

Newsletter April 2010 Edition# 15

A message from the International Executive (IE)

Year after year, for the last twenty years members, sponsors, donors, supporters and volunteers have given their wholehearted support to the Toronto-Calcutta Foundation (TCF) and 2009 was no exception. Among many fundraising initiatives in 2009, the year ended with a gala fundraising event in December where our supporters contributed over fifteen thousand dollars. Without the dedicated hard work of many people, TCF could not have held so many fundraising activities. It is truly a great success story. So far as our regular programs are concerned, we draw your attention to these points:

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One of many health awareness camps organized by TCF



Thalassemia awareness and prevention (Serum) camp

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Inauguration of a new clinic: Thanks to Dilip and Manjusha Bhattacharyya

The name 'Nishchintapur' village was immortalized by the famous film 'Pathar Panchali' directed by world famous Satyajit Ray. Most people who have seen the movie know the story by heart. English meaning of Nischintapur is worry free and now the village people can really be unworried due to opening of a new weekly health clinic. The village is also known as Bokultala, a suburb of Kolkata located in the south.

TCF has opened an additional health clinic in the Bokultala Sports Club with a generous donation from Mr. Dilip and Mrs. Manjusha Bhat-tacharyya of Toronto, on April 7, 2010. The Bhattacharyyas were visiting the village when local people mentioned that the village desperately needed a second health clinic because one clinic operated by TCF on every Friday afternoon was not able to fulfill medical needs of locals. So if TCF could open another clinic that would help the villagers tremendously.

Thank you for supporting us for 22 years

A message from the International Executive (IE)



Pre-schools Ghutari Sharif and Chukjagaddal

New initiatives contributed to better design of teaching, more co-curricular activities, better monitoring of the attendance of students and teachers. The improved management of the much-appreciated tiffin by the parent-teacher committee has been of great importance. A special sub-committee has been created to come up with ways of making these schools as a model school.

Pre-schoolers after uniform distribution at Chukjagaddal. These uniforms and school bags were made by Uttaran trainees, a great achieve merit.

Village Clinics

TCA began a new weekly clinic turning up at each. We welcome these indicators of progress but, of course, this puts greater demand of medical/health services. The support of local residents enabled this. So TCF now manages two medical clinics at Boral.

The importance of our weekly field camps or clinics in the villages is signaled by the increasing numbers of people turning up at each. We welcome these indicators of progress but, of course, this puts pressure on our dedicated doctors and support staff. Also, it means we need more medicines and medical supplies. Nevertheless, we applaud the fact that our doctors, medical, field and office staff are meeting this challenge.

TCF Volunteer Mrs. Uma Paul and Nursing Assistant Mrs. Mita Pal getting ready to distribute medicines at the village clinic



Eye Camps



Mr. & Mrs. Dey have been supporting TCF for many years.

Our eye camps, mainly in the surrounds of the city, were launched in 2007. So far we have held fifteen eye camps and distributed about twenty seven hundred pairs of eye glasses. This is no mean achievement as it requires one ophthalmologist, two optometrists, TCF staff for the camp. At times they all have to travel to the village either overnight or early in the morning to be able to start the eye camp on time.

The ophthalmologist dispenses much needed medicine without charge to the patient.

These eye camps are organized in the name of a specific donor (usually but not always from Toronto). When the eye camp is held the TCF displays the name of donor in the camp. We are very grateful to our generous donors who have enabled so many to have better vision.

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A message from the International Executive (IE)

Uttaran (Tailoring Training Centre)

Uttaran (Uplifting) is an initiative which TCF launched in 2008. In the training centre TCF has three full and part-time teachers who instruct the students how to do the cutting, sewing, knitting, designing of petty coats, blouses and school bags, uniforms and sweaters. In 2009 Uttaran trainees tailored to fit

school uniforms and sweaters for about one hundred and fifty students. It was a great effort on the part of these new Uttaran students, instructors and staff. Congratulations!

TCF chooses trainees thoughtfully. Twenty six trainees were interviewed in January 2009. Out of these twenty were

selected from the economically backward class. Preference was given to the married, distressed and widows who live near the centre.

