



NEWS ARCHIVE:

## Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

Editor: Kiply Lukan Yaworski, Communications  
Phone: 306-242-1500; Toll Free: 1-877-661-5005  
communications@saskatoonrcdiocese.com

# ***Chalice trip to Bangladesh opens eyes of Saskatchewan residents to the impact of aid dollars***

*Chalice trip to Bangladesh – for PM*

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

KERROBERT – During a recent trip to Bangladesh in southern Asia, Kerrobert resident Bev Murphy saw first hand the impact of work being done by Chalice, an international Catholic sponsoring and development organization.

“I know where my Christmas gifts are going: to help those who need it,” she said after her recent trip, describing how this year the adults in her life won’t be receiving gifts from her. Instead the money will go to Chalice projects.

Murphy said that the two-week mission tour to Bangladesh Nov. 15 to Dec. 1 clearly demonstrated to her how every donation makes a difference.

“You don’t realize what the price of a cup of coffee can do for people. We just complain about everything, and we have so much; they have nothing and they don’t complain and are just so grateful,” said Murphy, describing how she has set up a can to collect “Change for Chalice” at her parish, Assumption of Mary in Kerrobert. She has also been asked to speak about her trip by a number of Christian denominations in the community, and is willing to share her experience with others.

“I was reminded of where in the Bible Jesus said ‘Come and see’, and sometimes I think that’s just about what you have to do to believe it.”



Ali Tuchscherer, 13, of Kerrobert, SK. welcomed by children.

**CONTINUED ....**



Murphy's 13-year-old granddaughter Ali Tuchscherer accompanied her on the Chalice mission tour, which had a packed itinerary, touring projects and meeting local people, and which also included a few challenges and difficult conditions along the way – everything from the heat and humidity, to the sight of armed guards and the overwhelming traffic on populous streets, as well as unfamiliar food, primitive bathroom facilities and insect bites.



Ali Tuchscherer, 13, of Kerrobert, SK. (right) meets Antora Das, the sponsored child of Ali's grandmother Bev Murphy. The Kerrobert residents recently spent two weeks in Bangladesh, in a tour organized through Chalice, an international development and sponsorship agency.

“I was so proud of her,” Murphy said of her young granddaughter’s eager participation in the trip. “She just keeps saying that she can’t wait to go back again.”

Thirteen participants took part in the tour organized by Chalice mission services, including two other women from the Saskatoon diocese. Murphy first heard about the trip when Deacon Eugene Perabo of Ottawa visited Our Lady of Assumption Parish to talk about Chalice.

“I saw that the trip included going to Jessore, which is the area where my own sponsor child lives, and I said ‘I’m going,’” Murphy related, adding she much prefers this kind of awareness-raising trip to the idea of traveling to a tourism destination or resort. “I’m not a traveler, but this was something I had always dreamed of doing.”

The itinerary was organized by the Rural Reconstruction Foundation, and it was both full and varied, Murphy related. “They kept us busy all day long,” she said, citing visits to a hospital, sponsor sites, homes, workplaces, and cultural events, as well as being present during celebrations for the Muslim Festival of Eid in the capital city of Dhaka. The visitors also toured a mangrove forest game preserve for Bengal tigers in the southern Asian country.

The Rural Reconstruction Foundation (RRF) is a non-government, non-profit, non-political, non-sectarian volunteer development organization established in 1982 by Philip Biswas and his wife Rita “to promote the socio economic emancipation of impoverished people of Bangladesh.’ In addition to administering Chalice programs, including the files for 5,500 sponsored children in the area, the RRF is also involved in United Nations initiatives, public health organizations, and the world food organization. RRF was recognized as the best micro finance institute in 2006, and is also known for its work in promoting entrepreneurship, especially among women, said Murphy.

**CONTINUED ....**



Located between India and Myanmar, Bangladesh is one of the world's most populous nations, with some 158 million people living in an area the size of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, said Murphy. The land is lush and rich, with rice fields and fruit trees, as well as prawn farming. "However, two per cent of the population owns all the land. The rest of the people work it, and they work for nothing much at all," said Murphy, describing the difficult life of the people, harvesting and threshing by hand.



Bev Murphy of Assumption of Our Lady Parish in Kerrobert, SK. meets her sponsored child Antora Das

The visitors also witnessed the labour-intensive hand weaving of cloth, and the creation of jute bags, with workers spending many hours working for very little return.

The focus of Chalice's work in the district of Jessore sponsor area is education for the children, as well as providing food for both the children and elderly. Meeting the health needs of the entire community is another focus.

Although it is a Catholic organization, Chalice provides assistance to people of all faiths, stressed Murphy, noting some 89 per cent of the population is Muslim, and only about one per cent is Christian.

"When they sponsor through Chalice, they simply look for those who have the most need," she explained. "There was only one village we went to that was all Catholic and it was run by some of the sisters who were there," she said, describing efforts to build up that site as a way to battle flooding that hits the area during monsoons.

At the hospital the group toured, there are only two doctors. The one who addressed the visitors quickly asked if they knew of physicians in Canada who would be interested in coming to help, said Murphy. Medical supplies and equipment are also needed. For instance, the replacement of an aging ultrasound machine is out of reach in the impoverished community, she noted.

A highlight of the journey for Murphy was meeting face to face with her sponsor child Antora Das and her family in the Jessore area of Bangladesh. It was a joyful time, with the visitors presented with flowers and everyone getting to know each other a bit better. "We learned that she is a good dancer," Murphy related about her sponsor child. "And I saw how grateful they were. Without sponsorship, this child couldn't go to school, couldn't get a good education."

A new Chalice initiative provides an opportunity to sponsor an elderly person, for the same monthly \$33 amount as for sponsoring a child, noted Murphy. The plight of abandoned and impoverished

**CONTINUED ....**



seniors is heartbreaking. “It’s hard to say how old they are – the life expectancy in Bangladesh is only 63 years – but when they get old, and can’t work anymore, and the family can’t or won’t take them in, then they either have to beg or just go hungry.”

During their stay, the travelers helped distribute the monthly allotment of food staples to those being sponsored. “We were handing out 50-pound bags of rice, flour, oil and other stuff just to sustain them for another month. We gave out blankets, and we gave out baskets with chickens in them. Some got goats, and some of the younger children got lamps to help them to study and do homework, as there’s no such thing as electricity in most places,” Murphy said. She noted that the group was told that a goat is one of the best donations a family can receive, they raise it, breed it, use the milk, and then eventually butcher it for food and are able to tan and sell the hide.

“Everyone was so very grateful for everything they received. We were smothered with hugs and handshakes and everyone wanted to touch us,” she described.

“Everywhere we experienced gratitude, gratitude. We brought little gifts, small toys – if you gave a child a matchbox car it was like they had a million dollars,” she said, adding that when children were given candy and a piece dropped, they would politely pick it up and give it back, not wanting to take two – something which she contrasted with the recent Halloween experience in Canada, where children had bags filled with candy.

“They are happy: you don’t hear anyone complain. They walk hand in hand, arm and arm; the older kids look after the younger kids, the families are there together, and they are so proud of their kids. And they are so grateful for what Chalice is doing for them.”