



Thank
you!



THE IMPACT INDIA NEWSLETTER: ISSUE NO.70

OCTOBER 2009

More than just a volunteer

What makes Impact India Foundation's (IIF) volunteers so different from those in any other NGO? After all, every volunteer is motivated by a cause. While each volunteer is a blessing for any non-profit organisation, IIF's volunteers drive it's success...!

It is they who bring a life-long commitment to Impact to ensure that the rural blind can see, the deaf can hear, the physically disabled can walk and those disfigured by cleft lips get a new life on IIF's Lifeline Express(LLE) Hospital Train. Eighteen years old and on the fast track, the train has to its credit over 100,000 medical and other trained volunteers - all who have impacted the lives of over 600,000 rural poor across India.

At IIF "giving" has a whole new meaning. This newsletter is a tribute to all of Impact India's volunteers who have selflessly given hours, days, nights and even months of their professional time and services, driven only by the desire to make a difference! And a volunteer's job is never easy. They work long hours without reservations, braving heat and

Toiling in harsh, unfamiliar surroundings requires two special qualities in abundance: compassion and commitment, to deliver a promise to those persons who have been living in neglect and hanging on by a thread of hope.

Over the years, for all the volunteers IIF has had, we dedicate this issue with first-person accounts by some of our volunteers. Due to space constraint we have had to limit the number of volunteers.... At Impact India, every volunteer is a dream-maker. We take this opportunity to thank each and every one of them for their invaluable time and assistance and for helping IIF make its journey memorable by creating rainbows of hope for the poor disabled in rural India.



Announcement... IIF forms MAB



The MAB members with Ramesh Sarin - Vice Chairman of IIF

IIF often relies upon advice and guidance from the medical fraternity. To maintain regulated support, IIF has formed a Medical Advisory Board (MAB) to advise IIF's Board of Trustees on the expansion of the Lifeline Express, Community Health Initiative (CHI) and other related matters.

The Impact family extends a warm welcome to its new members. We are grateful for their expertise and invaluable time.

The MAB comprises :

Dr. Ninad Gaikwad- Associate Prof., Dept. of ENT & Head Neck Surgery, KEM Hospital, Mumbai

Dr. Nilima Kshirsagar- Director, Prof. Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, Nashik

Dr. Taral Nagda - Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon, Parel Institute of Orthopaedic Specialities, Mumbai

Dr. Mansing Pawar - Prof. & Head, Dept of Dentistry, Govt. Dental College & Hospital, Mumbai

Vaidya Balendu Prakash - Director, IPCA Traditional Remedies, Mumbai

Dr. Vinita Puri - Prof. & Head, Dept. of Plastic Surgery, KEM Hospital, Mumbai

Prof. R. Rangasayee - Director, Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Hearing Handicapped, Mumbai

Kate shares her experience



Kate Higgins, Australian volunteer with CHI staff

“ For the past 5 months I have been volunteering with the Community Health Initiative in Thane District. I asked Impact India if I could volunteer because I wanted experience in a reputable and dynamic NGO although at first I was apprehensive about what I could achieve having no medical background. However I have found that volunteers can contribute in a variety of different ways.

In the communications area, I have been helping improve the skills of the CHI staff in computing and administration, helping coordinate the implementation of a Management Information System (a partnership between the CHI and Tata Consultancy Services) and participating in a survey of the disability rate and health conditions of the 1.5 million tribal population within the CHI area.



Kate on the field with Plus Moras- Project Director, CHI

Everyday is challenging, for example not speaking Marathi (or even Hindi at least), requires some creative problem solving to overcome the language barrier! However the rewards are worth it.

Not only have I gained most valuable work experience, I have made some wonderful friends and am the ongoing recipient of lots of Indian hospitality. I would recommend volunteering to any person because you will inevitably get back far more than you give.”

Kate Higgins- Graduate with History Honours, Interest in Community Development, Australia

A student with a view ...

“ The thought of ‘working in the community for the community’ had always impressed me. With a certain amount of planning, I set aside two days to volunteer for IIF’s CHI.

