



MSMF Newsletter

# A Ray of Light

Our Mission: Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation (MSMF), a registered Canadian charity, dedicated to promote rural community development in India through education and vocational training, healthcare and emergency relief.

Newsletter

20th Anniversary Special

Spring 2009



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## A Look Back at a 20-Year MSMF legacy

Twenty years is not a long period in history. When MSMF was founded in 1989, the only one thought we all had in mind was to do something useful for others. This journey has been an adventurous but nevertheless very fulfilling and satisfying one. We have made some significant inroads with our programs and activities.

The initial mission was to provide care to the rural poor children, which later led to a primary school. Sarada Vidyalayam school with 25 students in grade one in 1992 has now blossomed into a high school with enrollment capacity of over 200 in grades one to ten. Through this school, the Foundation has been able to provide quality education blended with human values, discipline and other extracurricular activities. We are very gratified that in addition to excellent academic performance by the children, we are also able to impart good social values to the children. The success of the school is indicated by the absence of any drop-outs from the program. One more interesting outcome is that there are more female than male students in our school, contradicting the overall trend in the area and the country. These children in-turn are bringing favorable changes at the family level and we do think this is

**“The human toll is incalculable; the economic cost runs into many billions. Training, providing more infrastructure and public health education, combined with the considerable influence of foreign leaders will help contain this problem and in the long run, rid the global community of avoidable blindness. That is our goal. “ Oliver Foot, President of ORBIS International.**

sustainable. Recently a vocational school has been added to Sarada to provide employable skills to students.

At the same time we became aware of the need to provide quality eye care which is equitable and affordable to all. The successful establishment of a base hospital, Srikan Institute of Ophthalmology in 1993, with good facilities and quality care was the first step. We then have built on this by improving accessibility through community out-reach programs, such as Screening Camps and Vision Centers, to make eye care more accessible to people living in rural and remote areas. As a result, we can provide out-patient services to over 10 million people.

It did not take too long for us to realize that the fishermen and farmers who live along the coast of

Bay of Bengal and in the mighty Godavari river delta needed relief at times of natural disasters, such as cyclones and floods during monsoons. The program called “Spandana” was started in 1998.

Twenty years have gone by very quickly. Our contributions account for only a small fraction of the total work that needs to be done in rural India. We did make a significant contribution in the elimination of illiteracy and blindness through several projects. However much more work still has to be done in the areas of providing education, primary health care and eye care to the several millions of people living in the rural areas.

After twenty years, we also need to take a look at the sustainability of the projects and the Foundation for future generations. We need to develop a sustainable funding base and a core group of volunteers to support the Foundation. It is also very important that we plan for an endowment fund to support these activities in the years to come. We have to work hard to increase the awareness about the needs in the communities we serve so that we can find the necessary support to continue our activities. We have made an attempt to share with you some of the good work done by the Foundation with your support in the last twenty years. Your comments are always welcome and give us inspiration. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

REFLECTIONS FROM CHANDRA

*MSMF has provided a new purpose and meaning for my life when I lost my wife and two children in the Air India tragedy of 1985. Twenty years seem to have gone very quickly. In 1989, we started at Kakinada, India with modest programs and they have now transformed into the creation of what has now become a world class centre for treatment, training, education and research.*

*The long journey has been filled with challenges and adventure. We have benefited greatly from the support of numerous volunteers, supporters and others who have donated their time and funds generously to this cause. On behalf of MSMF, I would like to express our deepest appreciation and thanks to them. This support is continuing.*

*What started as a small caregiving initiative in 1989 has now grown to a high school, a vocational school, an ophthalmic hospital and centre for training, and support for disaster relief programs. You will read about these in other sections of this news letter. We have also included data on the services provided thus far and recognized a number of early volunteers that have contributed to this. This list is just an example of the support we received and by no means exhaustive.*

*As we move forward, we face a number of challenges. Most important on this list are to continue to generate financial resources. We also need to do careful succession planning so that the Foundation continues its good work for the foreseeable future. We also desperately need to recruit local volunteers to carry on the work.*

*In 20 years, we have made significant contribution to the elimination of illiteracy and blindness through well structured projects. Much work needs to be done in an area where 20 million people live. It is also gratifying to note that from the beginning we have pursued activities, that at the core, enable people to become more independent through MSMF support programs. Thus your support has a lasting effect on the society.*



Our Story  
Motivation

Empowerment of people through support programs in education, eye care and disaster relief to create a lasting effect in the society.

Education

Sarada Vidyalayam was started in 1992. Through this school, MSMF was able to provide quality education blended with human values, discipline and extra-curricular activities. These children



come from very poor families and would not otherwise get any education. What was then a primary school has now become a high school

with instruction up to grade ten. In addition, MSMF recently established a vocational school to train youth in various trades. It is anticipated that about 100 youth will be trained at this school and the training they receive will provide employment to rural youth and reduce the need for migration to already crowded cities.

