



One By One

Year 17 Issue 1 (Double Issue)

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“Your dream does not have an expiration date. Take a deep breath and try again.”

Unknown

Super Sonal

Sonal (Eng) first volunteered with her brother back in 2004.

Over the years, she has popped in almost yearly and has volunteered for a few months here and there.

We have been very lucky to have her volunteer for four months this year.

She has seen all of the children grow up and her perspective has been a special one. It has helped us to remember where we have come from and the successes that we have achieved—more accurately, the successes that the children and the families have achieved.

Thank you Sonal! For over 12 years, your dedication and love for One! International and its families and students has been phenomenal.

Edmonton Celebration: Dreams to Reality—Reality to Dreams

The Feb 3, 2017 One! International Celebration in Edmonton, with its theme, Dreams to Reality - Reality to Dreams, was once again an astounding success. A total of 306 people attended the event and helped to raise a net profit of \$30,400 for One! International – their charity of choice.

As in past years, this event helps to bring the One! International family of supporters, and those who are being supported, together in an evening of friendship, understanding, music, food, fun, and dance. As always it is an evening buzzing with excitement, as supporters gather to share fellowship and laughter, bid on silent auction items, learn more about what has happened at One! International in the last year, and celebrate together with a delicious meal. While all this is happening in a wintery evening in Edmonton, half way around the world in the early hours of a warm morning in Mumbai, a group of One! International kids are getting ready to help us say thank-you, entertain us with their songs and

tell us about themselves via Skype. What a wonderful way to see and hear firsthand about what the organization does, and the difference it makes to these young children and their families.

The 2017 Celebration would never have been possible without the tireless efforts of a group of dedicated Celebration Committee volunteers. The Board of Directors would like to sincerely thank the Celebration Committee – these unsung heroes, who worked behind the scenes diligently, doing everything to make this event successful. Co-Chairs, Kathleen and Paragi, you were the masterminds who chaired the meetings and organized the event through the volunteers.



Thank you Nirmala, for making sure that people attended the event, got their tickets well in time, and were properly seated. Sean, you did a wonderful job emceeing the event, and showing the guests a good time. Jocelyn, thank you for coordinating the donated gifts and organizing the well-run silent auction. Raj, the hall decorations, especially the hut, put the One! International children’s living quarters into perspective. David, your fundraiser was a lot of fun and your donated tickets to Las Vegas were a superb prize. Sonia, thank you spreading the One! International message through various forms of media. Finally, a big thanks to Marilyn and Tania for their leadership and support.

This Celebration Committee helped to make the One! International children’s dreams a reality. On behalf of the Board, THANK YOU again to each one of you.



Women's Health Workshops

With Nurse Sheetal in town (CAN) it was a wonderful opportunity to have health workshops with the female Staff, Client Staff, mothers and older female students.



Sheetal first carried out general health check-ups on all of the Khar

family and more than 90% of the Nallasopara family. Some long days, but her efficiency and hard work enabled us to flag some areas of concern for everyone.

Then Sheetal worked hard to research and prepare information for

the women's workshops. A need for balance between the cultural sensitivities and pure science.

The first workshop was at the Khar school with all of the Staff and Client Staff. We covered all of the female anatomy, changes and what happens monthly and during pregnancy. Basic information that western country women learn at young ages, but seemed mind blowing for the majority in the room. This was followed by debunking basic myths about sex and basic women's rights. "How many times a week am I supposed to have sex with my husband?" was one of the questions that was shocking and led to the answer "Your body is your body and no one else's." A concept that the ladies found mind-blowing. We went into the day thinking that it would be an hour or two...five hours

later, we easily could have talked for much longer.

In Nallasopara, we had the opportunity to have two wonderful sessions with the older female students. Information that they should have known and didn't.

The sessions with the mothers in Nallasopara were mostly enlightening for telling us the need for these type of sessions. They are living in myths and lack of knowledge of the facts and their rights.

Thank you Sheetal for being the professional catalyst to make this happen. It was an incredible opportunity for us to empower women through knowledge and building a tighter community with each other. A first step that we will now continue regularly in the future!

Volunteer Corner: Donna

"...I review my many wonderful memories of the children of Khar School, the teachers, my apartment mates, the local people I met, the ever-amazing, vibrant, in-your-face sights and scenes of Mumbai. I have gone over the names of the Khar children over and over - must write them down as I will eventually forget. It was such a challenge learning these foreign (to me) names and I stumbled on some right to the end. But the faces, the smiles, the songs and dances, the mischief, the chatter, excitement I won't ever forget. The walks with staff along [Ram] Mandir Road at the end of each day; Vikas hailing us rickshaws, Ashok walking us home. Then there was Honey (head honcho in Tania's absence), orchestrating the daily scenario from her perch by the office window, occasionally whipping to the classrooms to announce, teach, share a laugh or reprimand someone. I still marvel how we all climbed over stools, claimed corners to do our work, bumped and jostled in our tiny spaces (many a lunch, chai cup, water bottle crashed to the floor in the hubbub). But work got done, questions answered,

lost items miraculously found, and most amazingly, tempers rarely flared. People of India are accustomed to the din, small quarters, interruptions, and little or no personal space. It was a whole new challenge for me.

