

# PARTNER PLAN

An ecumenical appointment with:



## Gillian Rose - Bangladesh September 2012

Bollobhpur Hospital  
PO Kedargonj  
District Meherpur  
Bangladesh

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

Dear Friends in Scotland

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September, and the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity, as the churches year speeds by on its way to Advent. And in our ante-natal clinics our new mothers are being booked for 2013, which makes us realise that it is not far away, and high time for me to put pen to paper again, and send you our news.

In the meantime "the rains" (i.e. the rainy season) has passed by with very little rain, which is worrying the farming community. River levels are extremely low in this area, and farmers are already finding pumping water into their fields a problem and an extra unwelcome expense.



Jute is being harvested from the fields at the moment, the plants after cutting being immersed in ponds and rivers, or wherever there is any water available, to rot. Finally the fibre is stripped from the stalks, washed, dried and taken to the markets for sale. But the price offered this year is not pleasing the farmers, and does not cover the cost of production, so no one is very happy. Pray God for some rain in season to bring a smile to their faces.



With a sick baby

The monkeys have not been much in evidence the last two months. Obviously this area has not got much to offer them and they have crossed the nearby border into India to find food, and will return later.

But the birds are giving great pleasure and I have a pair of "Tuntuni" birds (tiny wren-like birds) sharing my quiet time in the mornings and joy of joys a pair of purple sunbirds coming to flit from flower to flower on the blood red hibiscus bush adjacent to my verandah. They too are tiny birds with green and brown heads and backs, purple throats and bright yellow bellies, and are a joy to watch as they search for nectar amongst the bright red flower.

And on the top most perch of the newly sprouted bamboo lining the river bank, a couple of kingfishers sway in the breeze carefully watching the water beneath for any prey.

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And beside me on the verandah, a noisy group of mynahs (starling family) inspecting the dogs bowls for any titbits. They are very friendly and inquisitive birds, and arrive on the table when I sit down to my late lunch, and demand a share. And I have no cat at the moment to scare them away. The two kittens went to a good home, the the third kitten disappeared in the same way as it arrived through the window one night.

Of my two dogs, Tom is lazy, and lies sprawled out on the cement floor, watching the mynah's attacks on his bowl; but Tinja, the younger one, often launches a sudden attack. But they have abandoned me today, and are guarding the main gate, wary of Sunday baths!!

But to recap....



A group of the newly capped girls

June was a busy month in the classroom and the wards, with ½ year and end of the year examinations for most groups, and the final midwifery examinations for the senior group. And on the wards plenty of chance to learn and exercise new nursing skills to care for their grannies and granddads in the "G" ward, and to manage a mother in labour, and safely deliver her new baby.

The newest group of case nurses have gone out excitedly to staff the outstation village clinics on three months rotation, relieving their seniors who came in to sit their final examination.

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June was 'all change' at the clinic in Khulna, meaning an early start with a car load of excited girls and boys. For one of Michael's senior laboratory students spends a month on rotation to assist disabled Kalpona in her little laboratory. And as they all get very attached to Kalpona, an extra boy always squeezes into the car to get a chance to see her again. Kalpona remains in control of her life, and the extra responsibility that she has of being in charge and in control of the group of students, keeps her from getting depressed with her own condition.

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> June found an excited group of senior girls, eight in all, boarding the hired car for the eight hour journey to the Baptist Mission Hospital at Joyramkurg to relieve their seniors for the three month training in operation theatre techniques and surgical nursing. We are grateful indeed to Dr Taposh and Dr Luey Rema, who are providing this excellent training facility for our girls. The returning students arrived safely the next day, full of what they had done and learnt. We hope this will give them a good basis to help them in the new work they will be doing.

And on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> June, they gathered in the office to sign for their hard earned certificates and make their tearful farewells. May God be with them as they step out into the next stage of their lives. Soon we will be hearing that they have commenced work. None remain idle, and Bollobhpur trained nurses and midwives can be found working in clinics, hospitals, industrial units and in community health programmes all over Bangladesh.

The beginning of July found the girls hostel being 'spring cleaned' as each group moves up a room to make room for the new batch expected this month. There is always great excitement at the change of rooms especially for the group that moves up to the first floor for the first time!!

And on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2012, seventeen new girls arrived to commence the three year training we give them. The group include three from the Santal tribal area, north of Rajshahi, three from

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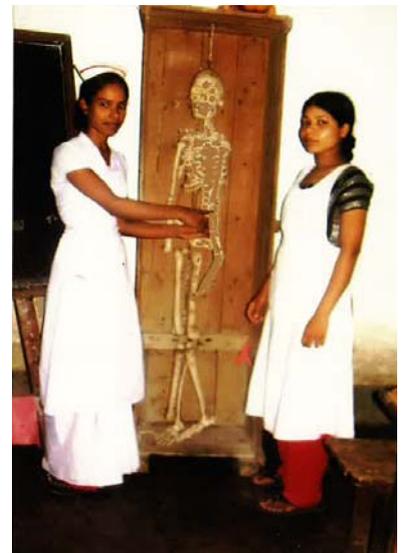
the Garo tribal group who live in the foothills of the Himalayas in the north of the country. Two girls come from the extreme south, where the famous Royal Bengal Tigers live in the Sundarban forest and they have to collect rainwater in tanks for drinking and cooking because of the salinity of the ground water.

