



### Memories of Bangladesh

*Doug MacDougald — Stratford, ON*

I have had the unique heartbreaking yet fulfilling opportunity to reach out and touch 20,000 children in Bangladesh in my times here as a volunteer with Sleeping Children Around the World [SCAW]. This is my last as team leader for Bangladesh. It is with sadness I leave this country for possibly the last time because I leave good friends and yet I have many memories that will stay with me. Below are snapshots of a few of these memories.

- The rhythm of the countryside with never ending rice fields, fish ponds, orchards, goats, cattle, water buffalo, and people everywhere planting, tilling, harvesting and transporting food for the 170 million people of this country.
- The more chaotic rhythm of villages and towns with people seemingly always on the move living their lives on the side of the road, plying products and services, again supplying the needs of this country.
- The very frenetic rhythm of the cities with the crush of people, constant gridlock fueled by hundreds of thousands of bicycle rickshaws and rickshaw vans, daily power outages and constant noise – and then the surprise as you find a little oasis of calm that people have tried to create.
- The simple pride of the owners of a mud hut in a village with their meager possessions that are neat, tidy and cared for, the dirt floor swept, and their spartan and primitive kitchen orderly and clean.
- The importance of family and community to each and every person I have met in a country where greater than 50% of people live below the poverty line, is a shining light for me on what the meaning of life is all about.
- Last and the most enduring and emotional memory, is the children born into poverty. It breaks my heart and yet at the same time is uplifting because it shows the resiliency of the human spirit. Kids are kids the world over. They want to be safe, loved, comforted as well as to play, to learn and to have fun. They do find joy in the midst of poverty. They are my heroes and I will cherish the memory of these 20,000 children forever.

Special thanks to my good friends in the Rotary Club of Dhaka for their tireless support and passion for the poor children of Bangladesh and to my Sleeping Children team members who laughed and cried together as we tried to make a difference.

And lastly, a big thanks to our donors. Your unselfish support continues to make the world better, one child at a time.



*Travelling team celebrates "One child at a time"*



*One of the 6,000 Bangladesh bedkit recipients with his bedkit*

### What Is a Bedkit?

*George Foster — Hamilton, ON*

"What is a bedkit?" along with "What does the child sleep on?" are two questions a Sleeping Children volunteer faces when speaking to someone who does not yet know about our charity. Often people may expect that the child will receive a bed or a mattress. The Bangladesh bedkit, as it has evolved over the past several years, has neither of these. (See sidebar for Bangladesh bedkit contents.)

A country approximately twice the size of New Brunswick, Bangladesh is hot and humid with a population of 170 million. Every inch of land mass is used to produce food and every pond or river is used for fishing to feed a hungry nation. In the monsoon season there are many flooded areas and many villages are under water.

This caused problems with the cotton-filled mattresses in the SCAW bedkit. Our surveys in the field told us there were problems with the mattresses not lasting long as they got damp and would not dry out.

This year's sleeping part of the bedkit included a simple, durable, waterproof, canvas ground mat with grommets and a heavy blanket. These items can be easily cleaned and hung to dry.

The families in many of the villages we visited were able to construct a bedframe from widely-available bamboo and the groundsheet was laid on the bed.

The groundsheet is also used in many other ways. It can be a room divider or a tarpauline to protect the family's belongings in the rainy season. Some used it as protection from the sun and cold or as a table when it was spread on the floor.

This simple gift to a child is able to change the life of each member of a family.

Thank you to the Sleeping Children donors that we all may be a part of making a difference in so many lives.

### The Bangladesh Bedkit

- ground mat
- pillow
- pillow cover
- bedsheet
- mosquito net
- blanket
- wrapper/shawl
- pyjamas
- Girls:
  - 2 kameez (dress),
  - 2 shalwar (pants),
  - scarf
- Boys:
  - summer shirt, winter shirt, 2 pants
- school bag
- pencil box
- cup
- water bottle
- tiffin (lunch) box
- chappal (flip-flops)

### Bangladesh Distribution

**Total Bedkits:** 6,000

### Overseas Volunteer Organization [OVO]

Rotary Club of Dhaka

### SCAW Fast Facts

**Total Bedkits:** 1,189,130

### Future Distributions

- Kolkata, January
- Pune, February
- Belgaum, February
- Chennai, February
- Kenya, March
- Philippines, April

## 28 Pinehurst Crescent



Administrative volunteers work out of the Dryden family home at 28 Pinehurst Crescent in Toronto — which has been donated to SCAW. Here they process donations, produce bedkit labels, and sort and mail bedkit photographs.

### Speakers Available

Would your UCW, school, community group, business, or seniors' organization like a speaker? SCAW's travelling volunteers would love to come to your event and tell you about their experiences and the children we help.

Phone our Executive Director, Linda Webb, at 416-231-1841 or contact her through email at [info@scaw.org](mailto:info@scaw.org) or through our website: [www.scaw.org](http://www.scaw.org).

### How To Donate

If you have access to the Internet, you can donate online at our credit card donation page.

If you don't have access to the Internet, all you need do is mail your cheque for \$35 to Sleeping Children along with your mailing address for the tax receipt.

