from Concentrix Daksh Private Limited for Infrastructural Development of Charunibash Home:

From January we are in the process of infrastructural development of Charunibash with the generous support from Concentrix Daksh Private Limited.

In the first 3 months the multipurpose hall was built on the terrace of the main building, the tile roofing of the small room on the terrace was replaced by concrete roof and part of the electrical wiring work was completed.



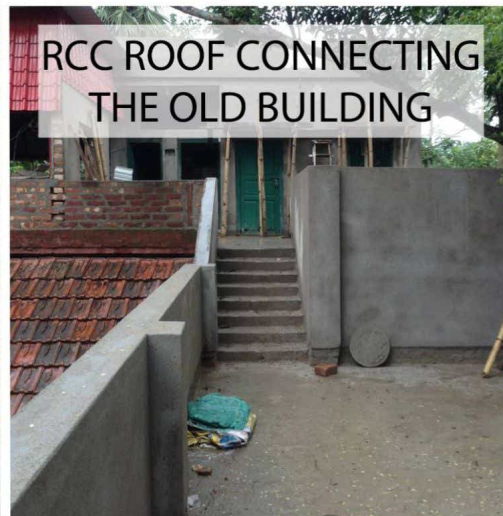
MULTIPURPOSE HALL



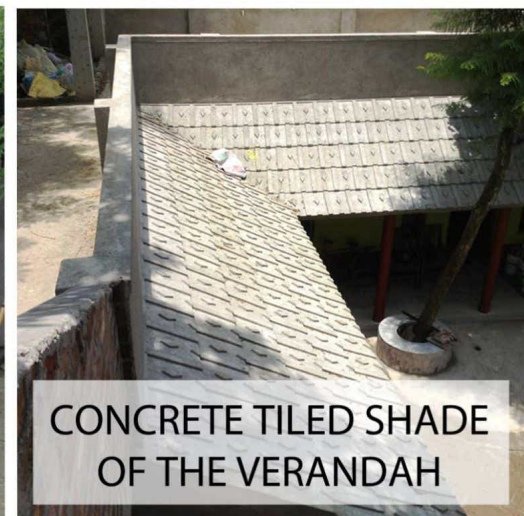
PREVIOUSLY OUTDOOR KITCHEN SPACE NOW NEW DADUR BARI



WATER TANK



RCC ROOF CONNECTING THE OLD BUILDING



CONCRETE TILED SHADE OF THE VERANDAH

The second phase of work began from 7 April 2021 with a new contractor, Kanu Marbles. The entire tiled roof over the kitchens, Dadur bari and the staff room was replaced with RCC roof; new outdoor water tank and guard wall for a certain portion of the pond was built and the 3 toilets were renovated. What was initially Dadur Bari is now Sridam's (Residential Manager) room, while his room has been extended outward replacing the outdoor kitchen with a bigger Dadur Bari, measuring 24ft x12ft, for 6 male members.

There are still a few developments in order. The workers are living there and carrying out the work. They don't come in contact with the members as they have a separate entryway and sleep in the new multipurpose hall on the terrace. We need to thank Kanu Das for arranging the work so well and seeing to all the details. Even during the lock down phase he travelled to supervise the work and has helped us with other immediate needs in Charunibash.



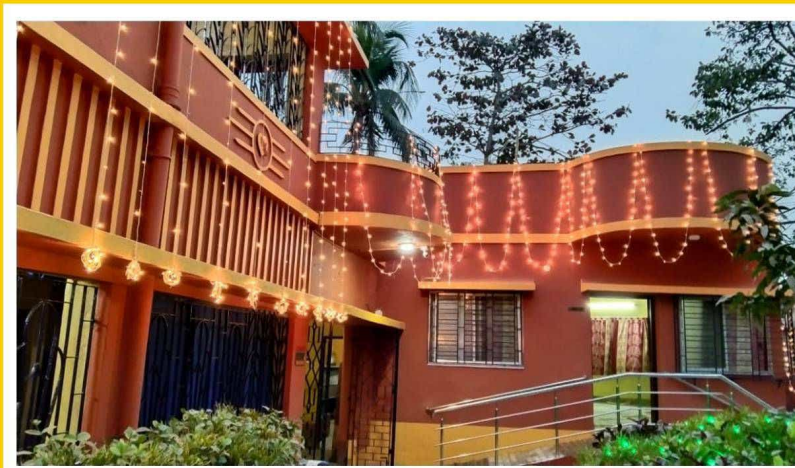
## Members at JAGORANI FOUNDATION:

When the construction work started in Madhubati, we had to transfer 3 of our members, namely, **Hashi Khushi**, **Geeta** and **Maya** in the home run by **Kestopur Jagorani**, to ease the pressure on the makeshift settlement - that was necessary for the construction. They will soon return home and we thank **Ashim Roy Chowdhury** and **Piyali** for providing us with this support.