And I am so happy I plunged into this venture and made some small contribution to this ever so worthy cause. What a marvel Tania is - 16 years developing schools for the most underprivileged, endearing children, graduating students to better job prospects, hiring teachers, giving employment to women (cleaning, cooking, child caring) who more often than not had histories of alcohol abuse, family violence, homelessness. Children attended school, sporadically or faithfully, in all manner of dress. It is a mystery to me how the older kids, and some teachers/staff, managed to be as neat and clean coming from homes/huts with no running water, no furniture, no space to store/hang clothing. The younger children often came to school barefoot, clothes, face and hair unwashed and then other days show up in shoes, nice shirts and sundresses, fancy chiffon dresses, freshly washed hair. And almost always with a smile. They came to

learn, to socialize, to eat (and they were fed well at the school). I will never forget the heaping platefuls some 8, 10, 12 year olds could put away, sometimes returning for seconds. In all likelihood their only meal of the day. One little 4 (or 5 year old - hard to tell as they don't always know their age and they are all smaller than normal) readily admitted she did not want to study, she came for the food. She also came to all Saturday outings. No TV and few toys at home for these kids. I am so thankful I had the pleasure to share space and time with them; they are all ever so dear and my affection for them runs deep. They blessed me with warm thanks and touching drawings/messages that I treasure.

"...the school, the children, Mumbai, that are indelibly printed in my memory. I am so very thankful I made the journey, should have done it earlier, when younger, and perhaps more often. I would love to return..."

Donna Hamar (CAN)



Parvati the Precious

On days like this, 'why' is the question that comes up the most and that can be answered the least.

It is with a heavy, heavy heart that that I write this. Precious Parvati passed away just after 12pm on March 12, 2017 at the age of 13.

You may remember her as the victim of a drunk driving accident that



killed her mother and brother and left her orphaned along with her elder brother Malesh. We remember her as a daughter, a student, a little spark that wouldn't take no for an answer and made everyone laugh and smile.

Malesh sacrificed his youth in taking care of Parvati—going from hospital to hospital. He was the most caring and loving big brother she could have ever asked for. Though the doctors were wrong about her being dependant on external oxygen and steroids (she grew too strong for those after only 5 months), they were not wrong about her short life. They said she would only live another 5 to 10 years. As we grew to love her, we never imagined that they would be right. She lived 8 years.

Malesh is struggling. Parvati was not just a sister, she was more like a

daughter and his only family. He will now lose some of his adulthood in trying to come to terms with her death.

Having lived at both

schools—Khar and Nallasopara, the staff and students are struggling with the news. It just seems wrong.

Without exaggerating, Parvati touched hundreds with her sense of humour and spunky personality. Hundreds who will now battle to understand how this can happen. We will miss you little Paro but will be forever indebted to you for shining your light on all of us.



Vijay's Corner— Towards Development or Destruction

"Hard to believe today, how the world is moving forward. Looking at the scenario, human beings have achieved great deeds in terms of development but, there are many things that have been overshadowed in the name of development. No doubt, human being with his intelligence can achieve anything in this world. He has proven himself the most intelligent living being on earth by successfully finding answers to many unknown facts with great deal of research. But, is that achievement makes him happy and safe or is it leading him towards an unsafe environment to live on?"

"There is enough for man's needs in this world, but not enough for man's want"
—Mahatma Gandhiji

Human beings, instead of exploring the resources available in the environment, have been consistently exploiting it. Each and every country in this world want to make themselves powerful and be on top amongst all. Due to such immense competition, they

are not bothered about any resources on earth including human resource. Every country have been using their financial resources in nuclear test, space shuttle and other things that brings them into limelight in front of the whole world.

Media and television have played a major role in promoting such achievements, but don't take efforts in showing the problems faced by the common people living in remote area.

In India, 70% of the population live in villages and don't get proper nutrition, education and medical facilities. There are more schools than the number of children but still there are many children who don't go to school. And those who go to school lack quality education.

In Santosh Bhavan, Nallasopara, where we have our school branch, things have gone really worse since last one year. Population has increased tremendously. There has increased number of crimes such as theft, murder, accidents, sexual assault etc. After completing grade 10, children find difficult in studying fur-

ther due to financial problems. They have to look for some sort of part time work to help their further studies. But, once they start going to work their interest in studies is not there and they start to concentrate on work only.

