

FRIENDS OF KOLKATA'S ELDERLY

NEWSLETTER - JANUARY TO JUNE 2022

Dear Friends ,

This year was crucial as several compliances had to be followed by all registered charities according to the new rules implemented by the Central Government. On 1st February 2022, in response to our application for renewal of the FCRA, the officers from the Home Ministry visited us to check all our submitted documents and were pleased with our work. Consequently, our FCRA was renewed on 7th March 2022 which is now valid for 5 years w.e.f 1 April 2022.

A fresh Tax Exemption Certificate, which was initially issued for a lifetime, needs to be renewed under the new law. The new renewed 12AA & 80G certificates are approved till 2026-2027. Local donors are eligible for tax exemption against their donations to our organization.

We are now registered under the Ministry of the Corporate Affairs and have received the required CSR certificate, which means we are eligible for corporate donations. We received CSR donations from Concentrix Daksh India Private Limited for the reconstruction of Charunibash, while PC Chandra Jewellers Private Limited, is helping us to build the first floor on the new extension of Bhalobasha.

We are very happy to include **Mun Mun Das** as the **Montessori teacher in Bhalobasha-Happy Classroom**, from March 2022. Alongside guiding the youngest students, Munmun also enriches the students and the elderly residents with her craft skills. **Fatema Khatoon** is also a new inclusion in Charunibash Happy Classroom. This new team is a valuable addition and is being led voluntarily by Mrs. Piyali Sen, team member of Behala Sujan and Education Co-ordinator of Happy Classroom.



Welcome Home

Chameli Jha came to live in Bhalobasha from 5 February 2022 and is now gradually settling in. She was found sleeping on the streets in the vicinity of Deshbandhu Park, Kolkata, by a good Samaritan who sought the help of Kestopur Jagorani Foundation. She was admitted for medical treatment under Dr. Fuad Halim. Her mental condition and emotional health is fragile and we are making special efforts to help her get better. We are thankful to Jagorani Foundation for their untiring efforts to rescue and rehabilitate the elderly homeless all across Kolkata and its suburbs.



Satyabrata Mukherjee was rescued by our President Sahadeb Some, from Naihati Railway station. After several days` treatment in Dr. Fuad Halim`s Nursing home he came to live in Charunibash. Satyabrata is a gentle soul and well educated. Because of his inability to walk and deteriorating health, he ended up in the railway station. Even though he says he has a son, we have not been able to trace him yet. However he has friends who recall the goodness Satyabrata always had.

Welcome Home

Basanti Mukherjee joined us as a resident of FOKE on 11 March 2022. She came to us after having spent the pandemic years of 2020-2021 at the Beliaghata Shelter for Urban Homeless. She was admitted there by the Beliaghata police after being rescued from the streets in April 2020. Basanti is a friendly and cheerful individual, although with some emotional health issues. She is delusional and thinks of herself as a sixteen year old princess living in a luxurious palace, and this illusion makes her joyful. She is happiest in the presence of children and the evening classes are the highlight of her day. She is receiving counselling and psychological support, and we are hopeful of finding out more about her estranged family and connecting with them in the coming days.



Both were abandoned by their families and thus there was no one to discharge them and take them home. Sandhya often speaks about her sons and daughter. We will get to know more about them with time. While Seema is shy, calm and quiet, Sandhya is witty, chatty and has good insight in life. Her favorite pastime is singing. They are both settling slowly in their new home.

Seema Dutta and **Sandhya Mondal** came to live in Charunibash on 11th June 2022 from Vidyasagar State General Hospital.



Rest in Peace

Suprava Mishra left us on 16 January 2022. A bright-eyed, gentle and dignified lady, whose softness belied the steel that lay within. She spoke little, choosing instead to immerse herself in books, spirituality and music, but was always there with a cheerful smile to welcome visitors and newcomers to Bhalobasha. Her story is a tragic one, as is the case with so many of our residents. Suprava's intelligence and knowledge was certainly above average. The youngest of nine siblings living in a lower middle-class family, she did not have the benefit of a sustained formal education, but she did not let that deter her from expanding her horizons through voracious reading and discussions. Widowed when she was very young and left to fend for herself and a ten-year old boy, she sacrificed everything to safeguard his future. She worked as a maid and as a cook, and left no stone unturned to raise him into a well-mannered, educated young man. Sadly, as fate would have it, her son, the boy in whose future she had invested her everything, passed away in a road accident at the age of 21, once again plunging her into a chasm of despair, sorrow and ill health. Her relatives were unable to take her in and she was in a state of utter helplessness. She came to us at FOKE at that time, a shadow of herself, depressed and grieving. Sharing her thoughts with her fellow residents and with us, but that shadow of sadness never really left her. Her silence and quiet acceptance of the tragic events in her life gave rise to a deep desire to remain active.

