

ST. JOHN'S TALES – CHRONICLES OF SOME KEY EVENTS FROM THE EARLY YEARS.

**IA- A chronicle of St. John's interns/students response to the Bangladesh
crises in 1971, among the worst genocides in History!)***

Introduction:

One of the inspiring initiatives of interns and students of St. John's Medical College, in its historic 50 years, was the spontaneous response to volunteer to serve in the East Pakistan refugee camps during the worst genocide in history in 1971. Beginning with the pioneering interns team of Ravi Narayan, Vikram, Venugopal and T.P. Gouri and Mr. Carpenter (of Pathology Department) who went to the Neelganj Camp in July 1971, there were three to four more teams who kept up the flow of volunteers till the beginning of the war in December 1971.

The extract from the letter of Rev. Fr. Alan de Lastic, then Rector of Morning Star College (later Bishop of Delhi and President of C.B.C.I Society of Medical Education) to Dr. Louis Monteiro, Dean of St. John's Medical College sums up the spirit of the whole initiative (see box)

A WORD OF APPRECIATION!

"Please accept my heartfelt thanks for sending the medical team to help out in the refugee camps nearby. Doctors Vikram, Ravi and Gouri were the pioneers in this work. But for their kind service the camp at Nilganj, two miles from here, would have remained neglected, and many probably would not be alive today. Their efficient and regular medical attention is responsible for the health of the entire camps. I do not think there is a healthier camp than that of Nilganj and the credit must surely go to them..... The medical students also did outstanding work in the big camp at Salt lake, Sector five, close to the city.

The entire medical staff, students and intern doctors showed unstinting dedication in their service to the suffering victims from across the border. St. John's Medical College, which assumes responsibility for their training, can well be proud of them.....

May God grant you his blessings for this great service to the Nation and to the afflicted members of our human race."

**Source: A letter from Rev. Alan de Lastic, to Dr. L. Monterio, Dean,
St. John's Medical College, Bangalore (28th August, 1971)**

***(COMPILED BY DR. RAVI NARAYAN, BATCH OF 1965)**

This chronicle of events is drawn from a historic collection of documents, correspondence, and reports that had been put together by Dr. Ravi Narayan, who spent three months in the camps, kept a regular record of events, took a series of photographs with a simple old box camera and gradually became one of the key facilitators of the initiative receiving letters from students and interns during the period July to December 1971. This old file was recently discovered in an old trunk and forms the basic reference to this chronicle. The story exemplifies the first of many such inspiring staff/ Interns/ student responses that lived up to the college motto. 'He shall live because of me.' The Bangladesh response of 1971 saw the participation of over 25 young Johnites in this 'mercy mission' .

Johnites in the Mercy Mission to the Refugee Camps 1971

10 interns from 1965 batch – Ravi Narayan, Vikram Venugopal, Sr. Lucian, VV. Mathew, Joseph Sequeira, Palaniappan, and Christopher Mathias ; T.P. Gouri and Sushil Cleatus of Batch of 1964; and S.T. Ong of Batch of 1963. Eleven medical students included Marian Kamath, K.J. Joppen, John Fernandes, Jose Joseph, Wenzil Vaz, all of batch of 1967 and Satish Kashyap, M.J.Thomas, Sr. Leah, Sr. Agnesita, K.T. Sebastian, Paul Mendonca and Irudayaradjou, of the batch of 1968. In addition five others Johnites were involved in refugee relief though they did not join as part of the college teams. These included Anand Noronha, Ramakrishna Bhatt, Fr. Xavier Barrett, and Jennifer Williams, of the 1965 batch and Gorden Vanspall of the 1966 batch. No list of teams was available and this list has been put together from the available correspondence.

The Bangladesh response in 1971 was followed by the next big response from the college to the Andhra cyclone disaster in 1978. Based on a small file maintained by Thelma Narayan and Luis Barreto, volunteer interns in that initiative a small post script has been added to this Bangladesh chronicle. Both these inspiring responses led to the establishment of a long standing tradition now, to St. Johns responding to several disasters in South Asia and leading finally to the development of a Disaster Response Unit in the college. The chronicles will be circulated in two sets.

1A - Chronicle of Photographs sent by the teams

1B- Chronicle of extracts from official documents of the college and university and extracts from the letters from the volunteers and some staff.

1A- CHRONICLE OF PHOTOGRAPHS.

I -THE REFUGEES AND THE CAMPS

01



Refugees in queues with their umbrellas from East Pakistan.

