Report on

70th Anniversary Celebrations

Of

The Catholic Health Association of India
Introduction: Founded in 1943, the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) is one of the world's largest non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the health sector with an expansive base of over 3,410 member institutions across the country. With 183 tertiary care hospitals, 417 secondary care hospitals and 2263 primary care centres, 121 social service societies, 120 Nursing schools and colleges and 52 Leprosy centres, CHAI has been rendering critical health care services to the poor and marginalized across the country for almost 70 years. With a large number of trained health care professionals of almost ever cadre, CHAI's strength is reflected by its colossal network of Human Resources comprising over 1000 sister-doctors, 25,000 sister-nurses and 10,000 plus Para-professionals relentlessly serving the underprivileged population in the country today. Almost 84% of these health facilities are in the medically underserved areas of the country. By locating its central office in Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh, CHAI's massive network operates through 11 Regional Units across the country. Currently CHAI works in the domains of Community Health, Communicable Diseases, Rehabilitation, Disaster Interventions, and Advocacy.

Events of the day: As CHAI completed 70 years of its committed services to the nation, CHAI central office organized various activities to mark the day which are as follows:

9.00 am to 10.00 am: Holy Mass by Fr Vincent Arokiadas, Procurator and Chancellor, Archdiocese of Hyderabad

10.30 am to 12.00 noon: Public Function; with prominence of

- Unveiling of Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey’s portrait
- Release of special postal cover on CHAI
- Inauguration & Blessing of Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey’s Statue
- Facilitation of senior staff of CHAI
- Inauguration of photo exhibition
- Inauguration of Medical Camps
- Plantation of trees

Guests for the day:

- Mrs. Minnie Mathew, IAS (Retd), Former Chief Secretary to Go AP
- Most. Rev. Thumma Bala, Archbishop of Hyderabad
- Mrs. Christine Lazarus, Honourable Member, AP Legislative Assembly
- Smt. Mariamma Thomas, Director of Postal Services (HQ), AP Circle, Hyd
- Rev. Fr. Julius Arakal, CMI, President, CHAI

The detailed report is as follows:
**CHAI 70th Day celebrations**

**Back Drop:** CHAI’s journey through the seven decades has been an inspiring saga of challenges and changes. The story began way back in 1920 when Sr Dr Mary Glowrey, an Australian Sister-Doctor landed in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, with a new vision and a definite mission. Both the vision and mission were translated into action when more than 70 years ago CHAI was started by her in 1943. Now The Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) has an expansive base of 3,410 Member Institutions (MIs) including large, medium as well as small hospitals, health centres, and social service societies.

Starting as the Catholic Hospitals’ Association (CHA) providing curative care to people, especially to the poor, women and children, the organization slowly got transformed into a Health Association. As CHAI grew in strength, its vision got broadened. Promoting community health, CHAI began viewing health as a basic human right.

**Nationwide Special programmes on CHAI 70th day:** CHAI’s 70th Foundation Day was celebrated on 29th July 2013 by member institutions with various programmes like tree planting, medical camps, blood donation and eye camps, health education classes etc. Diabetes and tuberculosis check-up camps were conducted by 692 member institutions. In all, 45637 people, including women and children, were tested for diabetes. They were also given help in seeking treatment in various hospitals and health centres as well as tips on follow-up.

**CHAI 70th Day celebrations at Central Office:**

At CHAI Central Office, Secunderabad, the day was observed with a holy mass, public meeting, eye testing, diabetes screening and dental check-up camps.

**The Holy Mass**

![Image of the Holy Mass event at CHAI Central Office](image-url)
The celebration started with a Holy Mass led by Fr Vincent Arokiadas, Procurator and Chancellor, Archdiocese of Hyderabad.

Sisters from Member Institutions, well-wishers and CHAI staff took part in the Holy Mass.

The public meeting

The public meeting started at 10.30 by inviting the guests on to the dias by Ms. Mrudulika, Master of the Ceremony. Smt Minnie Mathew, IAS, Chief Secretary (Retd), Govt of Andhra Pradesh was the Chief Guest. His Grace Archbishop Thumma Bala presided over the function. Guests of honour were Ms Christine Lazarus, Member, Legislative Assembly, Andhra Pradesh and Smt Mariamma Thomas, Director of Postal Services. Fr Julius Arackal, President, CHAI and Rev Dr Tomi Thomas, Director-General, CHAI were also present. The meeting started with CHAI Anthem followed by lighting of the lamp by the dignitaries.
Rev Dr Tomi Thomas, IMS, Director-General gave the welcome address. Before welcoming everyone, he read out the message sent by Honourable Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh. “The health crisis is the biggest adversity confronting India today. Bringing a transition for poor to good health care is a state responsibility. There is a need to go ‘back to basics’ with renewed focus on PHC, preventive measures health education etc”, he said.