There have been complaints that children are going in wrong line due to mobiles, and social media and other technologies. But, it is not true in real sense. Everything depends on the mental thoughts and behaviour of the person. Every good and bad deed has nothing to do with any things. Even our hands can do bad things, if we slap any person. If thoughts are good then hands are used for feeding poor people. A pen can be used for writing good thoughts that motivate others, but can also be used for writing defamatory statement about others, which is a civil wrong.

So, it is not the things that make the change it is the way it is used that results in the change. If used in proper way it will give positive results, but if used in bad way it will give negative results."
— Vijay

Written by Tania unless otherwise mentioned.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Canada:

112 Garland Crescent, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada, T8A 2R2

Phone: (780) 467-6254

India:

Phone: (91) 98205-17805

EMAIL: info@one-international.com

Twitter:

@TaniaDidi

Facebook:

/OneTaniaDidi

Blog:

On the Webpage

www.one-international.com

Everyone
Loves a
Good
Holi
Picture!



Demonetization = Demoralization

I have been through some very difficult times in India. The daily struggles of adjusting to a new country, new rules, new customs on top of the struggles of coping with death, abuse, injury, deception. Despite all that, there is no doubt that the period that followed Prime Minister Modi's Demonetization (removing 88% of the country's currency before having the means in place to replace it) was the most difficult struggle I have faced—and most of the One! family has faced.

November 8th was the day it happened (coincidentally or not, the day that Trump became the President Elect of the USA). Mumbai looked like a warzone. All of the banks were closed, many of the shops were shut—no money. The population were in a panic. The days that followed saw hundreds of people in lines at banks and ATM's only to be denied their own money. People with hard earned cash in their hands that was garbage, useless, illegal.

The physical aspects of it was hard enough, waiting in lines at the ATM's for upwards of 4 hours a day not to end up with any money (we accessed money for the first time on November 15th, then on November 22nd—\$40 CAD each time). Families were hungry with bosses unable to pay daily wage earners—all of our parents. We had to cut our services—no fruit, biscuits, chai; no medical; limited access to wages; cancelled Annual Program and Annual Trip.

But, it was the emotional / mental aspect that was the most traumatic. Not being able to give the basics of life, not being able to pay salaries that were rightfully earned by the hard-work and dedication of our people.

79 people died waiting in lines at banks, unknown numbers of deaths of people denied services at hospitals, increased suicide rates by farmers and others suffering by the stress. Yet, the international community knew little to nothing. Was it hidden? Did no one care? All I do know, is that it was wrong.

Village Update

“On January 15th, we celebrated our one-year anniversary for our project in the Khambale village in Vangaon. We observe this milestone by reflecting on the growth and development of not only the students and families in the village, but of our own teachers and staff.

In a year, we doubled the number of students attending classes, saw improvements in the students' attendance and commitment to the program, and even moved our classes indoors; we entrusted to use the large one-room community center. Relationships with the parents have transitioned from a “getting to know you” phase to one where they see us as a reliable asset to the community—people they can not only confide in, but call upon in times of stress or emergency.

This growth and progress in Khambale was made possible only through the dedication of our staff: Varsha, Ekta, Shashi, Sunil and Vijay. Through his experience and knowledge, Vijay has made it possible for us to teach indoors and maintain a good working relationship with the local village government and the administration at the nearby school. While excellent teachers and social workers, Shashi, Varsha, and Ekta became more independent and skilled in different aspects of project management. They learnt to handle the accounts, supplies and travel; created and completed medical and social work files for each of the families; and, barring big events or family emergencies, never missed a day of classes. Sunil joined late last year and although



Reshma's Asha

Client Staff Reshma (27) who has wanted to be a mother since she was 19 years old was finally given her asha (her hope) in August 2016.

Daughter Sanaya was born under emergency conditions at only 1.2kg. She spent her first few weeks in PICU but as you can see from the photo, her mother has done an incredible job at nurturing her and taking care—phenomenal care—of her. In fact, she is at par with the growth levels for her age and has a clean bill of health thus far. **Congratulations Reshma!**



he is relatively new, his commitment to the students and the school is impressive. He brought in new energy and ideas to the classes, easily won the respect of the families, and developed a lot of fresh approaches to dealing with the serious medical and social issues that plague the village.

“Though she be but little she is fierce”; although still relatively small and growing slowly, the Vangaon village school has had a fantastic first year through the efforts of our incredible students and staff and we look forward to many more to come.” — **Honey**

To donate to One! USA, please contact Honey directly at:

hmblakeman@aol.com