



# SOFOSH

E-NEWSLETTER OF SOFOSH  
OCT. 2013- DEC. 2013

## Editor's Note:

### 50 years of goodness!



This year has been a truly special one for SOFOSH - it marks the 50<sup>th</sup> year of its existence. And over these 5 decades, our countless donors, who are a the

backbone of the SOFOSH family, have enabled us to pursue our noble mission of assisting the needy sections of our society .

Being a charitable, non-profit organization we depend upon the generosity of donors for our funding. And with expanding humanitarian services, the responsibilities of SOFOSH towards our society have increased manifold. So, while our burdens have increased due to the changing economic scenario and inflationary trend , the receipt of funds have depleted to due to certain regulations by the CARA. The result? SOFOSH, too, is facing a financial crunch.

Thus, an appeal to the society to support us in all possible ways which will enable us to continue our services to the crisis affected patients and families and the abandoned, orphaned little ones in our society.

We hope that this 'friendship' which has touched the lives of countless beneficiaries will continue with your invaluable support.

- NIVEDITA GOGTE

## A stance to empower women



Different awareness programs were organised during the fortnight of 25 Nov to 10 Dec 2013 to raise awareness about violence against women. One of these activities included a street play organised by SOFOSH, with the help of Mobile Crèches on 9 Dec. To target a larger audience, the main OPD of Sassoon Hospital was chosen as the venue. The group of women, who performed the street play, were immediately able to attract the attention of the people standing in queues for various OPDs. Several passers-by also were curious and decided to stop and watch.

The group enacted several situations in which women face discrimination, hostility, molestation and outright violence. The role

of Police, Social Workers and NGOs was aptly presented. The message to women, of standing up and fighting against such situations, was clear. The activity also highlighted the importance of not being a silent spectator to such situations.

After the street play several women approached the group and the Social Workers of SOFOSH to share their problems and asked for advice. They were given the help line number for women, as well as the contact numbers of SOFOSH and Mobile Crèches. They were also advised to contact the police immediately, in case of domestic violence.



## ACTIVITIES @ SHREEVATSA

This quarter happened to be the busiest for all at Shreevatsa, as all the major festivals – Dussehra, Diwali and Christmas – fall during this period. Here is a description of how we celebrated some of the festivities at Shreevatsa.

### BHONDLA .....

During Navratra, on 11 Oct, children celebrated Bhondla – a very typical Maharashtrian ritual of worshiping the image of an elephant, singing traditional 'bhondla' songs and dancing around the



image of the elephant. It usually ends with a game of guessing what snacks/sweetmeats each one has brought and then distributing the same and having fun. At Shreevatsa, the children and the staff danced to the tunes of Garba songs.

### DUSSEHRA .....

On 13 Oct, Dussehra was celebrated by worshiping all the equipment, books, school material etc. All the children were dressed up for the occasion and had a special dessert at lunch. They were also educated about the importance of Dussehra.

### DIWALI .....

The preparation for Diwali began much before the festival. A group of volunteers decorated Shreevatsa on 26 Oct followed by a group of volunteers from Vande Mataram Sangathna who built a miniature fort in the garden. On the first day of Diwali, i.e. Vasubaras, several volunteers from 19 Ganesh Mandals from Pune city, gathered at Shreevatsa in the evening. Children were happily bursting crackers with the help of teachers and volunteers. A small program followed, which was presided over by

Shri Chandrashekhar Daithankar, Additional Commissioner of Police. Several other dignitaries such as Shri Vasant Kulkari, CEO of Janata Sahakari Bank, Shri Charudatta Aaphale, noted Keertankar, journalist Shri More of Lokmat were also present. The Ganesh Mandals donated several requirements of Shreevatsa at this function.

On 1 Nov the volunteers of Vande Mataram Sangathna paid a visit early in the morning at 5.30 a.m. to give *abhyangsnana* to all the

children. On the evening of 3 Nov, children and staff of Shreevatsa performed the Laxmipoojan. All children wore new clothes and feasted on sweetmeats. A Bal Mela was organised by Gajanan Mitra Mandal on 4 Nov in the morning. Children from TARA and foster care also joined to enjoy various rides and games. On the same evening Shreevatsa shone brightly with about 1200 oil lamps, lit by Sparsh group, to celebrate Deepotsav. On 5 May morning, children celebrated Bhaabeej at school.

### CHILDREN'S DAY .....

A group of young working men decided to contribute and celebrate Children's Day at Shreevatsa. They also offered to celebrate the birthdays of children at Shreevatsa and the adopted children who are invited every third Saturday of the month.

Children's Day was also celebrated in the Pediatric ward on 14 Nov, The HOD of Pediatrics, Dr. Sandhya Khadse, sang popular children's songs on this occasion. Mr. Kharat also sang several songs to entertain the children. All the children were distributed sweets, biscuits, fruits, drawing books and

crayons.

### DOLL'S WEDDING .....

On 29 Nov, all the children and staff participated enthusiastically in the 'Doll's Wedding'.