He continued his address by saying that in 1943, exactly 70 years ago, the health care situation in India had left much to be desired. The infant mortality rate was 146 per 1000 live births. Infant mortality rate today is 46.07 per 1,000 live births. The maternal mortality rate is 200 deaths/100,000 live births (2010). The average life-expectancy was 47 years, and today it is 65 years. By 2025, it is predicted to reach 74 years. The total population was mere 350 million then. Now, after 7 decades it is 1.3 billion.

Despite making significant strides in health care delivery in the last seven decades, access to available and quality health care to people, especially the
poor, is far from satisfactory. Health care has become quite expensive, hence unaffordable to ordinary people.

Dr Mary Glowrey left her country, Australia, and a flourishing medical career as she happened to read about the pathetic health situation existing in India in 1920. She wanted to serve the people of India, especially the poor. She lost no time in reaching India. She knew that there was a serious need for trained human resource to render health care to people. And today, CHAI bears testimony to her dream of building a Catholic health care network that would meet the health care needs of this great nation.

The health crisis is the biggest adversity confronting India today. The Universal Health Coverage (UHC) for all in a comprehensive vision of health care for the country as a whole has been appreciated. Thailand, Brazil and Mexico could transform the reach of health care for their people. China is 95% there. Bringing about a transition from poor to good health care is intrinsically a public responsibility. There is a need to go ‘back to basics’ with renewed focus on primary health centres, village-level health workers, and preventive measures as well as ensuring timely health care on a regular basis. There is need for strong public involvement in a range of activities such as immunization, sanitation, public hygiene, waste disposal, disease-surveillance, vector control, health education, etc.

From 106 institutions in 1943, CHAI today has 3410 institutions providing curative services to more than 21 million people. More than 80 percent of its membership serve in the rural areas of the country. More than 25,000 nuns who are nurses mostly work in the remote and rural areas of the country. These nurses with their skills and dedication could be utilized to minimize the shortage of qualified health care personnel. To this end, CHAI has submitted a proposal to the Government of Andhra Pradesh to permit CHAI to start a Nurse Practitioner’s Course allowing nurses to practice at the primary level of care.
Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey knew the importance of not just qualified personnel but also the value of research in supporting training activities. In the very first meeting of CHAI, she expressed her wish to found a Medical college that would groom professionals and that became a reality 50 years ago in the form of St. John’s Medical College. She knew the importance of disseminating health knowledge and hence started a health magazine called the “Medical Service” and in 1988 the journal was renamed “Health Action.” Today, CHAI is in the process of starting a “Knowledge Centre” dedicated to Sr. Dr. Mary Glowery here at Hyderabad with the support of the government of Andhra Pradesh.

India is standing at the threshold of a time bomb of communicable and non-communicable disease taking a heavy toll. While all our institutions are celebrating this day, 700 of our institutions will be spreading awareness on Tuberculosis and Diabetes. We estimate that around 3.5 lakhs people are receiving education on these two diseases while 54,000 will be treated for diabetes. We need to strengthen our efforts to educate people, especially children, on these diseases and tell them that any day “An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure”

Today is a historic day as it marks the 70th Foundation Day of the largest health care network in the voluntary sector. He said he was indeed overwhelmed by the personal message from our beloved Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh wishing CHAI’s 70th year celebration every success. And today is a blessed day as its founder will hereafter to be addressed ‘Servant of God’. Let us pray that she be declared a “Saint” soon by Holy See. It is indeed a great challenge to us all who are part of CHAI to fulfill the dreams of this great organization. We need to labour hard to achieve them. But with the support of likeminded organizations, and individuals and NGOs and the government we can realize all those dreams.

Before he concluded, Rev Tomi Thomas thanked all the previous Presidents and Board Members, and Directors for leading this organization with their hard work and vision. He placed on record CHAI’s funding partners and well-wishers, especially the government of Andhra Pradesh, for their support.
Ms. Minnie Mathew unveiled the portrait of Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey. The portrait was drawn by Sr. Dr. Helen. Later the biopic (documentary) on Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey was screened. Sr Dr Mary Glowrey, the founder of CHAI, has been declared a “Servant of God” and is on her way to “Sainthood”.

On the occasion of releasing the special postal envelope, Ms. Mariamma Thomas, Director, Postal Services, AP, said that to honour the services of Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey and CHAI, Govt of India has specially designed a postal envelope to mark the occasion of 70th year celebrations of CHAI. She said it was great honour for her to release the special cover. When witnessing the documentary on Dr. Sr. Mary Glowrey, she was impressed by the similarities between Vision and Mission of CHAI and the Indian postal Service, since both are striving to reach all the people. She wished CHAI the best in all its future endeavours.
Later she released special postal cover and gave it to Most Rev. Tumma Bala.

