

# PARTNER PLAN

An ecumenical appointment with:



The Methodist Church 

## Gillian Rose - Bangladesh October 2015

Bollobhpur Hospital  
PO Kedargonj  
District Meherpur  
Bangladesh

Gillian Rose is an  
Ecumenical Partner of the  
Church of Bangladesh Group

Dear Friends in Scotland

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September and I see to my horror that I posted my last letter to you all at the end of May, although it seems only a few days ago that it was sent! The days fly by, week by week, with the daily life and work of the hospital and clinics and the Nursing school, and the daily effort of keeping up with everything makes the time fly so quickly!!



But it is a beautiful day as I sit on my verandah to write. The sky is blue and the sunshine is losing the intense heat of the past months as we enjoy the pre-Autumn months at the end of the rainy season. I am surrounded by birds and flowers and Mary's two hens have also joined me and are having a siesta in the flower bed. The undergrowth on the river bank has been removed and I can see across the river once again and yes, the farmer is still ploughing his field with his two cows and wooden plough, despite the advent of so much farming machinery in this day and age. My scarlet hibiscus is ablaze with its bright blooms, each opening new to welcome a new day and fading away as evening comes, the amazing beauty of each flower lasting only a single day. And each morning pairs of tiny brightly coloured sunbirds arrive to flit from flower to flower to suck the nectar.

The beautiful pre-Advent collect comes into my mind as I gaze around – "Teach us to discern your hand in all your works, and to serve you with reverence and thanksgiving."

But to recap...

June 2015 brought routine examinations for most groups, the seniors coming in from the village clinics to sit their final Midwifery examinations and at the end of the month another group completed their three year training and left us with their hard-earned certificates. And it is good to be able to report that all have found good jobs and are putting what they learned into practice and serving their patients in new areas of work. We are proud of them all.

It is also good to be able to report that our hospital car is back on the road and Sunday, June 28<sup>th</sup> found us on the way to Khulna again after many months. And how good it was to see Kalpona again and Reba who is in charge of the clinic and to be able to support them in their work.

Kalpona is more incapacitated than ever and relies completely on the care of the two 1<sup>st</sup> year students for her daily living. All the students spend four weeks at the clinic during their first year of

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training to care for her and this experience as well as caring for their “grannies and grandad’s” in the Geriatric ward, enhances their training and turns them into good competent bedside nurses.

Sujon, one of our trained Laboratory Technicians looks after the laboratory under Kalpona’s supervision as a shortage of students has prevented us from sending a student on monthly rotation at the clinic as previously.

Monday July 6<sup>th</sup> 2015 and we are happy to receive six young men for the two year Laboratory Technician training. This is a new venture for us as previously our Laboratory students came from local homes and from the surrounding villages and a sudden shortage of boys seeking training brought the decision to accept students from any part of the country as we accept students for nursing training. But it also means that they have to be housed and fed and as they have all been selected from the very poor tribal

families of the border areas, we are ‘in faith’ going to train them for ‘free’ trusting as always that God will provide.

The new arrivals are from the Santal tribal villages north of Rajshahi and from the same area that many of our student nurses have their homes. And they join six new students who arrived last month, and from the tribal area of the hill tracts adjoining the border with Burma (sorry, now Myanmar). They bring different languages with them as each tribe has their own native language but all schooled in the Bengali medium and all have passed their school certificate examinations (O levels) and several the Higher school certificate (A levels).

They are temporary housed in a building in the village and a simple hostel is nearing completion for them near by the hospital and Michael is manfully accepting the extra responsibility of managing them all, and training them both in the classroom and in the laboratory.

Michael, our Laboratory Technician, has also been granted study leave this year and is at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of the Diploma course. Please keep him, our new students and our new venture in your prayers.

July 2015 has passed by with routing clinic visits, poisoning cases to be washed out and rehabilitated, tiny babies in the incubator to be cared for and, of course, the elderly and infirm in the Geriatric ward to be helped with their daily living.

And we have had to say goodbye to three of our long-stay patients. They died on the ward receiving terminal care from us all. In the same way, many previously have received care and passed on to their eternal home. It is a privilege and joy to be able to provide this care. Care for the elderly is non-existent in Bangladesh, apart from the care they receive or no not receive at home. And with nobody to look after them, widow or non-married, or widower with children find a home with us.



The new boys in the Laboratory



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And in the classroom there have been 'second try' examinations for those who failed in the examination last month and the new 2<sup>nd</sup> year are proudly wearing their new orange striped caps and preparing for examinations next month prior to commencing midwifery classes with me, always a covered event.