Over time, she found solace in our home. She taught music to the students of our outreach classrooms, minded and guided the students with full responsibility when teachers assigned her the duties. She entertained all with Rabindra Sangeet at our events. Her smiling visage and haunting music will live on in our memories.

Special Trip

Athai is living in Bhalobasha since 2004. She came to us from Kolkata's Chinese community, but over the years we have not been able to identify her religious belief. By bringing her to visit the Buddhist Temple in Tangra which Rajeshwari - our committee member gladly arranged, we tried to identify Athai's religious background. Athai was initially very nervous to travel in the car without any of her room mates. Later in the monastery she relaxed and enjoyed the attention she received from the Nuns and returned happy.



Jyostna who is living with us since 2019 always wanted to visit the community where she lived and was rescued from. We finally fulfilled her desire and arranged to visit the community and people she wanted to meet. Some of her documents was preserved carefully by a shop keeper who handed them to Jyostna. Later Jyostna finally let go of the hope that the person who cared for her during those days on the street will not take care of her anymore. The visit helped her to finally settle in Bhalobasha.

Doctor's Visit

We are very grateful to Dr. Suchandra Brahma and Dr. Arnab Manna, for visiting our members. Dr. Brahma continues to take care of the mental health of our members. Dr. Arnab who is a practicing doctor in NRS visits every two months . He admires the work we do and thus is happy to be part of this journey.



Rescue & Rehabilitation

Ramkrishna was referred for rescue by MAHER and Satyabrata was referred by a kind lady. They were rescued on 31 January. While Ramkrishna was rehabilitated in Apna Ghar, Satyabrata was admitted in Dr. Fuad Halim's Nursing home and then came to Charunibash. Another helpless man, Gour Das, was referred by Calcutta Rescue and was also rehabilitated in Apna Ghar. FOKE's President Sahadeb Some rescued 5 homeless men and 2 women on his own initiative, and placed them in homes run by Apna Ghar and AVIEW. We appreciate his personal efforts and interest in trying to help the homeless.





non-residential care

We identified an elderly widow, **Shiela Roy**, begging on the streets near our FOKE office. She was invited in and after listening to her life's saga we decided to support her. We visited her home and witnessed the condition of her rented house where she was living with her physically challenged son. We offered to pay the monthly rent. In the meantime her son has also got a small job.

Manju Halder is still under our medical and monthly donation programme.

Manas Mukherjee, a resident of Madhubati village, receives dry rations and medical support, while his daughter, a student of our follow-up school, comes for her daily meals in Charunibash.

wheelchair donation

We were very pleased to support both a young and an old person this year. **Mallika Naskar** is a 14 year old girl, who is unable to walk and belongs to a very poor family, in the Sunderbans. The wheelchair has made her life mobile and the parents do not have to carry her physically from place to place.

We also donated a wheelchair to MAHER -an organization working for the destitute.



Kanak Pramanick is an elderly lady from around Madhubati, who is also physically challenged. She was very happy to receive a wheelchair. Kanak was physically carried by her daughter-in-law wherever she needed to go. This was very hard for both of them, so the wheelchair will certainly make a difference.



Medical Support Rinky Mondal is a young girl supported solely by her widow mother. She is living a life with a partial lung and is in need of a lifesaving injection every month. We supported with 2 injections in May and June 2022. If needed further we will continue the support



eye check-up camp

We organised an eye check-up camp at Charunibash on 31st January 2022. This camp was conducted by GKB Optical as part of their CSR initiative. It had been temporarily suspended during the pandemic and we were delighted to be able to organise it this year. 230 people from the surrounding villages and all our residents and staff received a comprehensive eye check-up and medical advice.

169 individuals received free spectacles through this initiative of GKB. 35 individuals have been found to have cataracts. We are thankful to GKB Optical for extending their valuable services to FOKE and supporting us in our initiatives.

Following this camp on 30th March, FOKE arranged eye surgery at Netaji Eye Foundation for 6 of our elderly members, a staff member and 11 villagers. We facilitated this process and the villagers appreciated this support. Later the postoperative check up was conducted for all in Charunibash.

We are very grateful to all the associates of GKB for their support over the years.



community outreach programme

SABAR COMMUNITY :

Kaikala Chetana a registered organization, is fully incharge of this community outreach programme in Kaikala – Haripal. They identify the most needy elderly from the Sabar and other backward communities and reach out with dry food / toiletry and medical support according to their requirements. 6 elderly members are regular recipients while another 15 are receiving from time to time. Doctors come to visit and medical support is provided by the volunteers of Kaikala Chetana.