Over 1,200 children have passed through Sarada Vidyalayam and over 100 scholarships have been offered to those pursuing higher education. The education and training at the school have been very effective as is evidenced by the fact that no one dropped out of the school and more are pursuing post-secondary education. An attendant benefit is that the children influence their families to change their habits in general behavior, discipline, personal hygiene and general attitude towards community.

Eye Care

Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology was inaugurated in 1993 with two main goals. The first one was to prevent avoidable blindness among rural poor. The second part was a strong outreach program to increase awareness that the blindness itself in most cases was avoidable. Today Srikiran is a provider of modern eye care in the region



with five fully equipped operating theaters, highly skilled staff and other training and support facilities. Other strengths are its

training programs and international volunteer programs. The institute received accreditation for graduate training in Ophthalmology leading to a DNB (Diplomate of National Board).

In addition to these, Srikiran operates speciality clinics for Cornea, Glaucoma, Retina and Pediatric Ophthalmology, low-vision assessment and rehabilitation centre, microbiology laboratory and an auditorium.

Srikiran offers affordable eye care to all regardless of their socioeconomic status. Eye screening camps are conducted in villages as far as several hundred kilometers from the institute and those who need help are provided transportation, surgery, follow-up and medications, accommodations and meals at no cost. Complementary to these, the outreach program established a number of local Vision Centers that provide regular eye care services and refer the complicated cases to Srikiran. Over a million patients have been treated at Srikiran since its existence and about 20% of these are children.

Disaster Relief

Disaster relief program "Spandana" started in 1998. The program was conceived to provide emergency relief during the events of natural



disasters. Kakinada, the geographic location of MSMF activities, is situated on the east coast of India and on the

shores of Bay of Bengal. Cyclones and heavy monsoon rains are common and cause extensive flooding and considerable damage to property and livelihoods. During a recent flooding of Godavari delta, several villages were under water for several days. We have been providing basic necessities to the affected people. These include food, drinking water, medications while they are in shelters. We have also provided them food, clothing, utensils and other urgent needs as they return back to their homes.

Spandana is aimed at the poor people who mainly live in huts near the shoreline and in the low lying areas. In the event of a disaster, they are forced to leave home at very short notice and move to temporary shelters. Waterborne diseases such as gastroenteritis are common and if not treated can cause death. Significant events since the program started include the 1999 killer cyclone of Orissa, and the recent flooding of the Godavari delta. Assistance was provided to about 650 affected families.



# Milestones 1989-2009

## MSMF was formed (1989)

Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation (MSMF) was established in 1989 in Canada by Dr. Chandra Sankurathri in memory of his wife Manjari, son

Srikan and daughter Sarada, who died in the 1985 Air India disaster. This Ottawa Foundation, a registered charity in Canada is promoting rural community development in India through education, healthcare and disaster relief programs. In India,



MSMF operates through Sankurathri Foundation, a registered charity in India.

## Sarada Vidyalayam (1992)

Sarada Vidyalayam now consists of three schools, primary, high and vocational. The vidyalayam was established in 1992 with an initial enrollment of 25 students. The school has been a tremendous success with zero drop out rate and a large number of students are proceeding to post-secondary education. The total number of students that passed through the school now stands at 1,210.



H.E. Dr. Joseph Caron, High Commissioner of Canada in India and Mme. Caron at Sarada Vidyalayam

The new vocational school is operational now and will enroll about 100 students a year. Sarada has a partnership with St Gregory School in Ottawa and received support since its inception. Theresa Kryski, then Principal of St. Gregory visited Sarada Vidyalayam and provided a comprehensive report.

## Srikan Institute of Ophthalmology (1993)

Srikan Institute of Ophthalmology was inaugurated in January 1993. The need for eye care services in the area quickly outpaced the initial facility capacity and today the hospital has five fully equipped operating theaters. Over 1.3 million patients were

**“I have been exposed to a superb model of rendering eye care in a rural area. I will always remember the examples of team work and creativity at Srikan”, Dr. Karim Damji, MD, FRCS, FRCSC, FAAO, University of Ottawa Eye Institute.**



Dr. Peter Kertes, Sunybrook and Women's College Hospital, Toronto at Srikan.

screened since its inception and over 140,000 surgeries are performed.

The Institute also developed into a continuing education facility. Dr. Karim Damji from University of Ottawa Eye Institute visited

Srikan a number of times for providing continuing education to the staff Ophthalmologists at the Institute. He said that he has been exposed to a superb model of rendering eye care in a rural area, examples of team work and creativity that he will always remember.

## Spandana (1998)

Spandana provides emergency relief during natural disasters. The program was started in 1998 and has helped the victims with medical and other relief. During the recent Godavari flooding, about 650 families were assisted.