The new group

Monday July 13<sup>th</sup> 2015 and yes, another new group arrived with their boxes and bedding, all eager to commence training at Bollobhpur hospital. As usual they come from all parts of the country from the low-lying villages of the south, where flooding destroys crops every year and prevents them improving their living conditions; from the Baro tribal community in the north of the country and the Santal tribal villages; an orphan girl from the Home of Joy in Khulna and a girl from the Chakma tribe near the border with Burma. She brings another language with her, making six different languages in our hostel!! Please pray that they may settle in well

and complete their training successfully. The group includes six girls from Hindu homes. Pray for them too, as they live and work in a Christian environment and take their part in our daily worship in the hospital chapel each morning.



The new group with routine ward work

And on Friday mornings David or Billian, our parish priests comes to celebrate Holy Communion and take the sacrament to the Geriatric ward, and to any other Christian patients on the wards. Our new laboratory students also play an active part, taking their turns to conduct prayer and give a single teaching from the Bible.

Saturday August 8<sup>th</sup> brought our monthly community health meeting, where staff from the village clinics gather together to share reports and experiences and to learn something new to take out to the community. It is good that out field workers remain

enthusiastic and committed, and there is great competition between the clinics as to numbers of patients seen, numbers attending the village Antenatal clinics and numbers of women delivering their babies at the clinics. Number of Field Workers are not large due to funding constraint (i.e. community health work does not earn money!) but the work they do has impact in the community and we are grateful. And especially for our 'Elderly' Care community workers for no other programme to my knowledge cares for the neglected, or lonely with no one to give time to them. Our workers are especially encouraged just to visit and sit and chat and give them a listening ear, the checking of blood pressure, cutting nails and other help with bathing and daily living should come afterwards.

It gives me especial pleasure to have been able to provide this service through our three workers, though obviously many more are needed to cover more villages and homes in the area.

And in the hospital grounds work goes on apace, as I mentioned in my last letter, the generosity of Us, London, is providing another building for our students whose life is rather overcrowded in the

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present hostel. The middle of August saw the ground floor roof completed and last Monday morning, September 21<sup>st</sup> 2015 amid storms of rain, the 1<sup>st</sup> floor roof was completed. All work begins with prayer and Bible reading led by Rev William and all join in, Christian, Muslim and Hindu workers alike, as we pray for their safety and ask God for good weather to complete the task safely. And thanks be to God, the stormy sky cleared, sun broke through and the workmen toiling to the roof with baskets of prepared mortar on their heads, were able to complete their tasks speedily and in safety.

We were especially grateful as the day before, Sunday 20<sup>th</sup>, had been Khulna visit day, with change over for the girls on duty there and we had had pouring rain for the whole journey there and back, indeed the whole country experienced torrential rain storms and the daily papers showed water over the wheels of cars in Dhaka city! Indeed Dhaka has been labelled as the world's second most 'unliveable' city, with its drains and canals blocked with garbage, the water bodies illegally being filled in and built upon and the rivers gradually decreasing in width as infilling and encroachment goes on unhindered and new building appear where the river once ran. The result being the smallest rain storm causes flooding and heavy monsoon rains see people wading through water above their knees to get to work!! But to return to Bollobhpur and the new building!

And at the same time the hostel for the laboratory students has been built, mainly with materials saved from the medicine go down and store rooms which had to be demolished to make room for the new

hostel building. Our concern now is for the rooms housing the male patients, still the original mud and brick construction with the roof no longer safe as the recent heavy rains have shown us. Pray God we will be able to replace these also in the near future.

Monday 28<sup>th</sup> September and the newspapers have arrived after a three day shutdown during the Muslim 'Korbani' Eid festival, when every family kills a sacrificial animal (camel, cow) in remembrance of Abrahams willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac – only for Isaac they replaced the elder son, born of the slave woman – Ismail. And the papers bring horrific pictures and stories of the huge loss of life in the stampede during the annual Hajh pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. It is impossible to imagine the horrible scene and we have friends there and cannot feel happy until we get some news.

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September brought Michaelmas - the festival of St Michael and All Angels, and again my mind flies to that same day in 1964 when I boarded the ship at Liverpool docks, with mother and father waving me off, and sailed away my first time abroad, through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, to what was then East Pakistan, little knowing that 51 years later I would be running the hospital and Nursing school at Bollobhpur!! And I thank God again and again for the wonderful life of service that was His plan for me.

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2015 and my letter comes to an close as I sit in the classroom invigilating the weekly class examinations. And there is news for those who cannot read my writing – friends at St Paul's, Chippenham, informed me that Bollobhpur Hospital newsletter, complete with coloured pictures, can be found on the Church of Scotland website, reference [www.fost.org.uk](http://www.fost.org.uk).



In the classroom



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The newest group are coming to the end of their three months Preliminary training school and I enclose some photographs of them with their grannies and grandads and also of the new boys in the Laboratory. And today, a family of monkeys arrived to sit on the wall and listen and watch as Rev David celebrated communion for us, while my dog, Tom, is always present sitting (or lying) at the door!!

Thank you for keeping alongside. May God richly bless you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gillian', written in a cursive style.