However, it is a concern that more effort is required to make Uttaran a better training centre. TCF staff and directors are hard at work, aiming to make

Uttaran a model for other organizations. This year, TCF has improved the infrastructure by installing nets on the windows, a display board and two shelves for keeping materials and supplies. This may seem a small start, but the changes are much appreciated.



A trainee of Uttaran is learning how to sew



Finished products made by Uttaran trainees

Holiday fundraising gala raises over \$15K

Friday December 18th, 2009 saw the Toronto-Calcutta Foundation (TCF) throw a gala evening at the Payal Ranqiiffit Hall in Mississauga. The evening was dedicated to raising more funds for TCF's operations overseas which include medical clinics in five villages, two pre-schools, eye camps and a training centre for women. After a foreword by TCF President Ted Culp, the program began with an information session on re-need of support presented by Saswati Deb. Included was a

speech by Yeolla Teplitzky and Fatimah Uddin, two doctors who will be going to India to volunteer their services to

TCF's projects in and around Kolkata. A short interlude of a Jazz Trio comprised of Brendan—Cassidy, Tyson Kerr, and Jim

Sexton serenaded the audience with blues pieces. To close the night's program was a segment done by David Trattles, a documentary photographer, who shared his experiences on bicycle traveling all over India. He intrigued the audience with the revelation of women boxers in Kolkata, India. Despite having fewer guests than expected,

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Patrons at fundraising gala listening intently



My experience Visiting the TCF Eye Camp, Uttaran and Medical Clinic



The locations for the Eye Camps are carefully chosen by surveys and are held in the villages with the most needed first. The Eye Camp I visited was in Hassanpur / Bidadhapur located right outside of Calcutta. Hassanpur is a small village that has an average family income of less than 5000 rupees (\$122 Cdn) per month. TCF holds one eye camp a month and distributes about 100 to 150 free eyeglasses. The Eye camp is usually held at one of the resident's home living in the village. The Eye Camp itself is assisted by various people. Some are local villagers who donate their time and some are TCF staff. Men,

women and children from all over the village come eagerly to have their eyes checked.

Individuals first sign up to get a time slot with the ophthalmologist. They then wait until the ophthalmologist can examine their eyes in one room. Once they have been diagnosed, they then go to optometrist to get their glasses fitted. However priority is given to candidates who actually require the eyeglasses. Within a months time they receive their glasses with a nominal fee of Rs.10. However, people who cannot afford to pay get them for free.

After our visit to the eye camp, we travelled to Boral to see Uttaran - a training center for women which is a recent addition to the TCF

projects. At the training centre, women learn how to sew and stitch with the help of their teacher and an assistant. I had the opportunity to meet with a few trainees named Jahana, Sabia and Saira and they were grateful to TCF for getting this opportunity. The training center has been so successful that TCF currently developed a curriculum for a comprehensive training program. The women train to become tailors and seamstresses for local stores or open up a home-based business. Some of the women already had orders for school uniforms, bags and petticoats. Most of them would like to expand their businesses, but cannot do so as they do not have the means to buy their own machine. But I am happy to announce that Mr. Balarko and Mrs. Bidya Gupta

have donated funds to buy two sewing machines so that these nesses.

Lastly we went to visit a medical clinic in Boral run by Dr. M.K. Sengupta and a nurse. The busy clinic is a one room house that is kept very clean, although not very well lit. Women and children predomantly come to use the services offered by the clinic during the few hours it is.

It was a great experience and an eye opener for me to witness TCF activities first hand in Calcutta as I have been volunteering for TCF in Toronto for the past few years.

Manjurika Das



Dr. Ghoshal examining a patient at TCF clinic



Eye camp donated by Yoella and Fatima from U of T

Toronto Doctors volunteer for TCF

This January, we embarked on an adventure to Kolkata, India as part of our training to become well-rounded family physicians. For four weeks we joined the dedicated doctors and administrators as they visited 5 vil-

lages on the outskirts of the city. In addition to this, we visited the sewing school for women in Boral as they prepared for their first exhibition, we in Boral as they prepared for their first exhibition, we participated in the sports day at the

school in Ghutari Sharif, we helped distribute hand-sewn sweaters to the kids at the school in Chakjaggaddal, and we attended the association's award ceremony as they honoured their hardworking staff. One of our highlights was being able to perform the annual health check-ups for all the kids at two of the village schools. It was there that we were able to identify and highlight the rases of 4 children in need of further medical work-up. The experience was an enlightening and important one. It gave us an opportunity to experience medicine in another country with a health care system very different from our own. It also demonstrated the importance of the

various determinants of health, such as gender, education, and environment, in the ultimate health of an individual. However, what struck us most about the experience was the amazing perseverance, kindness, and generosity of the people of Kolkata and its surrounding villages. We continue to be impressed by the amazing hard work of the people of the Toronto-Calcutta Foundation and look forward to working with the organization once again in the future.

