



The Toronto-Calcutta Foundation

Estd. 1988

Registered with governments of Canada and India



Newsletter February 2008

Thank you for supporting us for 20 years

TCF adds a new program and continues with its existing activities

Progress with Eye Camps

From our experience with the village health camps, which have included eye camps from time to time, we knew there was a general demand for eye examinations. In October, we joined with the Rotary Club of South Kolkata to hold a camp at Khelaghar, Madhyamgram where about 250 people attended for eye checks and to receive prescriptions and eye glasses. Thanks to a donation from Arun and Gopa Chakravarty, TCF was again able to run an eye camp at Rajpur, in collaboration with the Dr. Shobha Chakrabarti Health Centre, about 10 km from Naktala. Over 140 people came to have their eyes checked, most being poor people who could not otherwise afford correct glasses. An ophthalmologist and optometrist saw the patients and 93 pairs of prescription glasses were given away. We thank Dr. Rabin and Mr. Shyamal Chakrabarti for their dedication and good work on the day. We are aiming to hold these camps regularly from now on and have sought specific dona-

tions to support them. We have the go ahead for six by a generous donation from Mr. Dilip and Mrs. Manjusha Bhattacharyya. In addition to that, we have collected funds from Mr. Moley, Mr. Niloy and Mrs. Nandita Sen for another eye camp. Mr. Utpal and Mrs. Jaysree Banerjee contributed in memory of late Baidyanath Chattopadhyay.



School Improvements

The planned improvements to the school room at Gutuari Sharif village, concreting of the floor and the building of two latrines, have been completed.

On January 17th, an article on the work of TCF in Kolkata was published in the "Voices" section of The Statesman, together with photographs. It can be read in TCF's website www.toronto-calcutta.org.

The article was written by Balarko Gupta, who visited Kolkata for 6 months from September last. Balarko and Vidya have done a great deal for TCF in checking on various financial and administrative matters, in spite of also being taken up with illness in their family. We express our heartfelt thanks to you both for your dedication, Balarko and Vidya.

Revised website

We are in the process of updating our website. One change is already in place: We have subscribed to PayPal, so that you can

now donate online. We have put in place the necessary security for the safety of donations.

Our visiting helpers

Three doctors from the Toronto University Health Network Gagan Saund, Nadia Luca and Karen Shokar went to Kolkata in February to work with TCA as part of their elective rotation during their residency. Gagan and Nadia both are from Toronto Sick Children Hospital and Karen is from Toronto East General Hospital. Karen Shokar is in her final year of the Family Residency training program at University of Toronto. She is based out of Toronto East General Hospital. Nadia Luca and Gagan Saund are currently in the midst of their specialty training in Pediatrics at The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto. All three of them have always shared the common goal of pursuing medicine in a developing country. They said, "With the help of the Toronto-Calcutta Foundation (TCF), all of us have been able to make this dream a reality". All three doctors are now back and they were very grateful for TCF's arrangements.

Inside this issue:

TCF adds a new program and continues with its existing activities.	1
The Toronto Calcutta Foundation (Current Activities and Needs)	2
New Project "UTTARAN"	2
Sponser an Activity	3
An exclusive interview with Volunteer Doctors from Toronto, visited TCA Kolkata	3
Traveling to Kolkata? Please visit our project sites! Volunteer with TCF in Toronto!	4
Member Application	4



Pre-school children in sweaters and bags

THE TORONTO-CALCUTTA FOUNDATION (Current Activities and Needs)

We have also had the support of Pri-yanka Nandan who visited in 2007. Balarko Gupta has been very instrumental in doing a great deal of administrative work on behalf of the international executive over a period of six months.

Mainstay support

We have been buoyed by two generous donations from a retired Canadian professor, who came to know of our organization but who insists that he wants to be anonymous. Our thanks to him for his thoughtful-generosity.

We continue to be supported by Suncor Energy Inc. through its Community Grant program. This steady support has been a mainstay for TCF, and we look forward to it continuing.

Videos in the making

Two videos showing our village work and the Bhaduri Health Centre at Naktala (Dr Sukla Banerjee and Dr Choudhuri) were shot, late last year, one by Murali Gana-pathy who donated his time and money in making it. The other one is done by Balarko Gupta. They will be edited and combined into a video that should help our fundraising and the general awareness of our aims.

Schoolbags and Sweaters



Dr. Arun Sengupta handing out schoolbags

Mr. Dilip and Mrs. Manjusha Bhat-tacharyya's generous contribution made our school children very happy. In December, TCA organized two events and distributed sweaters and schoolbags to the students. One of the students said, "I will never part with my school bag. When I sleep it will be with me always."

Fundraiser at the Tagore Centre

Music and dance, East and West, traditional and modern, formed the core of our annual fundraiser held at the Tagore Centre in Toronto last October. Indo-Canadian young people performed in variety, including Bollywood song and contemporary ballet. We had some senior artists who gave us Bengali and Hindi songs. The donations received enabled us to give sweaters and school bags to the students at our village schools in Twenty-four Parganas. Thanks to all who contributed and to Niloy Sen for the organizing initiative.

New Project: "Uttaran" Boral Training Centre

On Saturday March 15, 2008 the Toronto-Calcutta Association launched a Training and Tailoring Centre for destitute women at Boral, south of Calcutta. We have now 25 students (including some ex-sex workers).