Heavy rains prolonged the train journey. It took almost three hours to reach Palghar. Dr. Tapshalkar, Project Co-ordinator of the CHI, welcomed me and we reached the project office at Palghar. I was briefed about the various initiatives taken by them in the ashramshalas (village residential schools for children from tribal homes). We left for Embur, about 35 km from Palghar.

The ashramshala was quite a distance off the national highway with a narrow, bumpy approach road. I realised that there was nothing but long stretches of lush green terrain without any habitation. On arrival, we started measuring height and weight of the students in order to calculate their Body Mass Index (BMI).



Dr. Sanket Shah in discussion with Zelma Lazarus, CEO, IIF

I was shocked - most of the 469 students were undernourished. I learnt, that their diet was taken care of by the government. Students from Class one to ten have not ever been given any milk in the diet.

The classrooms at the ashramshala also doubled as home for the students. Students ran and played without any footwear. The toilets were unhygienic. The place was a fertile ground for health problems. When we left in the evening, I pondered at the grim need for modifications in the diet and hygiene of the students.

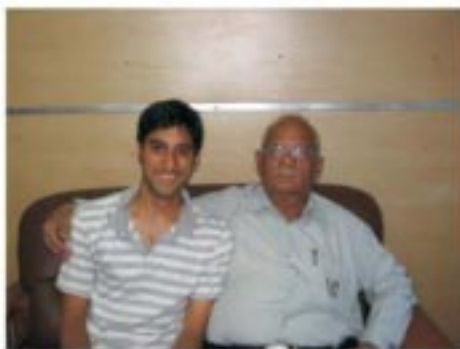
On our next visit to another ashramshaala at Mendhwan, Dr. Tapshalkar conducted the OPD for students with complaints, while I estimated haemoglobin of adolescent girls. More than half of the girls were found to be anaemic. I took this opportunity to explain to the girls the importance of haemoglobin and counseled them about dietary changes and hygienic measures. I knew that a single interaction with them would not be sufficient to modify their habits, however I reassured myself with the thought that at least a small beginning was made. My experience of two days by putting my knowledge and time to the direct benefit of the communities was very fulfilling.

My efforts have been a drop in the ocean; nevertheless, it's a small beginning, especially as the scope and the need for health reforms is most needed here.

I am certain that if every medico can give just one day of his life to volunteer for such community projects, the difference would be enormous. In the midst of lush green beautiful places, lie the most challenging situations and tasks. To toil towards improving these situations is a very rewarding experience. I am reminded of my medical college motto – "Not for self, but for all". I thank IIF for giving me this great opportunity."

Dr. Sanket U Shah - Intern, KEM Hospital, Mumbai

... And another with feedback



Sanchit Gupta with Col. Vishwen, CEO, LLE

" The Lifeline Express is really a unique project and it was very interesting to experience the different surgeries that are held. The medical staff are very good at what they do, and the doctors/surgeons who volunteered were very happy with the project after they figured out an efficient system for working after the first few surgeries. Colonel Vishwen is very capable and very organised, and everything on the train runs extremely efficiently. ►

That said, I had an informative time in the train. We were able to scrub into the operation theatre and directly observe surgeries, talk to the surgeons/anesthesiologists, and learn about the health care situation of the poor and the type of system that the Lifeline Express sets up."

Sanchit Gupta - Student, Cornell University, USA



Baby operated for cleft and in surgeon's arms after operation

New Frontiers....



Dr. Mamta Bhushan

" I have known about the Lifeline Express from Col. Randhir Singh for a while and have wanted to become a part of it and make Epilepsy care and awareness a regular service in the various projects! It took me a few years to actually travel and get a look at the train and how it works!

I was amazed at all that goes on inside that train! After generally witnessing a very casual and lackadaisical attitude towards public health services here in India, it was refreshing to be aboard the train. .

There was a palpable sense of purpose and pride in what everyone was doing and there were a lot of happy patients! I think it is a laudable effort and if we could run some 100 more Lifelines, it would be fantastic

My availability for the day had not been formally announced. Yet once I told Col Singh that I would love to see some patients, word spread quickly and by evening I had examined some 30 patients of epilepsy. I could not finalize the diagnosis and line of treatment in all patients, but there were many where I could start treatment right away. MOST patients were drug naive! There were patients mutilated with scars of injuries, knocked out teeth and burns – who had been having seizures for most of their lives but had not ever been treated.