## Vision Centers (2004)

Community Outreach is a major component of eye care program at Srikan. The outreach is necessary to meet the objectives cost effectively. The first Vision Centre was established in 2004 to provide primary eye care service locally and refer more complicated cases to Srikan. Today MSMF operates a total of five Vision Centers.



Post-Op patients

## 100,000 Surgeries (2005)

100,000 surgeries were completed at Srikan Institute in 2005. Dr. Sanjoy Kumar Gupta, an



Rosemary Bickerton, Carla Barbery, Dr. Marie Louise Lapointe, University of Ottawa Eye Institute at Srikan.

Ophthalmologist from Thunder Bay, Ontario was volunteering at the hospital at that time. He said that it is a big milestone for any institution and this could not have been achieved without the initiative of Chandra and the dedication and compassion of the

staff and volunteers. Dr Gupta treats many patients from First Nations and observed that there are many similarities in cataracts between his patients and those of Srikan. He found that the techniques used at Srikan would be applicable in Canada.

## Mother Theresa Excellence Award (2005)

Dr. Chandra Sankurathri was awarded the prestigious Mother Theresa Excellence Award for service to the poor in 2005. The award is made by the Front for National Progress (India). In the same year Chandra also received another prestigious award “Sankalp Tara” from Raksha International. In addition to these awards, the work of MSMF has been recognized by several media outlets. The CBC aired a one hour documentary, “A Ray of Light”, on the work of MSMF. CNN featured MSMF in three episodes of its program titled CNN Heroes.

## Vocational School (2009)

During a visit in 2008, Gulbanu and Noordin Madatali pledged support for the construction of a High School and a Vocational School. They felt that the children now have a better future in their communities without the need for migration to already crowded urban areas. The anticipated capacity for the vocational school is 100 students per year.



# The Statistics Speak for Themselves

*The statistics below provide a glimpse of what we have been able to achieve with the support of our funding partners and volunteers. Donors and volunteers are very important partners in what we do. It is essentially people empowering people. This list is only a representative one and is not exhaustive.*

## Facts

Out Patients Treated	1,374,935
Surgeries Performed	142,696
Vision Centers	5
Eye Screening Camps for Adults	1,294
Eye screening Camps for Children	794
Medical Personnel Trained	288
Support Staff Trained	81
CME Workshops Conducted	40
Children Educated	1,210
Scholarships Provided	118
School Children Screened	230,775

## Volunteers

Dr. Peter Kertes, Sunybrook Hospital, Toronto.  
 Dr. Kjell Dahlen, Eye care for the Adirondocs.  
 Dr. Karim Damji, University of Alberta  
 Dr. V.K. Raju, Eye Foundation of America  
 Dr. Vinod Mootha, University of Texas, Dallas  
 Ms. Rosemary Bickerton, University of Ottawa  
 Dr. Marie Louise Lapointe, University of Ottawa  
 Meera Suresh & Vikram Sundar, Toronto Ontario  
 Theresa & John Kryski, Ottawa, Ontario Canada  
 Ms. Michelle Danis, Gatineau, Que.

## Supporting Organizations

University of Ottawa Eye Institute  
 Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)  
 Christofel-Blinnden Mission (CBM)  
 Help the Aged Canada  
 ORBIS International  
 Rotary International

## There are many ways you can support



As a registered charity, MSMF depends on the contributions of donors for almost all of its operating budget. Over 90% of the funds raised go directly to support the programs. This support is vital to ensure the continued excellence of the Foundation. We invite you to join us in supporting the MSMF. There are three elements you can support.

- ✦ Raise awareness
- ✦ Build solidarity
- ✦ Mobilize funding

We can only rely on people like you to provide the essential support we need to fully realize potential. There are many ways you can participate or support our organization.

### Get involved !

- ✦ Start a local chapter or group in support of MSMF
- ✦ Hold a fundraising event in your community
- ✦ Invite a speaker to talk about MSMF and its programs
- ✦ Network with other groups.
- ✦ Learn more at [www.msmf.ca](http://www.msmf.ca)

### Make a donation

- ✦ Donate on line, by phone, cheque, money order or credit card.
- ✦ Become a regular donor by setting up post-dated cheques or pre-authorized credit card payments
- ✦ Give in someone's memory or in honor of a special occasion
- ✦ Donate securities
- ✦ Make a gift in your will or name MSMF as a beneficiary in your estate or Life Insurance Policy.

**“Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology and University of Ottawa Partnership has strengthened key human resources at both places as well as provided opportunities for ongoing and beneficial professional development”**

**Dr. Marie Louise Lapointe, MD, FRCS, University of Ottawa.**

Your generous support is appreciated and makes all the difference

**Many ways to reach us.**

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