

Friends of Kolkata's' Elderly

July –December 2013

"Brief is life but love is our most enduring legacy."

At both our homes we have seen many colours during the past six months. We have been energized by each other, handled difficult situations together in a positive way. In all, we feel grateful to God and all our well wishers for standing by us and supporting us.

Joys:

Kamala Majumder is our news resident in Bhalobasha at present. She was referred to us by Champa Choudhury, our medical co-ordinator. Kamala is a widow who worked all her life as home-help but never got anything in return when she needed their support most. Her only daughter died as a child. She adopted another girl child who later, betrayed her trust and took away everything that belonged to her.



Soon after Kamala came to us, we got her cataract operation done. Slowly she is coming in terms with the reality that there is no one to take her responsibility other than FOKE.

Shefali Pal : From Hope Hospital Shefali has now come to live with us. Coming from a very



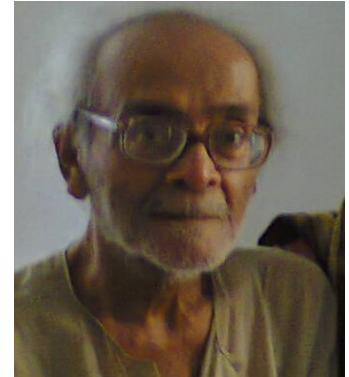
well to do back ground it is still a struggle for her to adjust in our set up. Shefali is widow with no children and there is no one to take care of her, though she thought her relatives from her in laws may make some provision.

Shefali is educated and loves reading. She spends time with the

children and is slowly coming in terms with her latest position.

Sorrows:

Sujit Lahiri: “ This gentle soul had gone on a long journey in his life of 79 years, starting with the childhood flight from a privileged home in what was to become East Pakistan at the time of Partition, fleeing to Calcutta along with many others. A little boy traumatized by the memories of what he later saw during the Calcutta Riots, people being butchered on the streets, lives being torn apart, lives unable to mend themselves. He encountered the evil people commit



against each other at an early age, and the screams and sights would still haunt him many years later lying on a bed in Bhalobasha in the gentle afternoon light from the veranda, slowly recovering from his first eye operation. "I have lived for 79 years," he would say, "but I have learned more in my last six months after coming to FOKE about love, human beings and religion than I have in all my previous years." Struggling to come to terms with being abandoned by his adult son, who left his parents in a helpless state of starvation in their flat in Kolkata, he wanted to move on with his life, look after his wife, teach underprivileged children, visit Mother Teresa's Tomb and publish his book of poems. His voice quivered and sang with his hopes for the future, with his gratefulness for being given a new chance in life, of all he wanted to achieve for himself and his fellow human beings, but despite all his vitality, his heart gave way and his long journey ended. He left us all stunned, feeling the poorer for him not being here with us anymore, but also grateful to have known him and keeping the light burning within him an inspiration and a beacon for our own lives. His book of poems will never be opened by him again, he will not get his second eye operation done as planned, and he will never put his pen to paper again to create his art. That too is a loss to all of us”By Eirin Lior (Norway)



Mala and Devika: both left us on the same day - the 30th of October 2013; Mala went at 6 am in Madhubati and Devika at 4:30 pm in Hope Hospital. It was not easy for our staff and members.

Mala came to us from Hope Hospital and lived in Madhubati for more than two years. She was frail and had difficulty to walk but her passing away at that hour in the morning was unexpected!! Mala departed in full consciousness, drinking water for the last time from Ganga - her roommate, without giving any inclination that within minutes she is going to depart. Mala embraced death with much peace and total submission to God!

Devika who came to us last year from TRACK Home was detected with Carcinoma within 4 months of her stay with us. She received all medical support and was admitted in HOPE Hospital for a full month after the Government General Hospital declared that the cancer in her stomach has spread so much that there was no further treatment excepting to provide her with oral chemotherapy and nursing care. Hope Hospital was very good to give her all comfort and nursing care. On 30th October as soon as we completed the cremation of Mala, we had to return once again with Devika for the last ritual.



The news came to Sanghita just after the ashes of dear Mala was immersed in the ganges; Baren, Surajit and Sridam were already on their way home and to Madhubati. By 8: 30 pm that very evening Devika's body was released and with the assistance of 3 male attendants from HOPE, Sanghita set out again for the last ritual at the same cremation ground. The priest and all other staff were sad to see us twice within such a short span of time. Michael Anthony - Founder of TRACKS home coincidentally (or God sequentially as Michael Hopkin's says) was

present in the city and was very honoured to perform the last rites for Devika. She looked upon Michael Anthony as her own son hence it was a great sent off for Devika.