Another group come from the low lying rice plains south of Dhaka, where crop fields get flooded every year, and it is hard to make a living and bring up and educate your children. Two of this group are from Hindu homes and are now being exposed to Christian values and Christian worship. It always gives me great joy to see one of my Hindu students taking an active part in our morning worship together, and even reading and explaining a bible passage to us, and leading the prayers. Pray with us that all may come to a living faith in Christ during their three years with us at Bollobhpur. As you have heard previously, several have been baptised and confirmed during their time here, praise be to God.

There are two girls from very poor homes in Bollobhpur village itself and one from Karpasdanga where we have our largest clinic. Please keep them in your prayers as they complete the first three months provisional training school.

July brought the beginning of the Muslim month of Ramadan, when they fast during the daylight hours, pray extra prayers and do their eating during the night. This year it has been tough, with longer summer days and extremely high temperatures and humidity, when the body craves for water to replace that lost through sweating. Many routinely keep the fast, not all, and sick folk and expectant mothers are exempt, though many of our booked women insist on fasting despite the exemption.

And on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> August, the month culminated in the big Eid festival, when everyone enjoys a meat curry, extra special foods and spend the days visiting friends and relations. Dhaka, the capital city becomes deserted with most people returning to their village homes and families to spend the festival.



In the classroom

The daily papers show grossly overloaded launches leaving the terminals, buses with the roof luggage rack jam packed with people who did not find room inside, and incredibly, trains leaving stations with people sitting on the engine and more people perched on top of the moving carriages than those inside!! Obviously there are accidents, but the majority arrive home safely, and return again the same dangerous way at the end of the holiday!

The hospital still does not have its own vehicle, and the two monthly trips to Khulna during July and August have been done by a hired car. And the July driver turned out to be very devout stopping at intervals at Mosques for the ritual prayers, keeping the fast, and eventually, on the return journey as darkness fell, making a long break to eat and drink and attend Mosque prayers. I, for one, felt much happier after he had eaten!!

Sunday August 26<sup>th</sup> and another crack of dawn start for the Khulna programme, a week later than scheduled, as the previous date clashed with the Eid festival, and shops would be closed and the roads busy.

Today, besides spending time with Reba and Kalpona, oxygen has to be brought for the hospital, the medicine supply bazaar has to be visited to purchase the necessary supplies for the hospital

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and laboratory, the main bazaar needs a visit to buy a roll of mackintosh for the patients beds – a necessary item that only too often needs replacing despite spiralling prices.

And finally a trip to the fascinating ‘clay road’ hardware market to stock up on the materials needed by the women’s group who make candles for us and for sale. I have a couple of the laboratory students with me which makes the day more enjoyable. And today as well is my 73<sup>rd</sup> birthday, and I thank God once again for such a full and joyous life, and wonder why I don’t feel any older than when I returned to Bangladesh and Bollobhpur hospital in 1996!! Praise the Lord.

Friday 30<sup>th</sup> August and five of the young men doing the laboratory technician training have completed their 18 month training and leave us to take up work outside. Like our girls, none will remain idle, all will find work, and we will be hearing from them soon after they settle in to their new workplaces.



Sister Mary in the Ultrasonic Room

Many take on the burden of their families and gradually repay all the loans their parents have had to make. For there are far too many NGO’s around (non-Government organisations) only too eager to offer people loans irrespective of whether they have the ability to repay or not and these loans become a huge burden to poor families, and the weekly visit of the field worker who comes to collect the instalments is a feared event.

Rocky is a fine example of this, and of how our Bollobhpur hospital training can transform the life of a family. Rocky, a Bollobhpur boy, who completed his training a few years ago, came from a heavily debt ridden family, whose parents had twelve loans from

different organisations and were on the verge of fleeing their home! Not that there was much to leave as most household items had been sold off one by one to pay the never ending weekly instalments.

Rocky has now paid off every loan, refurbished his family’s house and home and transformed their lives. He is now studying for the Diploma in Microbiology, funding all his studies himself.

Many Bollobhpur trained nurses do the same for their families, and we thank God for them.

August has been a busy month in the hospital and the clinics, and we are still without our own resident Medical Officer. There are too many avenues to “get rich quick” these days and no one is willing to take up a post in a village far away from all facilities.

Please keep us all in your prayers.