### DHOOM DHAMAAL .....

On 15 Dec, 6 children participated in the 'Dhoom Dhamaal' Dance event organized by Childline Pune. This was a charity event to raise funds for vulnerable children. Children from six other NGOs participated in this event. Since this was not a competition, all children received gifts for participation.



### CHRISTMAS PARTY

A fortnight before Christmas, a group of older children was busy attending Christmas parties at different venues. On 11<sup>th</sup> they attended the Foster Care Party, on 23<sup>rd</sup> they went to Poona Club and on the 24<sup>th</sup> they were invited to a call center to attend their Christmas party. On 25 Dec, the children had a party at Shreevatsa, with different groups visiting to celebrate Christmas with them.

### RITESH KULKARNI:

Adopted some years back from SOFOSH, Ritesh participated in the 9th NKFI National Open Karate Championship, organised by the National Karate Federation of India, held in Nov 2013 at Balewadi, Pune. He was placed first in the individual Kumite event in the senior age group of above 76 kg weight category. Ritesh we are proud of you!

### NUTRITION CLINIC:

About 401 beneficiaries took advantage of the nutrition clinic during this quarter as per figures below:

October	119
November	159
December	123



## ACTIVITIES@TARA

### MINI-MARATHON

Kamayani School hosted a mini-marathon race on 4 Oct. This event was organised by Lions Club International for the special children of Pune district. Chaitrali participated in this event and stood 4th in it. She was awarded a medal and a certificate.



### DRAWING COMPETITION

Aishwarya participated in a drawing and painting competition organized by the Rotary Club of Poona West, through her school. She got a certificate of appreciation for participation.

### SWEETMEATS

Diwali was celebrated with enthusiasm at TARA. The staff had prepared various Indian snacks and sweetmeats and the children feasted on them. All the children wore new clothes and had fun bursting crackers.



### CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Christmas party at TARA was organized on the evening of 22 Dec. The premises were decorated and lit up for the occasion. A crib, with several miniature statues, presented the event of Christ's birth. Sister Nicole from Switzerland (Mother General of the congregation of St. Ursula's) graced the occasion. She was accompanied by Sister Rita (Provincial in-charge of India) and Deacon Roy D'Monte. A few youngsters from the nearby Church also attended this party. Children performed a few dances and a skit about the birth of Jesus Christ. The residential trainees of the St. Ursula's convent performed a few dances and presented a play about how one can find God in acts of kindness and not in religions. The child care staff also performed at the event. The whole atmosphere was charged with cheer, enthusiasm and excitement.



## ADOPTION AWARENESS WEEK

Adoption Awareness Week is celebrated all over India with great enthusiasm from 14th to 21st November. All those who are passionate about adoption seek the support of the general public for this cause. The idea is to reach out, not only to families who are likely to consider adoption as a means of completing their family, but also to all those who are in a supportive role. The emphasis is on generating awareness about legal adoptions and the recognised sources for pursuing the same. At the same time, the activities aim at dispelling the myths and misconceptions in the minds of the society at large.

As per every year, the Adoption Awareness Week at SOFOSH was planned well in advance.

On 14 Nov, a Bal Mela was held at Shreevatsa. It was organized with the help of a group of enthusiastic youngsters.

On the evening of 16th Nov, an open house session on adoption was organized in collaboration with the Indian Medical Association. Popular TV and film personality Mrinal Kulkarni, who is a great supporter of this cause, was the Chief Guest at this event. Dr. Jayant Navrange, a well-known pediatrician, gave a presentation on medical challenges, child-care and several aspects of adoption. After the presentation, a few older adoptees, and a few adoptive couples were invited to speak about their experiences. It was a truly moving experience to hear their stories. About 37 prospective adoptive couples and few other interested persons attended this session.

## CELEBRATING WORLD AIDS DAY

1 Dec is celebrated as World AIDS Day. This year, instead of celebrating it on just one day, SOFOSH decided to have activities for children infected with HIV during the whole month of December. The main aim of the program was to bring joy into the lives of these children and to promote their physical, emotional and mental well-being.

Social Workers contacted the volunteers of Make A Wish Foundation who then visited SOFOSH to meet these children. Each child was asked what his/her wish was. Make A Wish managed to fulfill all their wishes by January 2014.

On the occasion of their sixth anniversary, BMW had organized a fun fair cum party on 19 December. About 22 children and 10 parents attended this party, where they were able to present their multiple talents, and have a blast.

SOFOSH organised a Christmas party, sponsored by Make A Wish foundation, on

25 Dec. About 20 children and 10 parents attended this party. The kids were given gifts and had a lot of fun playing games and interacting with each other.

Such activities were a source of joy for these HIV-infected children. Coupled with the emotional support, counseling and nutrition provided by SOFOSH, their physical as well as mental health was boosted.

