

## Newsletter 11 Full Report: Lots of Toilets: DEL + DAC + PNH + COL

Two and a half months are over, four countries, wonderful people and maybe we made a tiny bit of difference(?) Widows, children, tots, teachers all figured. Hope you enjoy our newsletter!

This year we started in **India**. India, ah India, the love of my life for so long – but that was when the population was roughly half what it is today. There was always a lot of dust and filth all over but it was not so important. Now, it has even managed to annoy the nation as a whole and so October 2 was the start of



♥ CLEAN INDIA ♥

Villages are being adopted for sanitation and even Holy Mother Ganga – which is highly polluted but, as someone told me the other day, it makes no difference because it is the Holy Mother! – is going to get a face-lift!

It has become a custom to visit the Sulabh ([www.sulabhinternational.org](http://www.sulabhinternational.org)) every time I come to Delhi. Dr. Pathak is something of a miracle in a country that still leaves excrement to others to clean up. From his lofty height, in his fine traditional dress with a red waist coat, he has been talking about toilets for 50 years! And now ears are opening.

In addition, his organisation has taken on the plighted widows – women who have lost their husbands and so are considered a curse and shunned by society. When he told me of this, I asked various questions and then he said that i should visit and so I am visiting them on this, my next visit to India.



So off we (darling, cute, organised, helpful Chandan and i) went in a rickshaw on a nice hot day (35 degrees) and bought towels and bed sheets (as they are called here) and a few sarees. The next day we piled everything into a rickshaw (the kind with a bicycle attached) and rode as far as possible down the





narrow little streets of Varanasi to visit 4 different homes, ashrams, where the widows live. (Most are in Brindavan, the holy city of Lord Krishna, near Delhi.)

We visited Ram Kutti, 7 widows, Birla Ashram 14, Nepali Ashram 16 (Nepali widows come to live here and in Brindavan because they believe they will have a good death and rebirth if they die here — some have been over 50 years waiting...), and Sarnath Ashram 31. They had requested the bed sheets, towels and sarees. Their lives are simple: they cook or have a cook (Sarnath, Nepali) who serves the whole



community. The most happy communities are bound together by religious practice : singing bajans or devotional songs on a regular basis altogether. One could feel the difference.

Sulabh is supporting over 900 widows with a monthly stipend and quite honestly, i felt they are lucky living free and simply, helping each other, now that society accepts them better.



One of our small but rather exciting projects this year is in collaboration with Lotus Outreach ([www.lotusoutreach.org](http://www.lotusoutreach.org)). It is a sewing project for girls in school, an after school project. There have been two batches (as they are called in India) of 90 girls completing a 6 months training in cutting and sewing, five days a week in groups of 15 at a time. Many of the girls

came to the meeting wearing their creations; they were proud! Some of the girls wanted to continue for another 3 months in order to increase their skill. We were happy to help with this also. Many will open a business, others will at least be able to sew for their families and save!



So here we all are gazing at the foundation stone.

Then it was off to **Bangladesh**, our main project of 2014 and 2015.

Moanoghar is a residential school which now has 815 boarders and 564 day students aged 6 to 19 — though they have no recording system for birth so no-one knows their real age! It is quite simply, a wonderful place. However, resources are sorely lacking and demand is huge. Presently many of the classes have over 100 students in them! (Just imagine teaching a school room of over 100....) Anyway, by the grace of good luck, the Foundation did very well last year and so we are able to begin a really huge project: a 36 meter (120 feet) long, three story, 10 classroom building. We are ALL terribly excited about it.... 😊 Most bases are covered (electricity, furniture, +++) but there are some chances if you would like to join...

♥♥ Also we will do a huge opening + 3 day program December 12, 13, 14 2015 — if you would like to join....♥♥



This year we improved the bakery, bought medicine, bought a delivery van for the fabulous, much-in-demand baked goods, and then, when we arrived we had a special meal and then went off to Kargracheri. On the way back we passed through a wholesale fruit market and decided to buy for all the children fruit. So we bought 4,000 bananas, 1400 oranges (local oranges — they had never had them before)

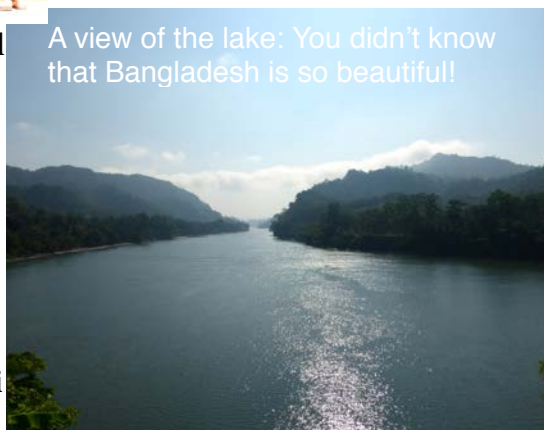


and 400 pomelos for USD250!

And we had CLEANING DAY! Wow, beds out in the sun, ceilings swept, widows wiped down. Even the staff got involved! The children really appreciated the result.

Do you remember the pump? You know, the one we carried to a remote village on the lake in Rangamati, Bangladesh? Well, this year we were met by one of the main benefactors of said pump. Guess what! They made a committee to run the pump and each user (of the 24 members) has to pay Tk.50 (about 65 cents) to use the pump. This money is kept in an account for maintenance. In addition, each member has to pay Tk. 100 (about \$1.40) each month into a fund for future investment. They have Tk. 2,700 (\$34) in the first fund and Tk. 8,000 (\$101) in the second so when I asked about future plans, they told me that they are trying to borrow about \$254 to start a nursery. Guess what? We decided to lend them half the money interest free if they can find the other half (\$127) . Any offers?

