



# The Toronto-Calcutta Foundation

Estd. 1988

Registered with governments of Canada and India

*The Toronto-Calcutta Foundation (T-CF) is a non-profit organization devoted to the well-being of needy people in Kolkata and its surrounding areas. T-CF funds, supports and/or manages projects that address local needs related to health, education or employment skills. Registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, through its Kolkata chapter and in partnership with local communities, T-CF is working towards sustainable development.*

[www.toronto-calcutta.org](http://www.toronto-calcutta.org)

## Origins and development

In the summer of 1988 Ted W. Culp, Uttam Chakrabarti and several other Canadians who were fascinated by the city of Kolkata and aware of its many needs, formed a charitable organization in Toronto. Their view was very simple: "What we can do, we must do." The then-named Toronto-Calcutta Association gained a base in Naktala, south Kolkata, the next year, when Srimati Sovani Bhaduri, donated space in her home for the Dr R.N. Bhaduri Memorial Health Centre, in memory of her husband. The foundation has run this neighbourhood clinic since then, expanding from basic health services, to, for instance, ECG and pathology testing through a small laboratory. The International Executive, which meets monthly in Toronto, consists of volunteers from the business and academic communities.

The charity is registered with the Canadian government and participates in the annual "United Way" fund-raising. Our management costs are minimal due to donations of time, space, skills and materials. External auditors review our financial statements annually in both Toronto and Kolkata.

Srimati Sovana Bhaduri is president of the Kolkata chapter. A retired executive is vice-president, liaising with the International Executive and the chapter, dealing with legal matters, and advising the paid project director. The project director manages all our projects and reports monthly to the chapter and to the International Executive.

Funds are raised through local events, an annual mail request, and the employees' charitable funds of several large corporations and banks, such as Suncor, Ontario Hydro and The Royal Bank. Occasionally, there has been co-operation with other charitable organizations.

In 1996, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) approved the joint proposal of T-CF and Gems of Hope (a Toronto-based charity) for initiatives in health education, micro enterprise and skill training in Kolkata. Under this partnership, with the CIDA funds, the organization gained experience in many activities, including tailoring instruction, adult education, basic health, and HIV/AIDS prevention (working with sex workers in one of the red light areas of Kolkata). T-CF volunteers collaborated with community centres in several parts of the city during these projects.

## Origins and development

**T-CF  
TODAY**

Pre-schooling in villages  
Rural medical clinics  
Adolescent education classes  
HIV/AIDS prevention project -Garia

## Our strengths and our future

## Our Naktala base

The Dr R. N. Bhaduri Memorial Health Centre has a waiting room, consulting room, laboratory and a small office. Our regular medical staff includes two physicians, a pathologist, a nurse, and a field clinic assistant. The doctors provide diagnosis in basic health, gynaecology, dermatology and cardiology. Other specialists attend from time to time to cover ear, nose, throat and eye problems. The clinic collects modest fees for services from those who can afford to pay.

The other components of our work are the outreach providing pre-schooling and basic health to some poor fringe villages, and the assistance to sex workers in the Garia area.

## Pre-schooling in villages

Our two teachers run pre-schools for children aged three to seven years in the villages of Ghutuari Sharif and Chakjaggaddal. The lessons provide the children with some basic English and Bengali, and general skills. Besides language, children are taught numbers, poems, songs, civic awareness and hygiene. Physical exercise is an integral part of the daily schedule. Our goal is to foster a balanced approach to early education.

A daily snack serves as an incentive for the youngsters to attend the pre-schools. Both schools operate from Monday to Friday between 6:00 am and 9:00 am. The classes accommodate 70-100 pupils.

With the help of each community, T-CF organizes an annual sports event in early spring. Students participate in a variety of competitions such as a 100m race, musical chairs, and fancy dress competition. Winners are awarded prizes and all participants receive a small gift. The purpose of the sports day is to encourage students to participate in physical activities and develop a sense of team spirit.

In addition, T-CF conducts monthly health check-ups of all students. Height, weight and any periodic illnesses are monitored by one of our doctors and nurse assistants.

.....Continued on page 2



## Preschooling in villages... Continued

Community involvement is a large part of our success in both schools. Mothers' meetings are also organized by T-CF about every second month in both villages. Community health educators discuss relevant topics such as reproductive and child health, food and nutrition, intestinal diseases, and sanitation problems in an open forum, where participation is encouraged.

These meetings aim to increase health awareness, while the field workers come to understand the concerns of mothers about their children's health. Mothers are encouraged to participate in the annual sports event and be a part of their children's education. The pre-schools and medical clinics in the villages are made possible through the co-operation of the local panchayats who have allowed use of school and club buildings and who otherwise supported these undertakings.

## Rural medical clinics

One of T-CF's most successful projects is the rural health camp. We currently run visiting medical clinics in three localities - Raghampur, Ghutiari Sharif and Chakjaggaddal - which our team of two doctors and two nurses visit each week.

Over 100 patients are seen each time. They are mainly treated for common ailments such as coughs, colds, respiratory infections, diarrhea and other intestinal problems. There has been a consistent level of community need for the camps and a steady number of patients in each locality. Patients pay a small fee to attend. Medication is provided free of charge, to the extent that T-CF can manage this, together with pathology tests.

## HIV/AIDS prevention project -Garia

T-CF works with a group of commercial sex workers and their clients in the Garia district of Kolkata, having initiated a project in this area in 1989. Our focus in this project is STD, HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. Three 'peer educators' meet the sex workers to explain health risks, distribute condoms and disinfectants. The toilets we built for the women in 1994 are appreciated, and we wish to repair and add to them.

Occasional meetings are also held where participants are encouraged to discuss any difficulties they encounter. This is an important aspect, as it provides an opportunity for the women to speak out about the trials of their work.

The Garia project has successfully been sustained because of community involvement and the relationships T-CF staff have fostered with the local population. Through hard work and perseverance, T-CF health educators, have developed trust and significant relationships with the Garia community.

Design : Biswajit Nayak

## Adolescent education classes

The previous adult education program in Raghampur village has been modified recently. We now cater to a group of about 20 adolescents (mainly women) who have dropped out of the school system. They learn basic literacy and needlework skills.

## Our strength and our future

T-CF's strength lies in the people who have supported its vision over the years. We benefited from dedicated individuals who have lent their expertise and skills to build the organization. In Toronto, these are the International Executive and our member volunteers who work enthusiastically for fundraising; in Kolkata, the local chapter and medical and support staff. Of great help have been members who have given time during visits to Kolkata, and, recently, volunteers from Toronto and Kolkata who, in spending weeks or even months, have brought fresh ideas and vigor to T-CF.

There is much work to be done, and we are ready to enhance our work on employment skills, health education, micro-enterprises, and broader pre-schooling in very poor fringe villages. We envisage further partnerships with Canadian charities and Kolkata organizations. The generous financial support of caring Canadians has brought us far. We can greatly improve our programs with an increase in funds, and we would like to see more support from within India. We see our challenge now as building partnerships of Canadians and Indians for the betterment of children, adolescents and workers in Kolkata.

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