I was so happy that I got an opportunity through this wonderful project to make a difference in the lives of at least a few people. I would be so happy to continue working for at least 2-3 days on every project and providing care to epilepsy patients.

I am now trying to rope in some more colleagues and I will take them along for my next trip to Udaipur, Rajasthan. We plan on providing 3 days of consultations for Epilepsy. I have also been trying to mobilize support from drug companies to provide free drugs for poor patients at Udaipur. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you and your team for the absolutely amazing work that you are doing. I feel honoured and privileged to join your efforts."

Mamta Bhushan Singh - MD DM Asst Prof - Dept of Neurology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences New Delhi



Gold for Impact

This summer I had the opportunity to shadow physicians with the Impact India Foundation and work at the CHI. I also visited the Lifeline Express at the beginning of its project in Udaipur, Rajasthan. I was amazed to see buses filled with volunteers from Indian medical schools, each eager to work on the *Magic Train*. The enthusiasm of these young volunteers underscored the importance of effective publicity to the medical community for medical service projects such as the LLE.

One of my tasks as a volunteer was to look for areas of improvement. I travelled to the surrounding villages to determine whether the local population had heard about the free surgeries being performed on the LLE. While I found that many doctors in the surrounding villages had read about the service in the newspaper, most of the local people, many of whom are illiterate, had not.

I suggested that the LLE triage centre determine how each potential patient heard about the service.



Greg Goldgof with an Field Worker in front of Impact's mobile diagnostic van

This data could be used to improve awareness about LLE's free services and prove valuable to other NGOs. With the rapid expansion in telecommunication currently underway throughout India, understanding the best way to communicate with both rural and urban poor will be an evolving challenge that LLE is in a unique position to address."

Greg Goldgof - MS, BS, Stanford University, USA



Our heartfelt thanks to

Tom Alter
 Gautam Kewal Aggarwal
 Utpal Bankim Almoula
 Gloria Bunefo
 Joan Brown - UK
 Julien Bourdinere
 Ian Boyd
 College of Social Work - Nashik
 Clive Monica Collins
 Liam Collopy - UK
 Essel Mining & Industries Ltd.
 Sultan Fazalbhoy
 Robert Fenwick - UK
 Jonathan Gould
 Dr. Y.K. Hamied
 Impact UK - BBC Film
 Impact UK - Michael Chowen & Family
 Simon Johnson
 Cameron Jones
 J. Karanjawalla
 Samira Ebrahim Ladhabhoy
 Peter Markham - UK
 Mr. & Mrs. Vijay Menon
 Pia Mollback
 Navneet Motors Pvt. Ltd.
 Vithal Palekar
 Moreshwar Panchal
 Bobby Parikh
 Ashok Gulabrai Parsram
 Praful Patel
 Jay Prasad
 Tejas Pravinchanda
 K. S. Raghavan
 Eveline Robijns
 The Smile Train, New York
 A. H. Tobaccowala
 David Wilson

Cost here

For Rs. 1,000

One person will have sight restored through Cataract Operations on the Lifeline Express

Or

Seven children will have their vision corrected

Or

Three persons will have lifelong disability prevented

Or

Any contribution will go towards the Community Health Initiative

All Donations are 100% Tax Free

Attached is cheque No. _____ for Rs. _____

Favouring **Impact India Foundation** drawn on (Name of Bank)

Kindly send the receipt at the following address:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ E-mail: _____

IMPACT INDIA FOUNDATION



Nhava House, 65 Maharshi Karve Road, Mumbai 400 002, India

Tel. : (91 22) 6633 9605 / 6 / 7 Fax: (91 22) 2201 0594

E-mail : impactindia@mtnl.net.in / info@impactindia.org

Web : www.impactindia.org

Editor : Zelma Lazarus.

Photographs : Volunteers

Text and Design : Batull Tavawala