We were still in a state of shock with the sudden passing of Mr. Lahiri and at such a short span of time; to deal with two deaths in one day was tough! It was the toughest and saddest day experienced in FOKE.....

In loving Memory of the first death anniversary : We are very grateful to Mr. Jeet Bhatija – a friend and well wisher, for choosing FOKE to gift beautiful bed sheets and pillow covers to all our members in memory of his loving Mother-in-law. Jeet we really appreciate for choosing FOKE. May her soul rest in Peace.



Care for the Non- residential members: Since May 2013 we have Ganesh Mukherjee under our non - residential medical and pension programme. He is a lovely gentle person, but life is harsh with him. Being physically handicap also affects his mobility. He travels by train every morning and begs in Sealdah Railway station. His wife and he live in a small hut in the village. The son does not have enough earning hence Ganesh has to fend for himself and his wife.

He is a potential member for Dadur Bari and has expressed his desire to come and live in Madhubtati.

We continue to feed 8 people on a daily basis, through our food programme.

We are continuing to support our 3 elderly widows with pensions and medicines. Bimal Maity and Ansar Ali are on our medical programme on a regular basis.

News from our Homes:

Celebrations: Durga Puja :



Like all year we had a good celebration of Durga Puja. From both the homes we were able to take out the members in hired tuk tuks to see the pandals and decorations. News saris, dresses, food, lights and music around the homes made the Puja days extra nice and special. We decorated both the homes for Diwali and members loved it.

On Raksha Bandhan the students of the Follow-up school tied Rakhi to our members in Madhubati. Sweets and snacks were shared with all.

Celebrating a Special Birthday:

On 2nd December we celebrated the Birthday of two year old Sudeshna in Madhubati and Bhalobasha. Sudeshna's family requested us to spend the day with our school children and members. They willingly sponsored a lavish lunch for all students, members and staff and gifted each child with school bags and stationary. Each member lovingly received cardigans and blessed Sudeshna from the core of their Heart. We are very grateful to Sudeshna's family for making the day so special for all. May God bless their only child and may they continue to be a part of our FOKE family. We are also very grateful to Swarna and Sahadeb Some (Sahadeb is presently also the committee member of FOKE) for putting us in touch with Sudeshna's family. It was also through Swarna and Sahadeb that Mr. and Mrs. Lahiri came under the care of FOKE.



Medical Interventions:



After several investigations Mr. Lahiri had his cataract operation but sadly within a month he passed away without being able to use his clear sight for his much loved passed time....reading and writing poems.

Champa visited with her aunt Dr. Nandita Nath, who is a homeopath doctor and her advice and medication is very effective.

Kamala Majumder also had her cataract operation in November 2013.

Parveen has been detected with gall stone when she was admitted in HOPE. After initials tests and medication she was released. On 9th December she was admitted again in Sambhu Nath Pandit General Hospital. We are still working on her.

Ganga is at present in HOPE Hospital for her psychiatric treatment. Hasi Khusi had her hysterectomy operation in NRS Hospital.

Mahadeb who is from HOPE is now in hospital again for a medical check up.

Champa and Bela constantly took Momota, Sabitri, Parveen, Maya, Binapani, Mrs Lahiri for checkups at the Geriatric / psychiatric Unit in PG Hospital. Tara was taken to NRS Hospital for the eye check up. Her last operation was not so successful hence the Doctors are not very keen on taking the risk of operating her second eye as her age is an issue for further operation.



Sunita our ex Rainbow who was an extra help in our Home, decided to leave and get into other jobs. We tried our best with Sunita and trained her in basic nursing from Hope Hospital, and allowed her to be of help in whatever area she felt comfortable. Taking care of the elderly requires patience, and Sunita is too young to take such responsibility. As Sunita is an orphan with no

family support we took her in FOKE to give her a chance in life. Within a couple of weeks after leaving us she found a partner and is now married happily. We wish her all the happiness in life.

Nibedita who was also from the Rainbow has completed her nursing training and has joined in a private hospital.

Generally the members are all in good health. They enjoy their food, evening Television shows, their walks and small jobs at home. Lovlina is busy at present knitting cardigans, while Kamala is busy with her crochet work.

News from Follow up school:

Academic Result: all the children passed and have been promoted to their new classes.

We had 4 Parents meeting and 3 Teachers Training during this term. Surajit as co-ordinator also attended a teacher's orientation programme from 1st till 7th September 2013, in



Loreto Sealdah.



Eirin Lior, with all her physical constraints, was very generous and passionate in helping our teachers as much as possible. Eirin specially emphasized on developing the

reading and spoken English capacities, which our teachers need much.