A view of the lake: You didn't know that Bangladesh is so beautiful!



## CAMBODIA

We have a completely new venture in Cambodia: scholarships for girls selected to study IT. They are all scholarship students from LotusOutreach and have been supported throughout their studies and are therefore well known to Raksmei (the wonderful coordinator — see below). This is not usual for us but we were so enthralled by the proposal that we accepted. The school is called Passerelles





Numeriques. Dinner was organised and i had no idea what to expect. After all, one year of training isn't much.

So we all met up and i was enthralled by the ability to speak and communicate that these girls had acquired in just ONE year. So i insisted on visiting the school and



Off on their bikes

the next day we went. The bottom line seems to be discipline. There are no phones in class or even, i seem to remember,



Raksmei on the road!

during study time. The girls are all housed nearby and are provided a subsidised meal for lunch only. They are kept

very busy and as only 100 out of 2,000 candidates get in each year, they know they are lucky. There is 100% employment of graduates or else they can go on to university with the studies accredited.

**OF COURSE we are going to support them for next year...**

**And we are looking forward to following their career. Anyone want to join in? 😊**



Our old favorite, Wat Opot ([www.watopot.org](http://www.watopot.org)) the mainly HIV positive orphanage is doing very well. This year we rebuilt the girl's dormitory and made a larger area for Melinda so that she could have some time of peace and quiet.

Wayne (the founder of Wat Opot) is taking a hard look at sustainability. One avenue is breeding fish. Here he is trying this luck! Other ideas include the wonderful jewellery the children make (see last year's newsletter) and growing more food on the property.



At present Wat Opot has 20 girls and 30 boys between ages 1 and 19 years; half of them are HIV positive. With 20 girls of all ages housed under a poor roof, squeezed into small rooms, our renovation/rejuvenation of the building has been





much appreciated. In fact, they had the brilliant idea of putting in a little kitchen. The girls started selling the boys noodles so the boys demanded a kitchen too!!

If you are interested, Gail Gutradt has written a book called *In a Rocket Made of Ice* — in case you would like to know more.



What a relief to arrive in **Sri Lanka!** No really! The roads are fantastic, not all but most... and



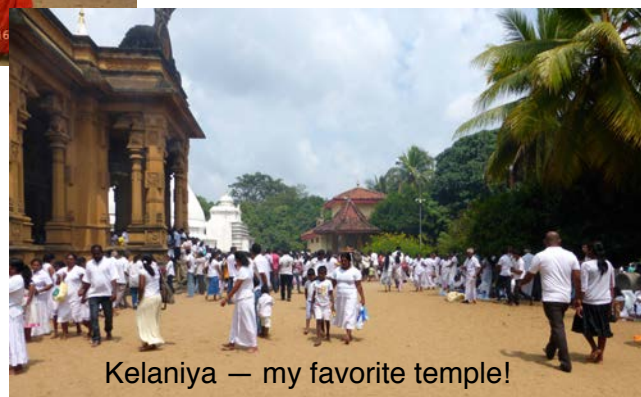
people seem more honest (there are meters in the tuk-tuks) — well worth and highly recommended for a very peaceful holiday. So i was stuck in Colombo for a few days before heading down to Tawalama near Galle. There we were to visit 17 schools and 27 toilets, almost all newly built (only a few repaired this year.)

Each day we planned to set off

early and come back late in order to visit all 17 schools. So i stayed in a very simple hotel near a river: beautiful. We visited school after school and one of my main focuses was the integration of the



society. (There are three main groups in Sri Lanka: the Sinhalese 73.8%, the Tamils 8.5% and the Muslims 7.2%. There are 69.1% Buddhists, 7.6% Muslims, 7.1% Hindus and 6.2% Christians.) So everywhere i asked about the composition of the schools and, of course, it depended very much on where



Kelaniya — my favorite temple!







the school was. And so there were more Tamils near the tea plantations and so on.

Sri Lankan schools are marvellous! Rural ones have 6 or 9 or 11 students in a class. The more popular, less rural ones have 30 or 40 in the class. What a difference with our poor Moanoghar where there are sometimes over 100 in a class.

As many of you know, Sri Lanka has just emerged from 30 years of communal conflict. To me it seems obvious that if they don't want anymore communal conflict — which they fervently say — then everyone must make an effort starting at the earliest age. So i hoped to find the schools more mixed.... I did find one or two places where Tamil was actively being taught — even in one temple. Some schools complained that they had asked for a Tamil teacher but that no-one had been sent. Anyway everyone is working towards harmony as best they can.

It is really quite funny when you see everyone marching towards the toilets and then going in to take a look! It is very much out of character with the culture — everywhere(?) In Sri Lanka, our

27 toilets were painted all different colours which i thought was a very good idea. Roughly 550 million Indians need toilets (although some chose to defecate in the open for various peculiar reasons.) This is unique in the world as even the poorest countries manage to get a toilet of some sorts. Anyway i hope more are built and painted bright colours!



Some smiling faces to end with and our lovely new signs on each toilet. My uncle, Douglas A. Campbell, must be grinning from ear to ear on seeing his name all over and for such vital projects.

So ended DEL + DAC + PNH + COL. Guess what that is????

**Happy New Year and  
May you All be Well and Happy. mujin**





P.S. Do you remember the boxing equipment for recovering drug addicts? Well, we have news... Please meet Maxi, the only woman. Here is the latest picture.