## Inauguration of Bhalobasha

On 30 January 2021 we inaugurated the house which is dedicated to our very dear **Sister Cyril Mooney IBVM**. Close friends and well-wishers gathered to celebrate the occasion together with our members and staff. We thank **Raju Buxani** for taking the initiative and gathering friends, **Mr. Punit** and **Mukti Aggarwal**, and **Deepa Dholakia**, who sponsored the evening food and snacks. Special thanks to

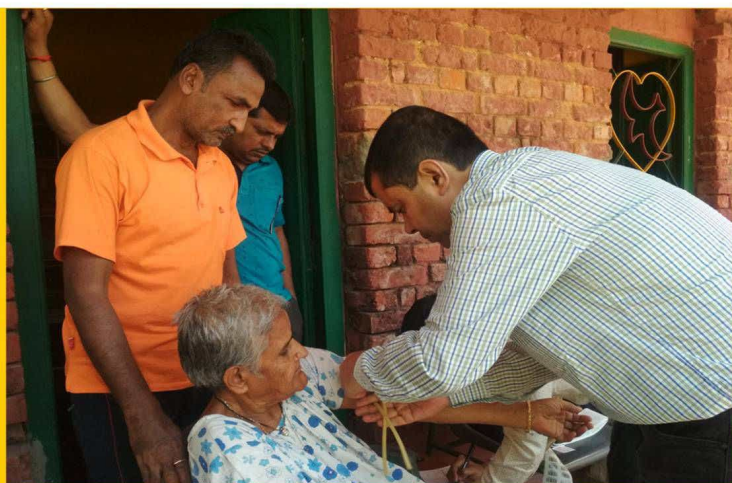
**Mr. Chiradip Das**, our builder, who arranged the music system, decoration of the whole house and coffee. We must thank **Sunny Mukherjee** – our general member and a long-term friend, for arranging his musical troop on such short notice. 6 fans for the new house were donated by **Mr. & Mrs Chakraborty**. 6 beds were sponsored by **Mrs. Papiya Das** and **Mr. Dipak Das**, after simplifying the grandeur of their only daughter's wedding. 1 bed was sponsored by **Mr. Prodosh Chanda** and **Mrs Kanan Chanda** in memory of their mother, late **Parul Bala Som**. The curtains for the room were donated by **Subhajit** and **Rinita Datta Gupta**. A geyser was also received in donation from **SAHAYAK**. **Nupur Saha** donated new pillows and pillow covers. Our friends and well-wishers encouraged us by being part of the occasion and we are ever grateful to all for their blessings, respect and trust. We would like to thank all the staff members of Bhalobasha for working extra hours, adjusting to using only a single toilet, at one stage, for the members, and protecting the members in every way possible. We would be able to take in new members as soon as the rooms of the existing members are renovated and painted.



## MEDICAL NEWS

### Pathological and ECG tests:

Pathological and ECG tests were done for each member. The reports of the members in Charunibash were checked by **Dr. Arnab Hati** and medicines were prescribed accordingly. A special thank you to **S.D Ahuja Foundation** for extending their generous support in sponsoring the monthly medical expenses for the elderly residents of our homes, since May 2021.



## Doctor's Visit:

**Dr. Suchandra Brahma** – Psychiatrist, visited both homes for follow-up treatment. Eye check-up programme for all the members in Charunibash was conducted by Vivekananda Ashram Netra Niramay Nektan.



## Professional Support:

**Mr. Nirmal Sarkar** is assisting us in making the psychological assessment of each member and is also trying to identify their areas of interest, which would greatly help us to engage them. The documentation would be of legal benefit as well.