If the donation is a gift, you should also include the occasion for the gift and the mailing address of the gift recipient.

If you wish, we will send an acknowledgement to the gift recipient when we get your letter. Just let us know.

## The Children of Bangladesh

Else Graves — Toronto, ON

Our trip to Bangladesh was all about the children and what a wonderful bunch of children we met during our time in this country. Everywhere we went we met up with friendly children who were most eager to interact with us. Arriving at each location we saw a sea of happy faces with beaming smiles. We were often greeted by enthusiastic clapping and cheering, not only from the children but also from parents who were able to follow their children to the distribution site.



Children receiving bedkits are between the ages of six and twelve; however, because of very poor nutrition, the size of the children varies greatly from what we are used to in Canada. A six-year-old Bangladeshi is often no larger than a healthy four-year-old Canadian.

The children loved to interact with us. While some of our team members prepared for the photo shoot, the rest of us entertained the waiting children.



The children stood in rows — girls in one line and boys in another — all dressed in the new clothes they were given when they arrived at the distribution site.

While they waited to have their bedkit picture taken and receive their bedkits we had a chance to play together. Blowing bubbles was a big hit. They were not used to seeing bubbles floating in the air and they loved to reach up for

them as they passed by or they would try to blow them further up in the sky to keep them from drifting down. We also brought Frisbees along — soft Frisbees so it wouldn't hurt if a child got hit with one.

"Here, here," or the equivalent in Bengali was called out as they reached up to show they wanted the Frisbee. Frisbee throwing was something most of the children were not familiar with and they were not very accurate with their throws. Thus the Frisbees often ended up going in a totally different direction from what was intended.



The majority of the children who received bedkits came from homes with no money for frivolities like toys. Even the older children appreciated simple playthings.

We also brought puppets including a quacking duck which brought lots of laughter among the children as it snapped fingers or got kissed as it moved among the freshly-dressed children. Some of the smaller children were scared of it though. They did not understand that it was a puppet — not even after being shown how it worked. They would step back from it, their wide eyes filled with apprehension.



The children showed a great deal of patience as they stood in line waiting in the heat. Some of the children came from areas close to the distribution site, but many were bused in from outlying areas. In one case, a group of children had a two-hour boat ride followed by a two-hour bus ride to get to the bedkit distribution. Then of course there was the trip back home.

We tried to get the children to smile when the pictures for the donors were taken. It was surprising how serious these happy children suddenly became once they got in front of the camera. We smiled and told them to do the same. We said "Hasso," the Bengali word for "Smile." Boys who a short time before had been the loudest and most vigorous became the most rigid and serious once they got in front of the camera. Still, after a bit of coaching, most of them managed a smile.

Six thousand children in Bangladesh will sleep a little better tonight because of kind people who care.

For myself I can say that I will always carry the children of Bangladesh with their joyful happy faces and their large brown eyes in my heart.

### A Parent's Perspective

Michael Graves — Toronto, ON

An interesting aspect of a Sleeping Children distribution is the perspective of the parents. First and foremost and without exception they were overwhelmed with gratitude for this contribution to their child's and family's welfare.



Michael interviewing parents

Due to the distances to be travelled some parents stayed home. Transportation is costly and some children travelled more than one hundred kilometers with four- to five-hour journeys. In this case, parents waved goodbye to their children as they boarded the bus and greeted them again in the late hours of the evening. Most had never been without their children for even a day, and the widespread anxiety this inspired was only offset by the knowledge that the children would be well-handled by the Bangladesh volunteers. How happy they must have been when the bus arrived back at the village and their sleepy smiling children dismounted.

### Saving Weight & Costs

As you know, SCAW is always looking for ways to operate as efficiently as possible. Due to luggage constraints currently enforced by airlines,

SCAW has had to reexamine the quantity and weight of the labels we take on a distribution. These are normally carried as hand luggage by our volunteers since they are vitally important to SCAW's promise to provide a good photo of the bedkit recipient. In an effort to reduce the number of labels, we have introduced Group Photos for donations of multiple bedkits. Besides requiring only one label, thereby saving paper and printing costs, it also saves us a substantial amount in photofinishing costs. Of course, if single photos are desired, we will gladly comply.



*Parents and villagers watching the distribution*

Local parents were able to attend the distributions. Seeing these parents added to the excitement and joy of the event for us. This was obvious from the moment we arrived.

Practically the whole village surrounded the area because SCAW volunteers are a unique sight. Parents didn't have access to their children while they were having their photo taken and receiving their bedkit. This avoided unauthorized entry by people trying to force their children into the count who didn't have the good fortune of being selected to receive a bedkit. Parents were, of course, worried about their children, concerned that they might get lost, be overwhelmed by the event, or miss their mother.

As a result it was common to see the parents looking over fences or, in many cases, sitting on the fence or anything that would give them a good view of the proceedings.

When the gate finally opened and their children emerged with a bedkit delicately balanced on their heads there were smiles all around as the children related their experiences. Then all went home to open the bedkit and set up the ground sheet and mosquito net for a real good night's sleep wrapped in a sheet or blanket with their heads on a pillow.