02



Much larger numbers of children than usual

033



Refugees walking in through the Indo-Pakistan border

04



More children and adolescent boys

05



A view of the camps with thatched accommodation

06



The Neelganj camp by the side of a small river

II- PROVIDING BASIC NEEDS:

07



Providing mats and thatch to build new accommodation (mat brothers)

08



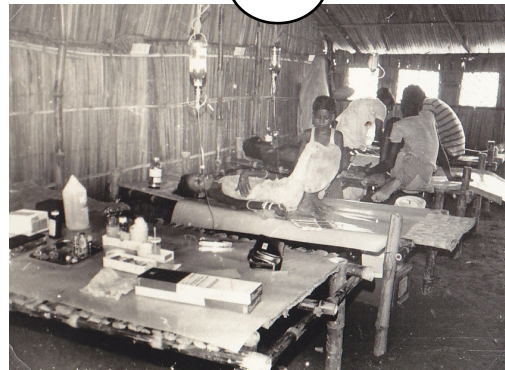
River water and borewell with pumps – the only source of water

09



Distributing milk prepared with powder (Milk brothers)

10



Our bamboo and cane hospital –a marvel of appropriate technology built by us

11



A view of our well stock pharmacy and food rations

12



Leaving head quarters with more mats/ thatch and volunteers

III- INTERNS AND STUDENTS AT WORK

13



Dr. Ravi – batch of 1965, dispensing medicines

14



Marian Kamath – student of 1967 batch examining patient

15



Dr.T.P.Gouri-1966 batch and Dr. Vikram – 1965 batch in the Neelganj dispensary

16



K.J.Joppen, student of 1967 batch giving an injection

17



Dr. Sr. Lucien, 1965 batch auscultating patients

18



Sr. Leah, student of 1968 with children in the camps

IV- Teams of Volunteers from St. John's

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Ravi,Gouri,Vikram, Ong, Marian, Jose, Wenzil,Joppen,-all johnnites with volunteers

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The team visiting the border as an outing

21



Vikram,Marian, Gouri, Joppen and John in Salt Lake Camp – A visit.

22



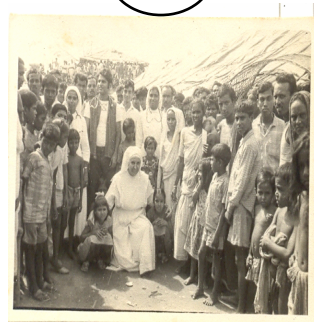
Dr. Sr.Lucien and students- Srs Leah, Agnesita, Paul, and Irudayaraj

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Drs. Christopher Mathias, Sr. Lucien, and Sr. Scholastica with Fr. Alan De Lastic - Rector

24



Dr. Sr. Lucien and team with refugees

V _ SPECIAL EVENTS AT THE CAMPS

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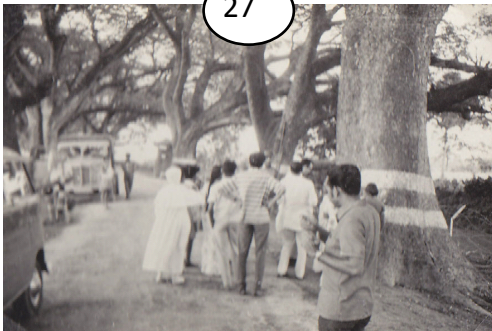
Senator Kennedy visits the camps with Msgr Henry D'Souza of CARITAS

26



Vikram, Gouri, and Ravi with Fr. Alan and Editor of a Catholic Paper outside our Bamboo Hospital

27



At the border watching the increasing security.

28



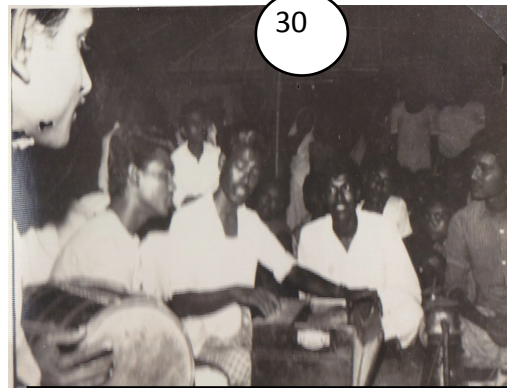
Three orphan children – Anand, Lokhi and Shobita, rehabilitated in Bangalore (see Chronicles)

29



The first two babies born in our Bamboo hospital and called Martha and John!!

30



Refugees giving us a musical send off at the end of the stay.

31



Dr. Vikram, batch of 1965 examining a child



Dr. Ravi, batch of 1965 starting a drip for a cholera patient

33



Dr. Gouri batch of 1964 examining a child with severe malnutrition

35

32



Sr. Paul from Bombay treating a child with sores



Another Volunteer Sister from Bombay immunizing a child

34



Mr. Carpenter of Pathology Department – our skin specialist

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