

## *Friends of Kolkata's Elderly*

### *News from July to December 2014*

*As the year comes to an end I take this opportunity to thank each one of you for being so generous towards FOKE. Every contribution, be it financial donation, your time, moral support, or just being there silently...means the world!*

*May we continue to spread the joy in giving and receiving.*

*In appreciation*

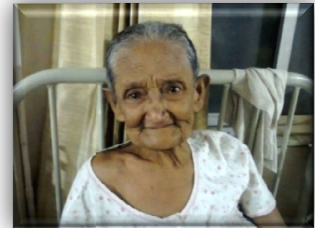
*Sanghita*

#### **WELCOME HOME:**



**Shakuntala and Gita** were both referred to us from HOPE Hospital. Shakuntala is Hindi-speaking and is under psychiatric treatment. She is quiet and gets on well with the others. While sitting with the school children one day she wrote her own name in Hindi and that's how we finally found out her real name. We hope that she will slowly open some more.

**Gita Das** was literally married for one day as the next day she decided to leave her husband and in-laws and to come back to her own family. All her life Gita looked after her mother and 2 brothers but after their marriages Gita was sent off to fend for herself.



**Rest in Peace:** Mrs. Kalyani Lahiri passed away very peacefully in Hope Hospital on 7<sup>th</sup> December. We tried to meet Mrs Lahiri's son in October but his in-laws lied and denied us a meeting with him. We lodged a General Diary (complaint) against him at the local Police station and also requested the Local Political leader to follow up with the son but our efforts were in vain as he did not even come to perform the last rituals. We are glad that we looked after Mr and Mrs. Lahiri as they deserved respect at the end of their lives.



**FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS:** Durga Puja and Diwali were celebrated in both homes and all members and staff had a great time visiting the puja pandals on two days. Like every other year we hired tuk tuks to take the members around and the auto drivers were extremely helpful in Thakurpukur and Madhubati. We had special lunches and dinners during those days.



**MEDICAL NEWS:** Athai had her cataract operation. This was a great challenge as Athai had never allowed any medical treatment to be given to her. Neither had she allowed any doctor or nurse to come near her. Congratulations to the entire medical team in NRS Hospital and our staff for their tremendous efforts and especially their patience.

Lovely was admitted to Hope Hospital and got all her teeth extracted and will soon get her new set of teeth. Binapani and Momota were also admitted to Vidyasagar Hospital for medical treatment.

Champa also arranged for the doctors from Jamtala Medical Service center to conduct a health and eye check-up camp free of cost for our members and for some villagers from Madhubati.

Cataract operations for PV Sabitri, Parul and Srimoti were done on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014.



**Non- residential Programme:** We have provided medical support to 4 non-residential members. Hospitalization and all medical treatment for them have been provided along with a new crutch to Ganesh Bhattacharya who begs in Sealdah Railway station every day.

**TRANSFER OF THE CAR:** We thank our President, Mr. Sahadeb Some for taking the initiative to sort out the transfer of the car. On Friday 28th November he finalized the paperwork with Ms. Basabi - a representative of CRDS who was also very co-operative in this matter. FOKE now legally owns the vehicle. Thanks to Friends of Calcutta- Ireland for donating it to FOKE and to Calcutta Calling for supporting its running cost.



**SPECIAL BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION:** Sanghita's birthday was celebrated with much love by the staff and members of Madhubati. Members saved their money from assembling the pen caps and lovingly gifted a salwar suit to her. It was a surprise celebration with cakes and gifts. The experience was overwhelming....

**NEWS FROM MADHUBATI- FOLLOW-UP SCHOOL: CELEBRATION:** On 15th August children, teachers, staff and members together hoisted the National flag in celebration of Independence Day. Children performed patriotic songs and recited poems with much zeal. Everyone had nice snacks and loved the togetherness.

On 23rd August children and members gathered plants from their own surroundings and planted them with much love and care in the premises of the Home. It was done to encourage them to plant trees and take care of them and for them to understand that with global warming more trees can save our world.

Like every other year we celebrated Teachers' Day and Children's Day on 14th November with great enthusiasm. Our teachers were invited for High tea and each was presented with a gift.



**2ND OCTOBER IS CELEBRATED AS WORLD'S ELDERLY DAY:** Teachers and students in Madhubati got together and celebrated with sweets and dancing with our beloved members.

**TEACHERS' TRAINING:** This year again Eirin Lior from Norway spent a day in July helping our teachers to develop their English language, in reference to the Government English books. With financial support from Concern India Kolkata we were able to complete 7 days teachers training programme in the span of 6 months. Ms. Anita Deb - the external resource person -



equipped our teachers with innovative ways to teach the children History, Science, Geography, Environment and English. Teaching and learning materials were developed during these trainings and teachers were encouraged to come up with new ideas to teach all these subjects. **Life Skill training** for the students was also conducted by Ms. Anita Deb. Anita also spent a day teaching our members how to make greeting cards which they loved.



#### EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF STUDENTS:

In the last 6 months 2 external evaluations were carried out by two separate Resource people - Ms. Sujata Das and Dipmala Saha. It is important that we receive an unbiased evaluation of each child and to see that the trainings received by the teachers are being implemented in classroom teaching.



**UPDATES ON THE SELF-HELP GROUP:** The good news is that the staff of FOKE decided to start their own SHG in October 2014. Each contributes Rs. 110 /- per month and FOKE also contributes the same amount. The staff thought of this plan so that they can take loan from this account in case of crises. Well done to all the staff as they all stood united in this.

