

# TFL (Teeth for Life) INDIA

## BACKGROUND

The project TFL India (Teeth for Life India) was formed in 2000 when a need for dentists and dental workers was identified at an Eye Hospital in Bisalpur, a town in a rural area of Rajasthan in NW India.. It was established when it became obvious to the many UK volunteers who have helped at the hospital, that as well as the eye treatment being provided, dental care in this poor region was also desperately needed.

Dental volunteers have been helping since its creation for periods ranging from two weeks to two months. They have gone at their own expense, to offer humanitarian aid to this impoverished part of Rajasthan.

## WHERE

The hospital & clinic are in the State of Rajasthan - 3 hours south of Jodhpur & 3 hours west of Udaipur (by road). Nearest town you might find on a map - Sumerpur. The nearest railway station is Jawai Bandh (about 5kms from hospital) on the main Jaipur - Mumbai line.

## THE BISALPUR EYE HOSPITAL & DENTAL CLINIC

The Eye Hospital at Bisalpur is the creation of one individual, Rajmal S. Jain (R.S.J.) In the mid - 70's The Royal Commonwealth Services to The Blind approached RSJ - a prominent Bombay industrialist to sponsor an eye camp in his home village of Bisalpur. So impressed was he with what he saw, he sponsored a whole season of camps. Eventually his philanthropic work became a full-time endeavor. He turned his factories and business empire over to his brothers and founded the Samiti or Society. In 1979 the first Eye Hospital was constructed, and from it a series of surgical eye camps was begun in the surrounding area.

This original hospital is now the guesthouse and houses the Dental Clinic. In the late '80's the new hospital was built, which is still in a state of expansion - 100 beds at the moment!

RSJ is the founder, and chairman of the Hospital, as well as being a trustee of BMH General Hospital (8 kms. away) - again built with his funds. There is a resident dentist there who would welcome a visit and your expertise. You might also wish to see some of your patients there, as there are facilities at the hospital not available at Bisalpur.

RSJ's good works have extended to include a veterinary hospital, a cattle camp, arranging distribution of clothes and food to the tribal people, polio & TB camps, sinking of water holes in the Bisalpur area and I am sure many other unsung projects.

The Eye Hospital has become a centre of excellence in Rajasthan. Success breeds success, which is how it continues to expand in this remote area. Hopefully we can do the same with the dental clinic.

### **BISALPUR DENTAL CLINIC**

There is no permanent dentist at Bisalpur and as a result the local population can find itself without dental cover for periods up to six months, but because now they can look forward with some confidence to a visiting dentist they exhibit characteristic stoicism and wait until one arrives. That person could be you!

In the past because of the lack of serviceable equipment it was only able to offer pain relief. However through fund fund-raising and donations it has been possible to improve the conditions for dentist and patient. As a result the clinic can now boast a recently installed dental unit together with a compressor, a new chair and a Bob Cat scaler. Periodontal disease is rife, and as a result many teeth have to be extracted, and here I should add that probably 90% of teeth extracted are mobile. As most of the problems are preventable TFL India has also set up an education program within the local schools. Fluoride content of the local water is 3.9 parts per million!

As well as dentists; hygienists and dental nurses are also welcome to visit and help these needy people.

I must stress there is NO financial reward, although all your board and keep is provided by the Hospital.

### **Working Conditions**

It would be misleading to describe them as anything other than primitive compared to what you are used to. However over the past year there have been dramatic changes to the clinic in size and the equipment therein, and is now well known and respected in the area. Once dates are fixed regarding the arrival of a dentist, the area is informed by leaflet drops, newspaper ads. and loud-speaker vans!! It is then a matter of waiting for the patients to turn up and believe me they will! More sophisticated dentistry could also be done at the local general hospital (about 12kms away). The dentist there is very keen to learn up to date techniques. The schools in the area would welcome Oral Health Education. There is also the opportunity to help at the Eye Hospital should you wish.

The ideal months to visit are October to April as the weather is more conducive to travel and work, although volunteers have gone at other times.

## AT BISALPUR

### On Arrival

Once you arrive at Bisalpur your board and keep are taken care of. The guest rooms are basic, but clean and comfortable with separate shower & WC. The bed/sitting room is equipped with fridge, toaster, kettle and fan. Also provided will be bread, jam, butter, cheese & bottled water, fruit. Breakfast you eat in your room but other meals are taken in the hospital's private dining room, the fare is good but can get a little boring. Please note this is a strictly vegetarian establishment. I would recommend slipping in some of your favourite goodies i.e. Cereals, marmite, veggie cup-a-soups etc. Keep your duty free's hidden, they will cause offence. Coffee, tea, biscuits are free and in plentiful supply from the 'char wallah'. Your laundry will be done for you! I find a short wave radio, tapes and plenty of books fairly essential. A lap-top even better

Rajmal Jain will ensure your welfare is catered for, and will arrange excursions to the more local sites of interest.

### Local Area

Very rural but spectacularly beautiful. The wildlife is fascinating (dawn chorus of wild peacocks), Mountain lions are in the area as well as fresh water crocodiles in the local dam. Bisalpur makes an ideal base for visits to Jodhpur, Jaipur and Udaipur. Most volunteers take the opportunity to holiday in India either before or after their stint at the clinic.

### Further Information

Should you feel that you would like to help then please contact me. There is much to think about, but as a result of six visits to Bisalpur I feel I am in position to help make your trip an easier one by advising you of the joys and pitfalls, and of local contacts I have established over the years.

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