

Newsletter April 2011 • Edition# 16

Seminars on diabetes, hygiene and HIV/AIDS for villagers



Dr. Basanti Majumdar conducting a seminar on health issues and basic hygiene in December 2010

Dr. Basanti Majumdar, Ph.D is tenured professor with the School of Nursing and an Associate member of the Department of Family Medicine at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Her primary research interests include HIV/AIDS and Inter/Ethno cultural health.

In the suburbs of Kolkata, rural communities lack access to basic health information. Currently, TCF runs medical clinics in the villages of Ghutiari Sharif, Raghampur, Badhe Hoogly, Boral, Bakultala, Chakjagaddal and Naktala. During December 2010, Dr. Basanti Majumdar traveled to three villages named Ghuriari Sharif, Raghampur and Chakjagaddal to conduct health seminars related to HIV/AIDS, family hygiene (focusing on water, nutrition and skin care), and diabetes (both Type 1 and 2). Approximately 100 people attended her seminars in each village. Each family was given a gift package comprised of soap, dettol, toothpaste and a toothbrush.

The attendees were both men and women. It was interesting that after the formal dialogue session on the selected topics, women had many other questions related to women issues. This included pregnancies and child rearing such as the observation of their children for early diagnosis of health issues. They talked about some of the culturally based rituals which they practise related to their lifestyle. They wanted to know if these practices were good or harmful. They also wanted to know what kind of local foods they can use, which are nutritious and at the same time inexpensive. It was obvious that women were uncomfortable to bring these issues in front of the men attendees. Based on her research, Dr. Majumdar validated that women cannot make a decision related to sexual practices. Many of them expressed their concern on how to protect themselves as their husbands have extra marital sexual relationships. She was impressed with the women's motivation to learn in spite of facing poverty and dealing with the lack of basic needs.

She recalls how her last seminar was a special experience consisting of attendees mainly from the younger generation of one village site. She discussed different health topics based on their questions related to alcohol consumption, dietary intake and physical activity. She was flexible to change the designated topics (diabetes, hygiene and HIV/AIDS) and focused on their learning needs to motivate the young participants to engage in health-seeking behaviors. Dr. Majumdar described having a wonderful time during her visits and she appreciated how the field staff members were friendly, active and hospitable. She valued interacting with all the villagers during her seminars. She is thankful for being given the opportunity to work with TCF.

The TCF would like to thank Dr. Majumdar for taking the time to visit the rural communities and creating a supportive and healthy environment among the villages where our medical activities operate.

By Tina Banerjee

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Thank you for supporting us for 23 years

A Message from the International Executive



TCF staff, directors, volunteers and supporters attending a brain storming session on future direction in Kolkata on February 4, 2011

Brainstorming Session on Our Goals

International Executive is pleased to announce the recent discussions on TCF's future goals and actions.

Recently, the Toronto Calcutta Foundation conducted a seminar in Kolkata, in collaboration with the Board of Directors of Toronto Calcutta Association. This seminar was held on February 4, 2011 at Niranjana Sadan Auditorium, Bijoygarh. Approximately sixty persons representing the boards of both organizations, their staff, donors, and well-wishers attended. The objective of this meeting was to review the performance of the Kolkata operation and to chart the course for future programs.

Summary of conclusions reached

- Provide more balance in resources spent (time, money, efforts, planning) for all the three areas – health services, vocational training and education. Currently, health gets more attention than the others
- Health services are being offered in some places far from our base. For cost effectiveness, program efficiency, and regular follow-ups we should concentrate more on our core area-- within 15 km of the Naktola administrative office
- Provide more teaching aids to the Ghutiari Sharif school. Encourage the teachers and provide them with more training on modern methods of teaching such as proper utilization of English texts, pencils and crayons, blackboard and class lighting. Hold guardian meetings 2-3 times a year
- Support and guide Uttaran more with respect to programs and daily activities; consider self help groups, micro credit and adult literacy

- Publish and implement office procedures for attendance, work hours, annual leave, holidays, sickness absence etc.
- Naktola office needs modernization with a few physical changes and up-to-date equipment and office furniture
- Proceed towards a long term vision for TCA to establish a signature village.