#### SHG savings at a glance:

Name	Amount saved up to December 2014
Minoti	Rs. 32,560
Pronoti	Rs. 36,500
Jyoti	Rs. 36,920
New Bonophool	Rs. 420
FOKE (13 staff + FOKE)	Rs 4,620

**SPECIAL THANKS:** Dignity Foundation conducted a General Health Camp with the help of doctors from RTIICS -NH on 14.8.2014 for all the members of Bhalobasha and Madhubati homes.



A Collection Drive of Health & Hygiene products was initiated and organised by the employees of AEGIS, an IT company, who worked very hard for the collection. It was a successful event as both recipients and donors were extremely happy. Members interacted with the visitors and all had a wonderful lunch at Madhubati. The FOKE staff was very hospitable. We thank Lina Das - Social worker of Dignity Foundation (and a member of the FOKE

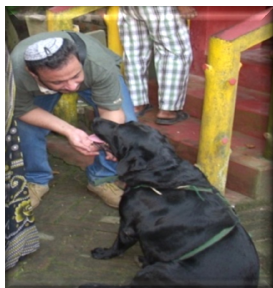


committee) for connecting us with AEGIS and involving Dignity Foundation with the cause.

Raju Buxani donated an electric walker machine for Madhubati which the ladies use for exercise for 10-15 minutes every morning.







Rajesh Shah continues to provide us with basic medicines for the homes. Raju Gayen and his organization gifted night dresses and toiletries to our members in Madhubati for Durga puja.

**Mufasha** Mr. Shalome Isriel, a friend of Dr. Fuad Halim gave a labrador as a gift to Madhubati home. Mr. Isreal was leaving India for a long time he wanted a safe home for Mufasha. The members and children love him and thankfully Mufasha is very friendly and well trained.

**MAINTENANCE:** In both homes there have been some improvements. In Bhalobasha we got new wall cabinets for medical storage and a table for the ladies.

In Madhubati there was a major repair needed again for the submersible pump. The windows on the top room now have grills because there was a recent theft. A new TV -DTH connection now entertains all staff with a clearer and brighter picture.



**VISITORS:** Students of Masters in Social Work spent a day in Madhubati with our members and entertained all with music, gifts etc.

Sean and Lorraine Garvey visited us from 8<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2014. Maria and Stephanie from Australia also enjoyed the Christmas programme in our 2 homes.

**A word from Sean and Lorraine:** Lorraine and I had marvellous visits to both homes - Bhalobasha and Madhubati. It was wonderful to see all the older people, to see how happy they are and how well they are cared for. We had a fantastic Christmas programme in Madhubati with the children singing, dancing and performing a drama. Thank you most sincerely to Sanghita, the teachers, all the staff and, of course, Raghavendra for all the driving. You are all doing unbelievable work. God bless you all. **Sean and Lorraine.**



Christmas programme was celebrated with great joy. Every member received bag full of necessary toiletries, each child received a blanket each with sumptuous food packets and all staff received family size blankets & a small amount as token of appreciation for their dedicated services. Thanks to Sean Garvey and friends, for sponsoring all the gifts.

**Blanket distribution on the streets of Kolkata was on 23rd December 2014,** with Raju Buxani, Arundhuti and Sanghita. Thanks to Raghavendra for driving all night.

### **Fund raising efforts for FOKE:**

Recently my friend Jodee was becoming very nervous about preparing an early Christmas dinner for her extended family of 25 people so I offered to do it for her. She insisted on paying me so I suggested that she make a donation to FOKE instead. The night was very successful and all enjoyed the ham, turkey, salmon and pudding, whilst Jodee could enjoy the company of her friends and family. One of the guests on the night asked me if I could do the same for her for a group of ten, using a similar menu, so now I have had plenty of practice for my own family lunch on Christmas day. The money raised will go directly to FOKE and the two events have



made more people in Sydney aware of people on the other side of the world and their needs. Another simple way of donating occurred a few weeks ago when dining in a restaurant with eight other friends, after dividing up the bill and putting our money in we were left with \$8 leftover and a friend suggested putting it into the FOKE account, even though it seems a small amount, it's still enough to buy rice and daal for a family meal in Kolkata and a good way of making people aware of how easy it is to donate. I'd love to hear of the ways that other supporters have to raise money for FOKE.

Cheers, **Kerry Luxton**

#### VISITORS AND FRIENDS IN 2015.

We look forward to the visit of all our friends and well wishers:

- Fr. Pat Hogan and his group Calcutta Calling will visit in January 2015
- Maura Allen like all years will spend 2 weeks with us in January 2015
- Kerry Luxton will be in Kolkata from February 2015
- Michael O Reilly, Brian and Michael Hopkins will visit in January 2015

**UPDATES ON ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL:** At our annual meeting, which took place in September, we elected our new President Mr. Sahadeb Som who replaced Ms. Delfina Boila. Mrs. Lina Das, a Social Worker with Dignity Foundation, is now a member of FOKE.

The Audited Statements of accounts and Annual report for the year 2013-14 were submitted to the Government of West Bengal and the Foreign Contribution Return was also submitted to The Home Ministry in New-Delhi.

In celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FOKE we printed 100 copies of our Annual report for the first time this year, thanking each and every staff member, donors and friends. Christmas is a time for celebration and being a better human being. Let us gift ourselves the spirit of tolerance and forgiveness which will, in return, make this world a better place.

*Happy Christmas & Happy New Year*

*From all in FOKE*

