

Newsletter January 2007

TB and AIDS - India and Canada's Response to the Global Emergency



The Toronto-Calcutta Foundation and Results Canada presented an evening of awareness-raising and relationship-building coinciding with the AIDS

2006 Conference. The event featured medical staff, officials from India, and Toronto-area Indo-Canadian leaders. The Toronto-Calcutta Foundation (www.toronto-calcutta.org) has done long-term work with poor and vulnerable persons in and around Kolkata. Results Canada (www.stoptb.org) works to streamline advocacy and improve coordination of HIV and TB. Held on August 14, 2006 (7:30-9:30 pm) in Brenman Hall of St. Michael's College, the evening furthered the goals of AIDS 2006 by stimulating discussion and sharing experiences about basic AIDS, TB and other health interventions, highlighting progress and identifying needed initiatives.

Featured speakers included Hon. Dr. Surja K. Mishra, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of West Bengal, India. Dr. Bobby John, on behalf of Results Canada, spoke about coping with TB epidemics. Dr. David Hawkins, of the British Government's Expert Advisory Group on AIDS, reviewed his observations of Toronto-Calcutta Foundation work being done on behalf of sex workers in Kolkata. Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, from the TB Research Centre in Chennai (erstwhile Madras), spoke about health education and prevention of disease and reported on her own research.

Leading up to the talks by featured speakers were welcoming remarks by Monica Palit (TCF) and Catherine Little (Results Canada) and a power-point presentation by Manjurika Das on the Toronto-Calcutta Foundation's activities in Kolkata and environs dealing with HIV-AIDS, STD and TB. National anthems of Canada and India were sung respectively by Paroma Raychaudhuri and by Kajori and Shirsha Chakraborty,



Catherine Little, President of Results Canada with Dr. Swaminathan and Dr. HHawkins.

those who wished, donating to TCF.

The program brochure of the event includes statements for the Toronto-Calcutta Foundation (Executive of TCF) and Results Canada (Catherine Little) plus: "Visit to Boral Centre by HIV/Aids Experts from UK" (Dr. David Hawkins), "Practicing HIV Care in India: a mixed experience" (Dr. Amitabha Chakraborty), "The Toronto-Calcutta Foundation (TCF) (Arun Chakravartty), "Highlights of TCF Work in Kolkata, 1988-2006" and interesting photographs of TCF sites and activities as well as advertisements from generous corporate and individual donors. The cooperation of many volunteers from within and beyond the ranks of TCF members was crucial to the smooth running of the event and is much appreciated.

By: Dr. J. O'Connell

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Dr. Surja K. Mishra with IE Executive

while Monidipa Bhattacharyya sang two songs of welcome. There was ample opportunity for conversation, networking and enjoying light refreshments and, for

Fact: Almost 6 million people are living with HIV/AIDS in India, a figure second only to South Africa's. HIV is ranked as the leading disease burden in India...
(World Health Organization)



THE TORONTO-CALCUTTA FOUNDATION (Current Activities & Needs)



The year 2006 has been a good year for the Toronto-Calcutta foundation (TCF)

The achievements are as follows:

1. The Naktala clinic has been renovated and the pathological lab has moved to a more spacious room. We have full-time assistance from an experienced nursing aide. She is supported by a pathological technician and a part-time pathologist to analyse the blood samples.

2. The total number of full-time and part-time staff in Naktala, the field clinics and the two schools number sixteen including the part-time physicians.

3. We have now five field clinics in addition to Naktala clinic attended by qualified physicians and nursing aides. The field clinics are in the villages of Ghutiarisharif, Raghampur, Bade Hoogly, Baruipur and Boral.

Doctors and two nursing aides visit each field clinic once a week to examine and treat patients (mostly women and children). All medication distributed at field clinics are supplied free of cost by TCF.

In addition to medical clinics, TCF staff provides prevention and awareness programs periodically in each of the villages around diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, STDs, Malaria and Thalassemia.

These awareness programmes are supported by the Calcutta medical college and the Thalassemia Society of India. The DOT (Direct Observation Treatment) for the eradication of Tuberculosis(TB) has been very successful in India as per WHO Reports.

The Baruipur clinic is held in a red light district and is dedicated to awareness programs for STDs, HIV/AIDS and related diseases.

4. We have two pre-schools with approximately 170 children (age group of 3 to 6 years old) supervised by five teachers in two villages. Pre-schools are located in Ghutiarisharif and Chakjaggadal.

5. Regular visits and participation by TCF International Executives (IE's) have been very useful for the implementation of our plans.

6. A proper control of funds has been established by appointing an experienced part-time accountant along with the co-operation of the local board members.

