

# PARTNER PLAN

An ecumenical appointment with:



## Gillian Rose - Bangladesh November 2016

Bollobhpur Hospital  
PO Kedargonj  
District Meherpur  
Bangladesh

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Dear Friends in Scotland

Sunday October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and time to get pen to paper again, noticing to my horror that my last letter was signed off on July 1<sup>st</sup>, though it seems only the other day that I wrote!

And the church's calendar tells us that many Sunday's of the "green season" have flown past and Advent is once again on the horizon with Christmas not far behind. No doubt your shops are already urging you to buy early for Christmas!!



And a letter must always start with some news of the weather, which as in all places is very unpredictable this year. I started thinking about what to write in hot brilliant sunshine. Loud claps of thunder startled my note taking and now as I write steady rain is falling, cooling the air and accentuating the colour and beauty of the hibiscus bushes and the flowers. Indeed another day to rejoice and be glad in.

And here I must add my thanks to friends from St Ninian's, who regularly and kindly send on their Presbytery magazine, and I was happy to read their

agreement, that whatever the weather is like, each day is a day to rejoice and be glad in.

I myself am a very happy person, enjoying life to the full and I would hope and pray that everyone be glad and rejoice as I do. But to return to the weather, we have six seasons in Bangladesh, not four, each two months in length – namely

Bosonto Kal – spring

Gristio Kal – summer

Borsha Kal – the rainy season

Hemonto Khal – pre autumn

Shorat Khal – autumn

Sheet Khal – winter, and we are now stepping into autumn having left the rains behind (or should have).

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And yesterday saw the start of the biggest Hindu puja (festival) of the year when the Goddess "Durga" is celebrated for five days. There are thirteen such festivals in the Hindu calendar and this is the largest. And on the last day of the celebrations the "Goddess Durga" is sink in the river, and usually there is some rain i.e. the heavens cry over the disposal.

But to return to Bollobhpur:-

Tuesday July 12<sup>th</sup> brought 18 new girls to start their three years training. And this time they have two rooms, newly whitewashed and painted for their first six months, thanks to Fran and other caring friends of USPG. Previously all had to squeeze into one room. We really are grateful to you all.



And it is good to relate that they have settled in well and now being very useful on the wards and are studying hard, eager to pass their Preliminary Training school examination and be able to wear their first uniform and nurses cap.

July 25<sup>th</sup> Monday and our twelve laboratory technician students sat their first year examinations and all passed, some extremely well. They are now into the second year of their training and are

managing the outstation village clinics themselves. And thanks to the generosity of S.K. Foundation of the Netherlands, the laboratory is well equipped with analyser and other up-to-date equipment, which enables Michael, our laboratory technician to give them an even better training than previously. We are grateful indeed.

August and a warm month full of routine ward work, caring for tiny babies in the incubators, visiting the village clinics for the weekly antenatal and general clinics, looking after the elderly in their homes and in the geriatric wards, managing the suicidal poisoning cases which are all too frequent, and all the varied patients to be cared for on the wards. Then classes for everyone and extra study in the classroom, weekly class examinations and medicine tests.



And then the monthly community health meeting for community staff and senior students where we learn something together to take out into the community. This month the subject was an interesting one, namely 'Anthrax' as there have been outbreaks of the cattle transmitted disease in many parts of the country.

And Friday August 25<sup>th</sup> brought final Anatomy and Physiology examinations for the new second year group, subsequently all passing well and commencing their

Midwifery classes with me, always a coveted event for each group, all eager to become 'case nurses' and to be able to look after the mothers and deliver their babies themselves. And this is a good group and a pleasure to teach.

And I forgot to mention that the doctor on the horizon, mentioned briefly in my last letter, vanished after the Managing Committee meeting, no one being in agreement over his appointment, so we wait on and welcome the help of the lovely government hospital doctors, one of whom comes briefly for a ward round on the days he is free. We are grateful for their input over the years.

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Friday September 2<sup>nd</sup> brought the last visit to our most distant clinic at Khejura. The clinic has gradually been underused as other new facilities have grown up in the previously poorly serviced area. Indeed the visiting team from the hospital found only a couple of patients waiting and the resident staff complain of the dearth of patients coming for medicines during the week and lack of women coming for maternity services. Also I have been forbidden to visit that area by the Meherpur Superintendent of Police as it is outside of their jurisdiction and they are not willing to take any risks so it is best to keep quiet and obey. And so Khejura clinic is closed.



