

KAILAKURI HEALTH CARE PROJECT

(Kailakuri & the Mati NGO)

Village Kailakuri, Madhupur Thana, Tangail District, Bangladesh



JULY 2017:

“DIABETES IS NOT A CONTAGIOUS DISEASE”

In our last newsletter we hinted at upcoming changes for the Kailakuri Health Care Project. We have now gained Social Welfare Department Registration for ‘**Dr Baker’s Organisation for Well-Being**’ although we need to partner with another NGO until August 2018 while we complete NGO Bureau registration (which allows us to bring in foreign funds and international consultants). KHCP will continue to operate as a project of the NGO. This month we hear from diabetic staff member Utphol Saha, who has been employed by Kailakuri since 1999.

UTPHOL’S STORY

My name is Utphol Chondra Saha. I am 33 years old. I am the second of four brothers from Elenga Baniabari village in Tangail district. My mother died when I was 10 years old and my father soon married again. He worked hard for the family. One day my older brother left for Tangail after quarrelling with our father and he started work in a shop. Because dad was not able to educate my younger brother, our uncle brought him to Tangail township so he could study.

One day I was carrying lentils to the bazaar with my father. It was three kilometres away from our home. On the way to the bazaar I had to pee three times. At that point I didn’t have any idea about diabetes. Slowly I started to feel weaker. I went to a traditional healer but I did not get any better. Several neighbours suggested I visit Tangail General Hospital and one day I went there with my father. After they tested my blood I came to know that I have diabetes. They gave me glibenclimide tablets but this did not result in any improvement. My physical condition was deteriorating and I developed foot and hand ulcers because of my uncontrolled diabetes. My stepmother always used to neglect me because of my diabetes. She didn’t feed me properly; there was even an eating plate for me, which no one else would use.

After seeing my circumstances, one of my uncles managed some money for me and he gave it to my father so that he could bring me to BIRDEM Hospital. I could get free insulin from there but there was no travel allowance to return to Dhaka for further insulin. As I couldn’t afford to eat properly at home, my diabetes became uncontrolled and I became weak and thin. I started losing eyesight in both eyes.



Photo of Utphol and his daughter Tithi outside their Kailakuri home

Gobindo Mali, my father's friend, was also a diabetes patient. He was taking treatment from Kailakuri. He suggested to my father that I also get treatment there. My father agreed and even helped to collect money from different places, especially at the bazaar, for treatment purposes. One day in 1996, three of us (Father, Gobindo and me) came at the main centre in Thanarbaid village. They admitted me at the clinic. After a few months, my health condition changed as my diabetes was controlled. My eyesight improved. I was able to see everything much clearer than before. I realised that I wouldn't die anymore.

After one and half months I was discharged. My diabetes became uncontrolled after going home, as I was not able to eat properly. My stepmother did not feed me enough. Sometimes I picked up money from my father's shirt pocket and bought food from outside. My stepmother gave me an eating plate. I used to drink water using the same plate after eating. After some days, I managed a plastic glass from a tea stall and I used to drink water using this glass. One day I decided to stay somewhere else. This is why I started working in a shop in Tangail. But after some time, I got a serious acidity problem due to my uncontrolled diabetes. This was in 1997. I was immediately transferred to Kailakuri clinic. I was here for almost three months. It was too painful for me to go home due to my family's poverty and my stepmother's unkind behaviour. So I begged to work in the clinic. Dr Bai sent Haydor (one of our staff) to visit my home. He categorised it as C- (meaning poor but not extremely poor). Dr Bai was not keen to employ me because of my home category and distance. I didn't want to leave the project. One staff forced me to leave. But after walking around all day, I came back to the clinic at night. The next day, after discussing with one staff Dr Bai sent me to work at a tea stall in Dokhola. My diabetes became uncontrolled while working there.

In 1998, I got another serious acidity problem. This time I was about to die. After getting treatment for four months I became well. After that, I wondered again, where could I go apart from home? When I talked to Dr Bai again, he discussed with some staff and sent me to a tea stall at Tulshipur. As I was diabetic and had to take urine tests, it wasn't acceptable for Muslims. So I had to come back after a few days. The management team discussed what they could do. One of our staff named Anish organised a job in a pharmacy in Madhupur. They didn't provide anything except food. They were not so interested to keep me on as I demanded some money for doing the job. I returned to the project again. In 1999, after discussion with the management team, Dr Bai allowed me in the project for three months as a labourer and they provided me with three meals a day. After that, they appointed me as a part time garden worker with 10 taka daily wages. At present, I am a storekeeper at the project and responsible for buying food.

When I started working here, there were far fewer patients than today. Kailakuri's treatment was really good. I discovered that many patients used to take treatment from traditional healers but this was changing gradually as diabetes patients and others like me started coming to this project. By working at Kailakuri, I was able to challenge my stepmother's superstition. Before, my mother used to think diabetes is a contagious disease. But after receiving teaching from the project, I explained to them that although diabetes is a life long disease, it isn't contagious and patients can keep well by managing their blood sugar. People are really benefited by this project. Patients like me could have died long ago if we didn't get treatment from here, as we would not have received it from any other place.