Our aim is not just to hand out similar items, but to provide what is needed most by individuals. It is worth supporting the Sabar community and FOKE is committed to continue this food and medical programme as they are detached from the locals and existing norms of the society.

We thank Somnath Chaterjee, Secretary of the organization, and his team for meticulously identifying their needs and arranging requirements accordingly.

Happy Classroom



Both at Bhalobasha and Charunibash Home - have become popular in their respective localities for imparting free quality education and other life skills to the underprivileged students. Our joint venture with 'Behala Sujon Welfare Society' is proving to be very worthwhile.

Mrs. Piyali Sen coordinates and monitors the academic activities of both centres. She has designed the syllabus of different classes based on the W.B Board of Secondary Education. Weekly workshops are conducted by her to enhance the skills of the teachers.



Teachers Training: We were very fortunate to have Laetitia Gomes with us for 3 full days. Ms. Gomes is an ex-Loreto Sealdah primary school teacher. She is a fantastic teacher trainer and for the last 12 years she has been teaching pre-primary/ primary level students in Ireland. Ms. Gomes voluntarily conducted a 3-days workshop on 5, 12 and 19 February 2022 in Bhalobasha and Charunibash. 7 teachers of our primary level and 1 teacher from a private village school participated. Her workshops included methods of introducing formal education, phonetics, storytelling, pattern to writing skills and integration of art into formal learning. This was followed by the demonstration of a teaching method in both the pre-primary and primary level along with activity songs, creative thinking and storytelling. Our teachers and students will surely benefit from this exposure. We will keep connecting with Ms. Laetitia who willingly agreed to extend her support in every possible way. We thank her for the generosity and love.

Happy Classroom



Summer Camp : This year 'summer camp 'was organised for students during their long vacation .They did painting, drawing, made greeting cards, wall hangings, photo frames and many more things .Their "didas and dadus" also participated in their fun activities . Some children played indoor games with their 'didas'. Children enjoyed it so much that they wanted to continue it even after their school reopened .

We thank Mekhala Banerjee who visited each day in May 2022, training children and members in making greeting cards, paper bags etc.

Students' short stay in

Bhalobasha: 3 students namely Rakhi, Rubina and Simran, all studying in Class X, lived in Bhalobasha for their daily studies during the summer vacation. Their parents are toiling hard to earn their living hence this support helped them to carry on their daily studies. In return they also helped the elderly members by serving lunch, involving them in activities and being useful in whatever way possible. Teachers also conducted special classes in the mornings for these students. This is a win-win situation as our aim is to guide the children in caring for the elderly and become responsible citizen.



Home visits: Visiting the families of our students from time to time helps us to measure their difficulties and helps us to deal with crises if any arises. It helps the teachers understand the background of the students and these visits are an integral part of our programme.

Parents meetings were conducted in both centres and several personal crises of parents were attended to by the management of Happy Classroom.



Celebrations!

Both homes celebrated all the National Days and festivals during this season. Holi, Republic Day, Netaji's Birthday, Poila Boishakh, Rakhi, Eid and Saraswati pujo were organized with great zeal. The volunteers of Behala Sujon and the teachers of Happy Classroom were all present for Saraswati pujo and made it special. Rabindra Jayanti was beautifully organized in Bhalobasha this year with songs, poetry, dance drama by students and volunteers.

We thank Mrs. Piyali Sen for planning and implementing the entire programme through her excellent networking capacity. The music and light arrangements was sponsored by Raja Das (our builder) while ice cream and food packets for the day was sponsored by Shankhalata Sen and Sthitodhi Ghosh.



Exposure programme for GNM students & nurses



26 Third-year GNM Students of Calcutta Nursing Training Institute, undergoing a 'Rural Community Exposure visit' at CINI Chetana Resource Centre, visited Bhalobasha Old age Home on 27 April, 2022 as part of their course curriculum. The students received an orientation on our structure and staffing pattern, observed the services provided, assessed their health status(checked medical files/ mental health files) and later presented to our staff and members a Health talk with Practical Aids made by the students. Our staff provided all information needed. There was an added sharing with the group by the Secretary to make the students aware on the realities of the geriatric population in our country, especially those who are destitute. There was time allotted to interact with the elderly members, which both groups enjoyed and students were much enriched by the exchange and visit.



Exposure for clinical experiences for five final-year students of M.Sc Nurses at the Government college of Nursing, NRS Medical College & Hospital, was conducted on 20th and 24th May 2022. Their main objective was to learn about the geriatric care being offered in the home as well as our set-up facilities and organizational structure. The nurses also conducted a class on geriatric care and hand wash for the students of Happy Classroom.