Our objective is to give these women a helping hand so that they can learn some skills at this centre which will enable them to earn their own livelihood. We'll pay not only for the facilities, the teachers, etc., but we'll also pay for all the materials.



Balarko and Vidya Gupta on opening day

We hope that after a few months some of these students will be able to produce products such as blouses, petticoats and shalwars, embroideries, suitable to be sold at the market. The profits will be shared among the women.

Lots of credit goes to Mrs. Aparna Dasgupta, Palash Das and Dr. Arun Sengupta for their good work in planning and setting up the centre. Needless to say, from the start Balarko and Vidya Gupta were heavily involved in the project.

TCF thanks Manjusha Bhattacharyya for naming the centre as "Uttaran", it is called in English as "Uplifting".

The red ribbon was cut by Mrs. Chinmoyee Mukherjee, Gopa Chakravarty's mother, attended by Arun and Gopa Chakravarty, Balarko and Vidya Gupta from Toronto and Prathama Das, President of TCA-Calcutta Chapter.

The students have started with great enthusiasm and we wish them every success.



Our Trainee



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.

Sponsor an Activity

- \$20** donation can buy nutritious snacks for our pre-school children for a week.
- \$40** buys a sweater and school bag for five students.
- \$50** donation will support our campaigns to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS/STD in the population.
- \$100** donation will assist in distribution of medicine to 200 young children and adults.
- \$250** buys school bags or sweaters for all the students.
- \$500** donation can pay for a medical or eye field camp which can benefit several hundred people.
- \$600** buys school uniforms for all the students.
- \$1000** donation can assist us in extending our services to other villages.



Volunteer doctors on their experience with TCA in Kolkata

Left to Right: Dr. Gagan Saund is a 2nd year paediatric resident working at the Hospital for Sick Children. Dr. Karen Shokar is a 2nd year family medicine resident working at the Toronto East General Hospital. Dr. Nadia Luca is a 2nd year paediatric resident working at the Hospital for Sick Children.

Three resident doctors from Toronto who did volunteer experience with the TCA in Kolkata early this year answer questions for the Newsletter.

Why did you choose to go to Kolkata?

In Canada, we are fortunate to have an organized social structure with excellent access to medical resources. As training physicians we sometimes take our ability to order investigations and use state-of-the-art medical equipment for granted. We wanted to have an experience in a society that does not have such resources, and to see first-hand what it was like to practice medicine in a developing country.

Although we did not know much about Kolkata, we did know that it had a high rate of poverty and that many people suffered due to lack of medical care. It seemed the ideal place to visit as part of our training, and to gain experience in doing international work, which we are interested in continuing in our future careers.

Why did you choose to work with the Toronto Calcutta Foundation?

We became aware of the good work that the Toronto Calcutta Foundation (TCF) was doing from their website. Not only were they a home-grown organization, they ran a medical clinic in Kolkata and had daily outreach rural medical clinics in various small villages outside of Kolkata. We were so grateful that the members of the TCF organization welcomed us to work in their clinics, as well as helping us to organize safe accommodations, connecting us with key contact people to act as liaisons, and giving us a primer on the healthcare system in Kolkata.

What work did you do in Kolkata?

We joined the outreach teams visiting various rural villages surrounding Kolkata. The teams consist of a doctor, nurses, coordinator, and a trusted member of the village community. We temporarily converted school rooms or club rooms into a medical clinic. Villagers came to the clinic and paid a very nominal fee to be seen, and then after a clinical exam were prescribed appropriate treatment. The medications were given without charge, and if the medication was not available, they were given a prescription for the cheapest generic version of the medication. Without the medical clinics run by TCF, the majority of these villagers would never have the opportunity or the financial ability to be seen by a doctor.

How did you contribute to the TCF?

We diagnosed and treated children, adults and seniors with various medical conditions such as infectious diseases, intestinal worms, asthma, diabetes, minor trauma and hypertension.

What did you learn from working in the TCF clinics?

We learned about true poverty. Unlike Canada, there is no welfare, food banks or shelters. In Kolkata, people must survive without much help from the government. Without NGO's like the TCF, many people would suffer without any interventions. The Toronto Calcutta Foundation makes a big difference in these villagers' lives by running schools, medical clinics and eye camps. They give free medications, eyeglasses and teach preventative healthcare. TCF is a highly respected organization in these villages and help people that no one else does.

Would you work with TCF again?

It was our honour and privilege to work with the TCF this year, and we hope to continue to work with the TCF in the future. It was wonderful to see first-hand what this organization does, and to see that it uses all money donated to help the people of Kolkata. TCF is an admirable NGO that we would not hesitate to donate our time and money to again. In fact, we would like to establish a long-term relationship between the University of Toronto and the TCF, so that other resident doctors are able to work at TCF clinics in the future. The best way to encourage Canadian doctors to volunteer their time and expertise to developing countries is to have first-hand exposure during their training period.

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 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:

Niloy Sen (n.sen@sympatico.ca) and Arun Chakravarthy (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>

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

DONATION (cheque/cash): \$ _____

Membership entitles you to:

- Visiting privileges at the T-CF annual meeting and voting rights
- 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