## Research Placement

"I have been a research scholar for a long time in the field of Gerontology, from the Department of Sociology, under the University of Calcutta. The purpose of my research is to find out the reasons behind the behaviour shown by the family members who throw the elderly out of their house, to know more about the people involved in such inhuman acts, and whether the elderly ever raise their voice against such acts, or, ever thinks of filing any complaints against them anywhere. I hope my findings would be able to highlight the plight of the elderly in Kolkata old age/destitute homes and also help other researchers to carry out their work in this field in the near future. In this context, I would like to highlight that I have always tried to voice the conditions of the elderly population in public forums, like, seminars and conferences, and attract the attention of policy makers to think and introduce provisions for the elderly, as, they are left out by the society. I spent the entire day in Bhalobasha with the elderly and talked with them, heard their stories, which were full of grief and sorrow. I had a set purpose for my visit, but within a few hours they all became so close to my heart that I felt their pain as mine. I even had the fortune to have lunch with them, and it was a warm gesture on their part to make me feel welcome in every possible way. It was a day that will remain etched in my mind forever." - **Punyarupa Bhaduri**





## OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

### Follow up Schools :

The annual sports in Madhubati, was organized on the field of the government primary school. We had visitors and friends who made it extra special. Behala Sujon organised some sports and there were prizes of school bags and stationeries by Mr. Ganesh Mondal. There were sports for the students of Bhalobasha as well and the prizes were sponsored by Raju Buxani.

Our Follow-up schools remained closed due to the pandemic for nearly a month in June.



**Behala Sujon Social Welfare Samity (BSSWS)** – our networking partner to develop the education programme, conducted a teachers training session for 10 locals of Madhubati on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2021, with the view to equip them with some teaching techniques which can be used by them when teaching their own children or when teaching in some education centre.

A well-wisher of Behala Sujon, Mr. Singh donated shoes to all the children in Bhalobasha.

Online classes were carried out for the older students of Bhalobasha Follow up school by Behala Sujon.

### Report from BEHALA SUJAN on Happy Classroom:

Happy Classroom started its journey on a celebratory note on 26 January 2021. An initiative adapted as a joint venture of Behala Sujon Social Welfare Samity and FOKE. It initially started with a number of 10 students and primarily dedicated itself towards educating V to VIII standard students in all their respective subjects. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, Atri Bhattacharya, presently pursuing his second year of Bachelors' degree, teaches English, Bengali, History and related subjects at the Happy Classroom. Ashish Choudhury, a graduate fresh out of college, is teaching Mathematics and Science on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. On Saturdays Mrs. Falguni Banerjee, a teacher of a English medium school, has graciously devoted her time to teaching geography to the students of Happy Classroom. In addition, every Saturday the children are encouraged to get involved in various cultural extracurricular activities like, music, dance, drama and painting, - in which they participate with much enthusiasm. At present the Happy Classroom has a total number to 11 students, and the ninth standard students are also attending the classes. Even in this Covid-19 pandemic situation, and, inspite of the difficulties faced by the students in accessing digital medium due to economic crisis, Happy Classroom has been successful in conducting online classes through WhatsApp groups and Zoom.





## Non-Residential Support

We continue to support Mita Dey and Manju Halder with Rs. 500 per month and prescribed medicines. Clothes and blankets are provided and we also try our best to meet any other requirements that they may have.

We, along with our well-wisher

**Swarnalata Das**, are sponsoring the elderly couple Mr. and Mrs. Mukherjee, who we rescued last year and found a permanent home in Koshis – a unit under Dr. Avijit Dam in Bokaro. They are well settled and Mr. Mukherjee is actively involved in the house.



## Tailoring Unit

The second batch of tailoring started with 20 trainees but ended with 15. 3 amongst the final 15 got married and could not sit for their exams. After the lockdown, the classes resumed from 16 September 2020. The batch officially ended in February 2021, but the students requested to extend the training for another month. They have now learnt to sew various items, like, shirts, petticoats, blouse, night dresses, long skirts, kurti, frocks, salwar kameez, patiyala pants and palazzo.

The session ended in March 2021 with evaluations both in theory and practical. But, due to the pandemic we were not able to find enough work for the trainees who completed their training. Hopefully, our collaboration with our partner **NGO Uttoran Foundation** would open up avenues for constructive earning opportunities for the group.



## Permanent Home for Parbati

After a long search we finally found a permanent home for **Parbati**, a young woman who has had several cerebrovascular accidents, and, who for several months was cared for by our Assitant Secretary **Arundhati** in her own home. After a few days in Dr. Halim's nursing home she was in **ASHABARI** and, finally, now she is in a home under **MAHER**, run by **Sr. Lucy Kurien**. We are very grateful to **Suprobha**, who kindly welcomed Parbati.