Report on the infrastructure development of Charunibash and Bhalobasha Old Age Home:

Infrastructure development of Charunibash Home: Support by Concentrix Daksh Private limited: For the third & final phase of work, INR 20, 79,412 was sanctioned in March 2022, which further helped us to renovate and extend 2 toilets into 3 toilets, building the road leading to the house and around, installation of lights along the pathways; flooring of the multipurpose hall, door and windows, roof tiling and the painting of the entire house. The home is safe with lights and CCTV camera. It is now strong, comfortable and beautiful. Heartfelt gratitude to every associate of Concentrix Daksh who transformed a dream to reality.



PC Chandra Jewellers Private Limited came forward to help with the construction of the community hall in Bhalobasha and we received the first installment of INR 5,12,120 in March 2022. This hall will provide sufficient space for the students as the space on the verandah is not enough due to the growing number of students and their numerous activities. It will be used for training programmes, community awareness, cultural activities and meetings with an office for FOKE.



St. Mary's Lodge 75 GLI and a member Mr. Tilak Shankar Majumder, personally, supported in revamping the entire ground floor of Bhalobasha. The two rooms of the members, their attached toilet, a staff room, the verandah, dining space and the new walkpath, were all revamped with paint and the house truly looks beautiful, spacious and suitable for the elderly.





Thank you!

We are very grateful to :

Sean Garvey & Family, Kerry Luxton & Friends, Calcutta Calling, Cobra & Mongoose, Margriet Jenssen, Swarnalata Das, Raju Buxani and Tilak Shankar Majumder for their very generous donations.

Our heartfelt gratitude for the ongoing support to :

- DP Ahuja & Co. for their monthly support with medicines for both homes;
- The members of 41 Club 12, towards monthly grocery support for Bhalobasha
- Humaquest Pvt Ltd for monthly support towards cooking gas cylinders of Bhalobasha.

The ongoing support helps us to strengthen and sustain our existing work; it is also giving us the opportunity to take responsibility of other need-based small programmes.

We thank everybody who celebrated their special days:

Memory Donations : Jolly Gomes, Prabir Nath, Ratna Bagchi, Champa Chowdhury, Debosmita Mukherjee, Sudip Mondal, Soma Bose, Chandana Das, Shyamoli Ghosh and Ananya Ghosh celebrated in Bhalobasha.

Atanu Mukherjee, Pratima Saha, Champa Majumder, Urmimala Sinha, Keya Basu celebrated in Charunibash. We received donations in kind from Sujoy Das, Nandini Dasgupta, Sudip Mondal and Kanu Das.

Birthday Celebations: Madhushree Dasgupta, Moley Das, Swapna Das, Arin Mukherjee, Amisha Pal, Biplab Mondal, Bela Barla, Pratik & Sarmistha Sengupta.

Sarmistha and Pratik Sengupta of Amar Sahar Garia celebrated their marriage anniversary in Bhalobasha.



Baby Das, Roy Finance, Samriddhi Foundation, Eikatan Paribar, Astha Biotech Pvt. Ltd, Anjan Sinha, Ranu Guha Roy, Anita S. Banerjee, Riya Neogi, Niladri Ghosh, Manoj Basu, Moutushi , Rajarshi Banerjee & Ritosh Sinha for celebrating their important days and for their loving contribution. Thank you Mekhala Banerjee for training our parents and staff members of Bhalobasha in phenyl making I

We thank all our staff members, committee and well-wishers for their constant support. Heartfelt gratitude to Sahadeb Some, our President, for committing himself in rescuing homeless people and placing them in institutional care.

Mrs Piyali Sen deserves a very special acknowledgement for taking Happy Classroom to the next phase. She is training each teacher and helping them to develop their English. Regular evaluation and monitoring, involving volunteers and above all always dreaming big to enhance the education system in both the centres . THANK YOU PIYALI.

We thank Shyamal Mohanty for always coming forward to help us with various medical issues.

Thank you Asim Roychowdhury of Kestopur Jagorani for donating 12 very strong chairs for our members. Inner Wheel Club of Calcutta for donating a wheel chair and WAVE for donating a ceiling fan.



Thank you Rajarshi Banerjee for helping us update the website whenever required. You volunteer silently & with great love, which we truly appreciate.

Special thanks to the associates of Concentrix Daksh India Pvt Ltd for visiting Charunibash and to monitor the infrastructural development. They came with gifts, snacks and tetra pack drinks for all and there was celebrations with dancing and singing.

God bless all.

Kindest regards
FOKE - Team Members.