I am now renting a home in Kailakuri village. I got married a few years ago but we were not able to conceive so we adopted a baby girl from Notre Dame and named her Tithi. My wife ran away with another man last year, so I am now raising Tithi on my own. She is six years old and attends Class One at Kailakuri Primary School. I live in the same compound as Masud, another staff member at Kailakuri. Masud's family has helped me care for Tithi the past few weeks, after my father passed away. As A Hindu, I have certain traditions to fulfil at this time, such as fasting from meat and some other foods.

By Nadine Vickers (English Communications Consultant)

In other news... Ratan Bormon and I (Nadine) got married on 4th March 2017! We celebrated with a 'gayer holud' the night before, followed by a marriage ceremony and two receptions – one at the Kailakuri Health Care Project, along with Kailakuri staff, inpatients and guests who travelled from afar, and the second at Ratan's home in Hagurakuri village, surrounded by his relatives and village members. Ten of my friends and family were able to travel from New Zealand for the occasion, as well as friends from Dhaka and Mymensingh. Amongst the highlights were a football game (KHCP vs. doctors from Gonoshastaya Kendra) and a cultural celebration with songs and dances by local performers.



Left: With Ratan's mother, niece and Dhaka friends. Right: exchanging flower necklaces at Ratan's home

Ratan works as an Interpreter/Translator at Kailakuri. We first met in January 2013 and dated for several years (including some long-distance spells) before committing to marriage. In the meantime I have completed a Masters in International Development and been accepted into the Candidate Pool for the New Zealand Police, so Ratan and I are looking to move to New Zealand later this year.

I have really enjoyed the last four years of volunteer work at KHCP, especially working alongside Dr Edric Baker in his final years and being part of the community here. In the beginning I could not speak any Bengali but the staff have been patient teachers and as time went by I developed more fluency. Village life is rather quiet and peaceful and I have learnt much about the rural Bangladeshi lifestyle.

I would encourage anyone else who is interested in volunteer work to consider an English Communications role at Kailakuri. Food and accommodation is provided, as well as a local allowance, so with a bit of support from family or friends to cover the visa and airfares it is well worth the effort. There's also the opportunity to provide English teaching and computer skills to our staff.



Please contact our Coordinator, Peter Wilson, if your church or group would like to have a speaker about Kailakuri.

A note about finances: Due to an inexorable rise in costs, we have been very conscious in recent times that income from our faithful supporters has not been meeting monthly expenditures and consequently we have been drawing down on reserves. In recognition of this situation that entire staff are currently taking part in a cost reduction exercise with the aim of reducing expenditures by 20%. Some savings can be made quite easily – e.g. closing outpatients on all ten of the official public holidays instead of only five as in the past. Some savings are tricky but attainable – e.g. limiting overtime. Other savings are more difficult, but are being faced up to in the interest of ensuring long-term sustainability of the health centre.

Contact Us...

USA

Ted Rose (Asia Connection)
whoknowstedrose@gmail.com

John Havican (Asia Connection)
jhavican.asiaconnectioninc@gmail.com

Nicholas Tseffos
helpkailakuri@gmail.com

Jason and Merindy Morgenson
jwmorgen@gmail.com

BANGLADESH

Sujit Rangsa
Acting Medical Coordinator
kailakurihealthcentre@gmail.com

Nadine Vickers
English Communications
kailakurihealthcentre@gmail.com

NEW ZEALAND

(NZ Link Group)

Peter Wilson, Coordinator
kailakuri.nzlink@gmail.com

Hilary Lynch, Newsletters
tui_eden@xtra.co.nz

Glenn Baker, Treasurer
treasurerkhcp@gmail.com

WEBSITES

<http://sites.google.com/site/kailakurihealth>

FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/kailakuri

(Like our Facebook page and receive regular updates)

Donations can be made by...

- Paying online through our website via Paypal at <http://sites.google.com/site/kailakurihealth>
- Making a telegraphic transfer (TT) payment to our New Zealand Bank Account (ANZ, Whakatane, New Zealand). Account Name: Kailakuri Health Care Project - Link Group; Account Number: **01 0486 0185024 00**, **SWIFT code ANZ BNZ 22**. Please email Glenn Baker at treasurerkhcp@gmail.com with your donation and contact details.
- If you live in the United States, you can write a cheque to "Asia Connection Inc". Please indicate on a separate note that the donation is for Kailakuri and send to Ted Rose, Treasurer, Asia Connection Inc, 1226 Scott St, El Cerrito, CA.94530-2458, and give your contact details for a receipt.

Thank-you so much for your support.

Our greatest need is gifts towards on-going running costs.