## YAAS Relief and Medical Camp

FOKE in collaboration with Kestopur Jagorani organized medical camp and distribution of dry food at Kumirmari village in Sundarbans on 6 June 2021, in aid to the victims of YAAS cyclone. Free doctor's consultation, medicine, tarpaulin, mosquito net, dry food, sanitary napkins and water were distributed. 380 villagers were checked by a group of 9 doctors from the SSKM Government Hospital.

Our Medical Co-ordinator Champa Chowdhury also assisted in Kumirmari. Two similar relief works were also carried out in Chararkhali, Hingalgaunge and Mousani Island in Sunderbans, for 200 plus beneficiaries. All the areas are completely devastated and paddy fields are all flooded by river water. The residue of the salty water and dead fish are causing a most repulsive smell and are leading to various illnesses amongst the villagers. Special thanks to, Kestopur Jagorani for taking the major responsibilities while FOKE tried to help with fund raising and logistics.



Special Thanks to **Kerry Luxton, Elouse Hanh** and **Dr. Sakti Das** for supporting **Kajla Janakalyan Samity** for their YAAS relief programme. We thank **Kaikala Chetona** for supporting **Sandip** - a small effort in Midnapur, trusting the reference and request from FOKE. Several well wishers of FOKE also donated to **Jagaroni – Kestopur** for Yaas relief on request made by FOKE. Thank you **Mrs. Shymoli Basu, Raju Buxani, Mr. T.B Chakraborty, Raja Bagri** and **Koushik Biswas**.

We thank **Mr. Tilak Majumder, Raju Buxani, Ms. Boila & Mr. T.K Mitra** for donating to FOKE directly for the Yaas Relief.

## Oxygen Hub in Behala

FOKE helped to connect several small organizations around Behala / Thakurpukur area to facilitate the opening of a much needed and free oxygen hub. We donated 4 beds and 2 oxygen concentrators and 1 oxygen cylinder for the setup to start.

We thank **Danpite** and **Ujaan** – two main organizations for doing all the leg-work and setting up the logistics. This free oxygen hub will run till August / September as per the need of the situation. We thank **Raju Buxani** for donating FOKE with the 2 Oxygen Concentrators which are presently being used in the oxygen hub. We are very thankful to **Concern India Foundation**, especially **Gaver Chatterjee**, for honouring our recommendation and donating oxygen cylinders and related equipment for the oxygen hub.

**FREE OXYGEN in BEHALA**

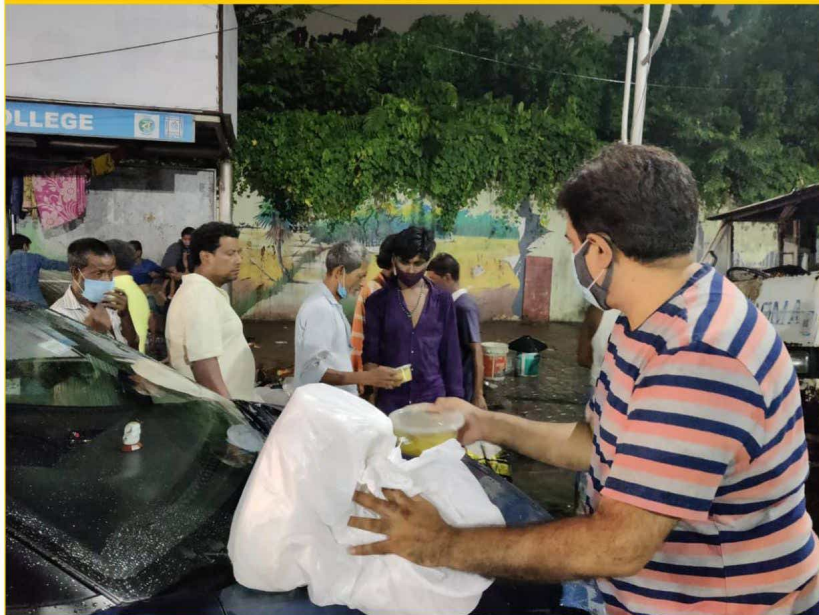


Organized by  
UJAAN ,DANPITE , Behala Sammilani Arabinda Pally, FOKE, VMS Alumni Association & SEVAC Mental Hospital

Venue :  
Behala Sammilani Arabinda Pally  
P-113, Arabinda Pally ,Behala Kolkata-700034

CONTACT US :  
Debojyoti :: 9830822557  
Gaurab :: 8017025738

- > Registered Medical Practitioner facility along with Telemedicine Support.
- > 24 hrs Nurses/Trained community volunteers .
- > Basic medications and basic oxygen support.
- > Basic clinical parameters (Temperature, Pulse ,BP, Breathing rate, Oxygen saturation etc) monitored.
- > Ambulance Support
- > Protective equipment's for health care system , safety and security.