Drs. Fatima Uddin
& Yoella Teplitsky



Drs. Teplitsky & Uddin speaking at the fundraising gala

Inauguration of a new clinic: Thanks to Dilip and Manjusha Bhattacharyya

The new clinic will run every Wednesday morning and will be run by a very competent young Dr. Naiya and two experienced nursing aides. The Wednesday morning clinic was inaugurated by Ms Puma Bhattacharyya, Dilip and Manjusha's sister-in-law, who is a resident of Boral. The inauguration was attended by Mr. Tapan Mazumder, a TCF Director and Ms. Samita Chakravarty, Secretary of TCA. We had record turn out of 61 patients the day the clinic opened.

We are planning to monitor the activities of this clinic closely and serve the villagers for many more years to come.

Arun Chakravarty

Upcoming fundraising

Youth Talent Show and dinner
June 27, 2010

(Please visit our website for more details)

Tickets

\$25.00 per person
\$100.00 a couple



Sponsor an activity

Contribute to Uttaran

We encourage students to enroll at Uttaran Vocational Training Centre for women by giving them a payment to offset the loss of earnings from their usual work. You can support Uttaran by sponsoring students, or donating for equipments. Donor's will be notified with the students' progress or how the equipments are used.

For further information how to sponsor please contact Arun Chakravarty at 416-762-3259

TCF is grateful to ICare Ophthalmic Foundation for their generous contribution for two eye camps at Sundarban and Raghobpur near suburb of Kolkata.

Key staff in Calcutta



Arpta Sengupta, new office and field supervisor who joined TCF in 2009

Please sponsor a child



Students from Chakgaddal village

Each year between the two schools we get about 130-150 students. For these students we provide school uniforms, school bags, sweaters, pair of shoes, school supplies and tiffin. Cost to provide all these is about \$100 per student per year. Students progress report cards will be communicated to the donor on half-yearly basis.

If you want to sponsor a student please contact Arun Chakravarty at 416-762-3259



Students from Ghutiari Sharif village

Travelling to Kolkata? Please visit our projects sites! Volunteer in Toronto!

The visits of TCF members, and other supporters and volunteers, to Kolkata have brought about better monitoring and co-ordination between TCF in Toronto and the Kolkata board. Improvements have been made in the management at Nakala. If you are traveling to Kolkata in the near future, please take the time to visit our project sites and let us know what you think. We guarantee the experience will be one like never before. If you would like to help the TCF in Toronto, please join our dynamic group of members. Your input will be valued to the growth and development of TCF. For more information to become more involved with the activities of TCF, please contact:

Niloy Sen (n.sen@sympatico.ca) and Arun Chakravarty (Arun.c@sympatico.ca)



TCF is please to announce their on-line donation feature on the website. You can now donate to TCF online easily and safely via PayPal! Please visit: <http://www.toronto-calcutta.org/donate.html>

Membership/Donation form

Your membership in the Toronto-Calcutta Foundation is needed to help alleviate poverty in Calcutta and its surrounding areas. T-CF funds, supports and/or manages projects that address local needs related to health, education or income generation. In partnership with local communities, T-CF is working towards sustainable development.

MEMBERS: \$25

SPONSOR A CHILD: \$100

DONATION (cheque/cash): \$_____

Membership entitles you to participate at the TCF annual meeting, voting rights and the TCF Newsletter

Please complete and return to:

The Toronto-Calcutta Foundation
2 Leland Avenue, Toronto, ON M8Z 2X5

Tax receipts are provided for membership and all donations \$10 or over.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____

Postal code _____ Tel: _____

Email _____

Charitable Registration # BN 88824 3391 RR0001

Please visit www.toronto-calcutta.org for more information

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