And also with “Brexit” and the loss of value of the pound, we are having to think of the future, wondering whether the so generous USPG will be able to manage the annual running grant they have previously given and if they do so manage it, then the proceeds in Bangladesh Taka will be considerably less than previously.

Indeed, I noticed a big drop in my pension money which comes three monthly by standing order from my bank in England. Recently the exchange rate dropped to 99 Taka per pound Sterling, where previously the rate was 124 Taka per pound and sometimes more. But although obviously we have to look ahead and plan, and decide where we need to increase or decrease our input in the community, we do not worry greatly knowing as always in the past and to the present God has provided and will provide. Praise Him.

Sunday September 25<sup>th</sup> and it is change over day for the students who help staff the clinic in Khulna that Bishop Michael asked me to keep an eye on and to care for Kolpona who still manages to run the laboratory and clinic there. Babu takes them (four student nurses and two laboratory students) by bus, as again I am not allowed and Rintu our driver refuses to take the hospital microbus on distant runs without me being present to prevent all the harassment and questioning by police and other personnel on the roads, such being the state of the country.

Here again we will need to think about the future, as Kolpana, who suffers from muscular dystrophy, and is becoming more and more immobile as the months pass by, will probably need to be brought to Bollobhpur for her future care and our students will no longer need to help with the work there. Again this clinic which is funded from Dhaka will probably close down too, Khulna now having many services available in this area.

But we thank God for the work that has been and is being done here and that we had the privilege of training Kolpana as a laboratory technician all those years ago when Bishop Mondol asked for help for her future. And we also thank God for our friend Rev John Webber and other friends in Wales who generously financed the setting of the laboratory at the Khulna clinic and make it possible for Kalpona to do something with her life.

But to return to Bollobhpur, the new Male ward has risen apace in place of the old building that was collapsing on the patients. And thanks be to God the money that was available is being like the widows cruse that should have run out weeks ago but is being poured out to finish the work. We will be glad to get the male patients back in their own place and free the ground floor of the new building which is being temporary ward for patients at present.

Then the dream for the future is to set up classroom, principals room and practical room in the ground floor of the new building and then with God’s help and your prayers to be able at last to get Bangladesh Nursing Council registration for our nursing school. This would greatly enhance the qualifies girls chances for good employment and maybe a better salary scale. Not that any

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Bolobhpur trained girls are sitting idle. All are working, many have married good Christian boys and have their own family life. We are proud of them all, and grateful to God for the joy and privilege of training them.

It is already Sunday October 16<sup>th</sup> as I come to a close. The newest set sat their P.T.S final examination last Friday and await the results, eager to wear their first uniform and start training proper. And for those who remember Monju who was a student nurse here in 1998 and who was diagnosed as insulin dependent diabetes during the first month of her training, and has since spent her holidays and times of sickness with us here. You will remember how I took Monju for a caesarean operation, 7 years ago last October, and she herself thin and undernourished due to lack of care during her pregnancy, was delivered at full term of a tiny 1kg 300gm baby. Mark is now seven, and almost as tall as his diminutive mother and a good student at a school in Dhaka where they live and his father Lasar works.



But sadly Monju has lost her sight to her diabetes and being suddenly very ill and chronic and bedridden and Lasar at his wits end of what to do. I told him to hire an ambulance and bring her to us for care and she is now in one of the private wards and already on the mend.

But diabetes is taking its toll on her kidneys too and needs a lot of prayer so that she can be alongside Mark for some more years and enjoy his upbringing. Thank you for keeping her in your prayers.

The day is coming to an end as I write, the last rains have brought the first reminder that winter is ahead, with a definite drop in temperature at night and my room thermometer show 80°F (27°C) as minimum temperature at night!!!

A cat is asleep on the table and two dogs sprawled on the verandah as I come to a close and the students have come to brew a kettle of tea for the geriatric ward.

Thank you for keeping alongside

God's Blessings.

Gillian