## Supporting FOOD DRIVE in Kolkata during lockdown

Several people and organizations came together and made the lockdown a little less painful for the ones on the streets. Project Life Force (PLF) initiated the food drive with support from well-wishers and friends and has collectively served over 35000 meals through the course of the lockdown. That's 35000 people who may have gone to bed without a meal. And that's something really meaningful.

We were happy to donate Rs. 21,000 to PLF for the cause and thank the Team of KOLKATA FOOD DRIVE for making this project possible.

## Blanket Distribution

100 Blankets received from **Mr. Pradip Arora** was distributed amongst our students in Bhalobasha, villagers in Madhubati and amongst the needy elderly in Kaikhala village, - which were kindly distributed by Kaikhala Chetona. A lot of recycled clothes were also distributed amongst the brickfield workers and their children.





## Visitors and Celebrations

### Birthday Celebrations

Jenny and Bubai celebrated their birthdays in Bhalobasha on 1 January. Anjan Sinha celebrated his birthday on 5 January in Bhalobasha. We also celebrated Bela's birthday. Thank you, Mrs. Mallika Majumder for celebrating her son's birthday with a lavishly cooked lunch for the members, staff as well as the children in Bhalobasha. Friends of Tausheef Ahmed celebrated his birthday in the midst of our members in Bhalobasha. Jyoti Ramakrishnan celebrated her mother's birthday by sponsoring the cake and rations all the way from Chennai. Thanks to Biplab for celebrating his son's birthday with all.



### Memory Donation

Salil Kr Biswas, Ratna Bagchi, Piyali Sen and Suman Sidhanta remembered their loved ones by offering lunch, fruits, and sweets. Suchetona Sarkar celebrated her son Sambuddho's birthday, who sadly passed away at a very tender age. There was lunch for the members and gifts for the children in Bhalobasha.

Thanks to Manisha and her friends for celebrating New Year with all in Charunibash which was also attended by Sahadeb Some and his friend. Thanks to Jyoti Ramakrishnan for sponsoring the Easter cake. Holi was celebrated in a low key. Rabindra Jayanti was cancelled due to the pandemic situation. We thank Ujaan, a voluntary group, for organising a lunch programme and gifts for all in Bhalobasha.



Thank you SAHAYAK for visiting with groceries. We thank Mr. and Mrs. Sinha for sponsoring the lunch in both homes on Poila Boishakh (Bengali New Years Day). All the workers of the building sites were included in this special lunch.

Thank you AMMA BHAGWAN SEVA SAMITY, Rotaract Club Joka, Mallika Majumder, Puja Haldar, Bashari Dasgupta, Suchetana Sarkar, Amit Veri, Raja Ghosh for your visit and support.





## Thank You

We thank all the associates of Concentrix Daksh for their visit, guidance and continuous support during the phase of constructing Charunibash.

We are very grateful to S.D Ahuja Foundation for their support towards the medical expenses of our members, Club 12 for their regular grocery support and Humaquest for sponsoring the gas cylinders in Bhalobasha. We appreciate their commitment and feel truly blessed.



Thank you Gaver Chatterjee, Mr. Tilak Majumder, Mr. Prakash Khanna, Mr. Kailash Ahuja, Mr. Michael Rao, Mr. Madhur Jhaawan, and Mr. Parvez Kaikobad for visiting and helping to materialise the wishes of Partha Chatterjee. We thank Mr. Kailash Ahuja for donating his TV and a very good storage/ table stand.

We thank Kanu Das our builder who carried out the construction and renovation works in Charunibash. Thank you Sahadeb Some

our President for introducing Kanu Das and also arranging for the new electrician to complete the electrical works.

Thank you, Dr. Fuad Halim, Dr. Suchandra Brahma, Dr. Avijit Dam, Hope Foundation Hospital and Calcutta Rescue for providing medical guidance and hospitalisation facilities whenever the need arises.

A special thank you to each and every staff member for adjusting and for putting in extra efforts while the construction / repair works were in progress, in both homes. The members also had to adjust with limited space, which they did. God bless them all. Also, a big thank you to all our committee members for all their contribution.

We missed the visit of all our friends from abroad for this pandemic; but everyone is remembered dearly. We wish to see each one of you soon.

Please stay safe and take care.  
God bless.  
From all of us in FOKE.