Actions initiated in response to the strategic session

- Discussion is underway with several school managements to make collaborative arrangements to educate more kindergarten and primary school children from within our core area of service
- Ghutiari Sharif school infrastructure is being improved and TCF added two new teachers to improve the quality of education
- Students from the Chakjagaddal school are being transferred to the Ram Krishna Mission School which is within the Chakjagaddal village. Money saved and additional resources have been earmarked for the new school collaborations mentioned above
- A list is being prepared that will bring the weekly health clinics and field camps for eye care and Thalassamia awareness to people who live within 15 km of our administrative office. The latest projects include the delivery of eye camps in various villages where over 1000 pairs of eye glasses, free of cost are distributed to the disadvantaged people
- Uttaran is rejuvenated and a batch of new students has started. Already they have participated in a garment exhibition that raised Rs 7000. In addition, TCF has engaged Usha Sewing School to start a certification course. At the end of six months training each student will receive a certificate which will give them an opportunity to work as a Taylor in the Textile industry.

Recent News

TCF Pre-school at Chakjagaddal

The Ramkrishna Mission has recently opened a new school in Chakjagaddal (CJ). As a result, the enrollment of students in the pre-school run by TCF has declined drastically. TCF decided to close CJ school from April 30th and redirect resources to other school.

New Music and Art School

TCF has started music and art academy at Brahamapur Children Academy for the impoverished children. Young children will get an opportunity to learn music as well as art. Soma Banerjee and Supratim Bose will teach music and art respectively. Mr. Paresh Chakravorty is sponsoring the school in memory of his late wife Shanti Chakravorty.



Music teacher Soma Banerjee and students

New Clinic

TCF is pleased to announce that it has opened a new health clinic in Brahamapur Village. Dr. Shukla Banerjee, a long term Physician working for TCF will be running the clinic every Thursday afternoon.



Dr. Shukla Banerjee at the new clinic

Annual Talent Show and Gala Dinner in 2010

The Annual Talent Show and the Gala Dinner held in 2010 raised over \$40,000. TCF sends their sincerest thanks to all the patrons, donors, supporters and volunteers for their generous contributions and support. Please check the TCF website periodically for more information on upcoming fundraisers to be held in 2011.



Miss World Canada 2010 Denise Garrido at our Annual Gala Dinner with Lauren Thachen-Cary and Nick Furtado



Performers at the Talent Show who raised funds for TCF year after year

A Memorable Visit to Uttaran Sewing School

On a recent visit to Kolkata I had the pleasure of visiting Uttaran, a school funded by the Toronto Calcutta Foundation. It is a school for local, underprivileged women to learn sewing and embroidery skills. The Uttaran school makes and sells a wide variety of beautiful hand-embroidered products and markets them in the local community.

I was greeted warmly by the dedicated staff of Uttaran who work tirelessly every day to teach their students. They showed me with great pleasure the many sari blouses, nightgowns, coasters, eye-glass cases, and cell phone cases created by their students. I was so impressed by the quality of the products that I purchased several items for myself, as well as some gifts for friends and family. The staff pointed out to me how the quality of the workmanship has improved greatly as their students have mastered their sewing skills. They were especially proud of their students sewing uniforms for the children at the TCF primary school. I also had the opportunity to be introduced to some of the students. Although they seemed a bit shy speaking with a "foreigner", they expressed a sense of pride with their new-found skills, a sense of empowerment through their accomplishments, and a deep sense of gratitude to TCF.

Uttaran is a wonderful place that needs your support to continue their work. They certainly appreciate donations, and better yet, if you are in Kolkata, I would highly recommend an outing to visit Uttaran and witness for yourself the achievements of these remarkable women. Their motivation and perseverance are truly inspiring.



By Sudipa Bhattacharyya

Youth Talent Show and Dinner on August 20, 2011

Tickets: \$25.00 per person and \$100.00 per couple (with \$50.00 tax receipt)

or more information contact Niloy and Nandita Sen at 416-431-3037

Announcements

Past President: Mr. Ted Culp is one of the founding members and has been the President of TCF for the last several years. The International Executive would like to thank Mr. Culp for his leadership and significant contributions and is pleased he will continue to serve in an advisory role to the Foundation.

New President: TCF would like to welcome their new appointed President, Mr. Arun Palit for 2011. Mr. Palit has been one of the longest serving members of the International Executive Board and has been involved in various capacities in running TCF.

New Website: The TCF website has been redesigned by Monica Palit, Colin Bhowmick and Glenn Richardson. Please visit the website www.toronto-calcutta.org to view updated information about the Foundation and its latest activities. Your comments about the new site will be highly appreciated by TCF.

Membership/Donation form

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