7. A full time co-ordinator Palash Das has been appointed to run the programs in an orderly manner and send monthly progress and expense report to TCF in Toronto.

8. Areas for improvement:

- a. Expansion of the pathological clinic in Naktala.
- b. Improve the facilities at the field clinics.
- c. Add a few more field clinics in phases.
- d. Improve the condition of the schools and assist with school uniforms to the students.
- e. Organize more health camps and eye camps.

f. Produce a short documentary film on TCF activities for publicity.

9. Publicity and fund raising programs were carried out in Toronto by our volunteers;

- a. Participation in the World Aids

and Tuberculosis conference in Toronto.

b. Three musical concerts by artists from Kolkata and a slide presentation showing TCF activities in Kolkata and surrounding villages.

c. Volunteer Appreciation day for young volunteers supporting our team.

d. Publication of magazine, brochures, fliers and newsletters.

e. Exposing Canadians to our work sites. A substantial donation and support was received from these generous visitors.

f. Exposing TCF activities to the student community as an awareness program for the young generation.

We appreciate the help and support from all of you for this noble cause. With a little sacrifice, we can help to improve the lives of many in disparity. It may be appropriate for me to quote the following lines from ancient Indian scriptures:

The value of sacrifice

Sacrifice is when we think less and less of ourselves and more and more for others. It is to spend ourselves in service.

It is to give from what we have-a part of our time, our wealth and our life.

A kind word, a helping hand, a supporting shoulder-such little deeds of service are example of sacrifice. And to do them daily, without keeping count is real sacrifice.



Thanks once again.
Have a peaceful and happy 2007.

By: Arun Chakravarty

My Experience In Rural India



Aviroop Biswas is a third year Anatomy and Cell Biology major from McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

Every summer, I travel almost religiously to Kolkata, India, undertaking the regular formalities of keeping in touch

with friends and relatives. However, this year I chose to volunteer at a non-government organization (NGO), where I was witness to a way of life vastly dissimilar to my own: An overlooked world with shocking levels of poverty, illiteracy, inadequate health care and substandard quality of life that is unfortunately very widespread throughout rural India today.

The NGO that I was volunteering with was aptly named the 'Toronto-Calcutta Foundation'(TCF), formed through collaboration between local doctors, nurses and volunteers based in Kolkata and generous benefactors from Toronto, Canada. Like other organizations of its kind, the TCF operates in predominately poor, hard-to-reach areas of West Bengal. They provide much needed

services such as regular health checkups, blood tests for diseases such as Thalassemia and HIV/AIDS and pre-primary schools for children. With the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic in the state, the TCF has promoted awareness campaigns on sexually transmitted diseases, promoting safe sex practices through the distribution of condoms and providing alternative employment for sex workers.

In the villages I had been to visit, had come across general practitioners, homeopaths, gynecologists and nurses, each tirelessly working to uplift and regenerate the existence of the millions who live in poverty and ill health with little education, health care or primary provisions. Volunteering from 2 to 5 pm, we traveled to many other villages like Ghutiasharif, Chakjagaddal, Bade Hooghly and Raghampur, each distinctly unique yet sharing a common plight.

At times my experiences were very saddening and at times marvelously enlightening. As I developed an understanding of the rural environment of West Bengal, I learned to appreciate just how lucky I was in being able to access such simple privileges and necessities that I had taken for granted before. The experience of helping a small child or an entire

Today, the West Bengal government continues to spend millions of rupees for the construction and improvement of urban infrastructure and business to woo foreign investors into the state. If just a fraction of this investment was spent on improving health, infrastructure and education for the rural poor, it would be a major step in truly modernizing the state and setting a model for others in India to follow. Through the work of hundreds like Palash Das, Dr. Bhattacharjee, Mita and organizations like the TCF, millions of people, born into a life of endless hardship and poverty, can continue to hold hope for a better life. Let's hope that their work does not go unnoticed and that we will be able to see the rewards in our lifetimes.

By: Aviroop Biswas



Chakjagaddal School

Traveling 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 Naktala.

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 Chapter 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:

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YOU CAN NOW DONATE ONLINE, YOU ARE ONLY ONE CLICK AWAY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



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>**



For more Information, Please visit our website
www.toronto-calcutta.org



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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
 DONATION (cheque/cash): \$__

- Membership entitles you to:
- Visiting privileges at the T-CF annual meeting
- T-CF Newsletter

Please complete and return form to the following address:

**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 _____

People who donate to the United Way can name the Toronto-Calcutta Foundation as a designated charity for their contribution. Please name TCF as "another registered charitable organization" on page 2 of United Way form.



Charitable Registration # BN 88824 3391 RR0001

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