Apart from the activities for children, there were several awareness programs organised by and for different organisations. Two such programs were organised by the NGO Manavya. Another one was organised for the staff, mostly bus drivers, of the Coca Cola company at Pirangut. Another such session was organised for the women living in the Pirangut area. The presentation covered topics like what is HIV, its symptoms, myths and misconceptions about HIV, treatment available for avoiding transmission of HIV from mother to child etc.



## ACTIVITIES @ THE PEDIATRIC WARD OF SGH

About 100 children underwent play therapy during this quarter. As the social worker had used play therapy with every child who was admitted, the children now ask for her at the time of admission and want to meet her. They also ask for toys, as they now know that they will be given toys to play while they are admitted there.

## Stories/Experiences

**RADHA**, barely a year old, was found with an apparently mentally ill old man on 28 Oct. Residents of Wagholi and Vitthalwadi, where these two were found, handed them over to the Lonikand Police Station. As the old man was unable to give any information about himself or the child, the police admitted him to the Mental Hospital at Yerawada, Pune. The child was admitted to SOFOSH as per the orders of the Child Welfare Committee, Pune.

While undergoing treatment at the hospital, the man was able to remember the address of his native place. It was eventually discovered that he was the grandfather of Radha, and his family originally belonged to Shahada in the Nandurbar district of Maharashtra. However, he along with his son, daughter-in-law and Radha, often lived in a village Rahu in Tal. Daund of District Pune, to work in the nearby sugarcane fields. He had gone to his native place in Nandurbar along with Radha for Dussehra. While returning to Rahu, he got off at Wagholi and felt disoriented. He could not relate anything about himself. To add to his woes, his appearance made him appear mentally ill to the locals.

When Radha's parents found that the duo had left from Nandurbar but not reached Rahu, they filed a 'missing persons' complaint for both at Shahada Nandurbar Police Station. Meanwhile the Mental Hospital had sent a letter to the Shahada Police Station informing them about the old man. Accordingly, the family along with the

police came to the Mental Hospital to take him home. From the Lonikand police they also found that Radha was admitted at SOFOSH and, after completing all the legal formalities, they came to Shreevatsa to take her home. It was indeed a heart-warming moment for all.

**SACHIN**, a young man barely 20 years of age, had a railway accident and was admitted to Sassoon Hospital. His right leg had to be amputated while his left foot was completely crushed. He was being treated for over 3 months. Sachin belonged to a very poor family from Ramwadi near Panchgani.

During his long stay at the hospital, the SOFOSH Social Worker gave him and his family a lot of emotional support. He had to be counseled for his amputation and further rehabilitation. The family could not afford medicines, hence medicines were provided by SOFOSH at subsidised costs. SOFOSH also helped him obtain the certificate for handicap given by the Sassoon Hospital. He was further helped in getting an artificial leg and special sandals for the crushed foot. An ambulance was also arranged by the Social Worker for him to go back home after discharge.

The Social Worker continues to follow up with Sachin and is working towards his further rehabilitation.



**GOLU** was admitted to Shreevatsa by the Lohgaon Police Station and by orders from the Child Welfare Committee, Pune. He had several injuries and burn marks on his body, mostly on his hands and legs. According to the police, Golu was locked up by his parents for over 4 days, when they had gone out for work. They also reportedly beat him up brutally for passing urine and stools in his pants during school time. The neighbours complained to Mr. Sachin Khandwe, the local Shivsena leader, who immediately visited Golu's house and found him crying loudly. His step-mother was near him. Golu's face was swollen, his whole body had reddened and there were burn marks on his body. Mr. Khandwe

immediately admitted him to the private clinic of one Dr. Chawan. When his step-mother was confronted, she accepted that she and her husband had been beating up Golu for the past 3 days. She was arrested; however, Golu's father was absconding. Golu was admitted to the hospital from 12 Nov to 21 Nov, and was brought to Shreevatsa only when his condition had improved.

At Shreevatsa, Golu soon became a happy child, but expressed his desire to go back to his mother Geeta. He could only say that she lives in Madhya Pradesh and that his father had brought him here without telling her. He could not give any other details about her whereabouts. Meanwhile, some of his neighbours, along with his step-brother, came to meet him. The step-brother was able to provide a more detailed address of Golu's mother. Accordingly, a Social Worker contacted Childline requesting them to trace Golu's mother. A few days later Childline informed us that Golu's father was arrested. On enquiring with the police, they told us that they had arrested him and that his brother and sister had come to bail him out. Golu's uncle and aunt wanted to obtain his custody. However, they were only allowed to meet him and were told firmly that they would not be given his custody. They were also asked to bring along his mother. They insisted that his mother would not come as she was not interested in him and had left him with his father. The Social Worker then took Golu's mother's detailed address from them.

Using personal contacts the Social Worker was successful in tracing Golu's mother and informed her that Golu was in Shreevatsa. On 24 Dec, Geeta, along with her brother, came to Shreevatsa to take her child home. All the required legal procedures were completed and on 26 Dec and Golu was handed over to his mother. It was a highly emotional moment for all present.

## SOFOSH

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