Raju Gyen – project staff of Loreto Sealdah was invited to give training on paper craft to teachers and students on 4th October. Children had great fun and made Raju promise that he will return again with more items to train.



Evaluation of the School by Concern India Foundation (CIF) :

CIF sponsors the honorarium of the 4 teachers, Co-ordinators honorarium, Teaching Learning materials, Printing stationery, Travel and Teachers Training costs.

Ms. Sudakshina Aich from CIF was very generous with her time. She evaluated the follow-up school in Madhubati twice this term. On 29th November she arrived early to see the morning session and later visited almost 20 homes of our students. This was mainly to see the background of the students whom we are catering through our education centre. It was important for her to see for herself the socio-economic condition of the students.

Ms. Aich also visited Bhalobasha Home on her way from Madhubati, to spend time with our members. Surajit assisted her from Madhubati to Bhalobasha. Ms. Aich made the following comment in an email to FOKE....

"The visit was really nice and refreshing. I must mention that your staffs are doing very good job and the children are really working towards their development. Thanks for the day.".....S. Aich

Report on Self Help Group :

Name of SHG	Forming year	Monthly subs	No of mothers	Savings till December 2013
PRNOTI	May 2008	30/-	14	33,720/-
JOYTI	MAY 2008	30/-	14	34,132/-
MINOTI	JAN 2009	30/-	14	30,109/-
BONOPHOL	JULY 2011	30/-	12	10,080/-
RAKHI	SEPT 2013	30/-	14	1440/-
			TOTAL	1,09481/-

No of meetings held: 56; Bank was visited 13 times.

Refund and revolving of fund: two groups Pronoti & Jyoti refunded their loan and have applied to the bank for the next loan for approx 1,00,000/- (Euro 1200 approx) each. We are hopeful that the bank will accept as our record to refund the loans are good.

Minoti SHG is in progress to apply for their loan of rupees 40,000/- from Bangio Grammin Bikash Bank.

Achievement: they are using and earning by utilizing their asset like water pump, corn separation machines, sand cement mixing machines etc. Some has invested their loan in cultivation.

The malpractice of taking loan from the money lenders with maximum interest is now practically not practiced as now they have enough money for any crises.

This entire system is a process of social upliftment and inclusion which has given the women the dignity they so deserve. A special thanks to Surajit for his commitment and opening the new group (Rakhi) which comprises of very poor ladies from the backward Muslim community.

Friends forever:

Sean Garvey as always was in Kolkata for two weeks from 9th till 25th November 2013. On 2nd November Sean was witness to the Birthday celebration in Madhubati. He also visited Bhalobasha and as always was very



generous with gifts for all members (Shawls, woolen head covers, socks, mufflers, cold creams, snacks etc) and a Christmas bonus to all home staff. Sean generously donated to FOKE and we are very grateful to his family and friends for giving him donations for Calcutta which he uses directly to help the work not only of FOKE but several other organizations.

- Majella Curtin visited after a long gap. Thanks to her for contributing towards Mr. and Mrs Lahiri.
- Perpetual Boyle from Northern Ireland visited us after a gap of 3 years.
- Mrs. Swarna with her 8 friends

Future Plans:

- 20 Students of the Follow-up school will come up to Calcutta to join in the sports programme conducted by Concern India Kolkata (dates to be confirmed)
- Participation of students from our Follow up school in RGT like all years
- Medical camp in Madhubati for the children for general health check up
- Preparation for the sports programme in Madhubati
- Some infrastructural work both in Bhalobasha and Madhubati homes
- To take in two more new members in Madhubati

We look forward to welcome our friends and well wishers in 2014:

- Calcutta Calling c/o Fr. Pat Hogan
- Maura Allen- Ireland
- Liam Ashe – Ireland
- Kerry Luxton – Australia

From the administration department: For the first time this year we have submitted our annual FCRA returns to the Home Ministries in New Delhi.

The audited statements accounts / Annual report for 2012-13, and other relevant documents were submitted to the Government of West Bengal in September 2013.

We submitted 4 months expenses to CIF as per their formats. (Submitted from April till November 2013)

We are still working on the transfer of the medical vehicle from CRDS to FOKE.

With the passage of time we know who stands by us and we also realize how much each one means to us. We pray to God that may we continue to be blessed with good people around us and may we carry on with the services we have been chosen for - with sincerity, love and passion. The staff deserves special mention who worked round the clock to keep it all going.



We thank each one of you for your continued support. May you all have A Blessed Christmas and a New Year with more hope, joy and peace.

With warmest regards and Prayers

From Team - FOKE .