Children are the highlight of every distribution but the parents are a close second.



*A long bus ride there and back*

### Our Dream

A world in which every child benefits from the comfort of a good night's sleep.

### Our Mission

Through free-will donations and in partnership with our volunteers, we give bedkits to needy children in developing countries, thus helping them to face the challenges of the coming day.

### Building Strong Relationships

*Michael Foster — Brantford, ON & Dhaka, Bangladesh*

Who would have dreamt being so fortunate as to be a member of the Bangladesh 2011 Canadian distribution team, to become a member of the Rotary Club of Dhaka, Sleeping Children's Overseas Volunteer Organization [OVO], and to be working in the capital city of Dhaka, Bangladesh at that time. This dream came true for me five months ago when I went to live in Bangladesh.

For me to be given the opportunity to become a member of the Rotary Club of Dhaka has been the most rewarding experience. I have been able to work with my local Rotarians to plan and organize for the arrival of the Bangladesh 2011 travelling team. I was given the pleasure to work with the Dhaka Rotary Distribution Team here in Bangladesh under the direction of Chairman Rowly and the Distribution Plan organizer, Khaliq. Both of these hard working gentlemen and their committees have thought of everything in terms of Sleeping Children's policies and

procedures. No stone was left unturned while working toward this year's distribution.

The relationships with SCAW have continued to become stronger, as the Rotary Club of Dhaka has been involved with bedkit distributions for the last twenty-three years with the goal to make it better each year. The main objective over the last few years has been to reach out to those children that are the



*Working together*

neediest in Bangladesh, meaning lots of travel for the distribution team here. This was very evident in terms of this year's distribution team as we travelled to the most north eastern and western parts of Bangladesh.

After last year's distribution the Dhaka Rotary Club developed their own operating procedures for future distributions in this country. They have successfully identified three zones within this small, over-populated country that will require future bedkit distributions.

This year's distribution team was involved in the first year of their plan. During this year's distribution, we visited the western and the most north-western and eastern parts of Bangladesh. When we travelled to these new and untouched areas, it was truly evident that these sites were definitely in need and were well-deserving of future bedkit distributions. Next year's plan is to visit the more eastern and south-eastern parts of the country. This will be another challenging and rewarding experience for the Bangladesh 2012 Team.

The 2011 Bangladesh travelling team was most grateful for the careful planning and execution of this year's plan. Excellent travel arrangements, suitable food, and overnight accommodations were a high priority to meet the needs of the team. After the distribution of 6,000 bedkits the team reflected very positively to the Rotary Club of Dhaka and their plans for the future. It is so important to build strong relationships with our OVO's as they work for the benefit of Sleeping Children, the children, our donors, and everyone concerned.

Hats off to the Rotary Club of Dhaka for another successful distribution.



*What it's all about: A bedkit on its way home*

## Thank You from Geeta

Sally Jo Martin — Etobicoke, ON

### The 100% Gift

Sleeping Children Around the World is operated by volunteers, from the processing of donations to the distribution of bedkits. We neither receive nor request funds from any level of government. All administrative costs are covered by a legacy account set up by Murray Dryden. That way SCAW can guarantee that 100% of every bedkit donation reaches a needy child.

### THE 100% CHARITY

#### One Bedkit

Though your photo may show three children, it only shows one bedkit. This allows us to get in closer to the children's faces and makes for a better photo for our donors.

My name is Geeta and I am eight years old. Today I went with many other children on a long bus ride. We arrived at a school with a large courtyard, which was set up with a colourful tent. Friendly people from Canada played ball and Frisbee with us and we had lots of fun trying to catch soap bubbles too. That was a new experience for us all.

We were taken to the tent and changed into new clothes. Mine was a shalmar and kameez with a scarf and my friend Faruk got long pants and a checked shirt. After lining up for our turn, we had a photo taken with everyone telling us "Hasso!" (Smile). We are not used to cameras and I am very shy so the picture you receive may have my hand in front of my face. I hope you understand.

One of the Canadians put a very heavy package on my head and said it was "A gift of love." When I got home after the long bus ride back I could hardly wait to open the bundle. I really like my new backpack and the other clothing. The blanket will keep me warm this winter and I will enjoy using the pillow since I have never had one before.

Mama and Baba were happy to see the other things which can be shared with all the family.

Our dinner tonight of rice, vegetables, and dhal will be a celebration. Thanks to everyone who made this special day possible.

With love, from Geeta



**SCAW is a Registered Canadian Charity founded in 1970 by Margaret and Murray Dryden.**

#### SCAW Contact Information

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#### Thank you for your contribution to the Bangladesh Distribution

- **Loblaw Great Food**, 380 the East Mall, Etobicoke, ON, for doing our photo processing at cost.
- **The Printing House** (Gordy Leong) 5120 Dundas Street West, Etobicoke, ON, for doing our printing at a discount.
- **SCAW's donors and volunteers** for their continuing support.



#### SCAW 2011 Bangladesh travelling team

(Back Row, Left to Right): Else Graves, Doug MacDougald, (Team Leader), Michael Graves. (Front Row, Left to Right): George Foster, Sally Jo Martin, Mike Foster.