Presidential Remarks:

In his Presidential address Most. Rev. Tumma bala said it gave him immense pleasure to be part of the momentous occasion when the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) celebrated its 70th birthday.

Boundless joy and pride welled up within him while recalling his association with the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) for more than two decades. Half of it was in his official capacity as special invitee of CBCI Commission for Health Care Apostolate in 1994 and as CHAI's Ecclesiastical Advisor. He said these positions enabled him to watch from close quarters how CHAI went about the mission of healing reaching out to the poor and the needy with succour and support. It has grown steadily into a mammoth organization covering thousands of villages with health care through its massive network of 3400 Member Institutions, he said.

This year is also special to CHAI, the Catholic Church and the nation. Sr Dr Mary Glowrey who founded CHAI was declared “Servant of God” only a couple of months ago. Let us pray to the Almighty that she be declared a “Saint” in the nearby future. She has done the Catholic Church, Healing Ministry and the country proud. Let us all pray for that blessed soul.

He said that today, to commemorate this glorious occasion, lots of activities have been planned. All these activities are most fitting to the day.
Today, health care has become so expensive that common people cannot afford it at all. It has become inaccessible and unavailable. When people find it difficult to make both ends meet, how can they spend huge sums on health care? Consequently, life has become a big burden to them. It is now more than ever that Catholic health care institutions have to play a more active role in reaching out to more and more people with health care when other sources of care fail, he observed.

Keeping faithfully to its motto “Love of Christ compels us”, CHAI is forging ahead. Christ’s love for us must compel us, to love and serve him. “Christ’s love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again (2 Cor: 5:14-15)

Celebrating two important milestones - golden and diamond jubilees -- in 1993 and 2003 respectively, CHAI, all through its journey has taken care to make itself relevant according to the changing health situation. That is its strength. That is what makes it different from others, he said.

Centering on community health, CHAI has been focusing on communicable diseases right from its inception in 1943. Lots of innovative programmes and projects have been implemented. The future thrust of the organization is on non- communicable diseases which is likely to prove a heavy burden in the coming years. On this occasion, let us remember with love and gratitude all those people – religious and non-religious - who have contributed to make this organization as it exists today.

He said that he has no doubt whatsoever that Fr Tomi Thomas who is resourceful, persevering, committed, and enthusiastic with the support of a band of dedicated staff, will take the organization to greater heights. Let the organization forge ahead loving and serving many more following in the footsteps of Lord Jesus, the Divine Healer and High Priest. He appealed to Holy Virgin to grant that all those at the Catholic Health Association of India compassion and strength as they work to assist those in need.
Felicitation address:

Ms. Christine Lazarus, member of legislative assembly, began her address with wishes to CHAI and said that the biopic of Dr. Sr. Mary Glowrey was very touching. So many Nuns, sisters and brothers have come from other countries to serve India and we are very proud and grateful to them. As Fr. Tomi had mentioned about the condition of Primary Health Centers of India while reading the Prime Minister’s message, she expressed her hope that governments will take measures to improve the situation. CHAI’s services have made glorious contributions not only to the state but also to the entire country. She thanked GOD for giving us a mandate and mission. She acknowledged the contributions of the past Directors and 11 presidents of CHAI in building up the organization. She recollected a massive meeting organized by CHAI with all the faith-based leaders on HIV/AIDS, which made Go AP to think utilizing services of faith-based organizations in the field of HIV/AIDS. She appealed to the church to give a helping hand to CHAI.

She also said that CHAI will go far under the leadership of the present Director General, Fr Tomi, who is young, dynamic, multi-talented and highly sought after, in coordination with the government and the Church. She commented on the huge network of Member Institutions of CHAI with 3410 institutions, who are the fulcrum of the organization. She appreciated the staff who are tirelessly working hard, very dedicated and loyal.

She specially appreciated the services and efforts of CHAI in Uttarakhand and conveyed her best wishes to them. She promised to strive to do whatever she can do for CHAI. She released the internal correspondence envelope of CHAI which has the photo of Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey, Servant of God.
Address by Chief Guest:

Ms. Minnie Mathew, IAS, former chief secretary to GoAP, said that it was a great privilege and pleasure for her to join on the 70th year celebrations of CHAI. She said she was greatly honoured to unveil the portrait of Sr. Dr. Mary Glowry. She said that her most valued possessions are; a photo of Pope John Paul II and a photo of Mother Teresa. And now she would like to add the portrait of Sr. Mary Glowrey to that collection.

She said after ‘Shastipurthi’(60th Year), celebrating ‘Sapthathi” (70th year) is important. She greatly acknowledged the services of CHAI.

She said the present world functions on “Networking. But, Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey took the initiative and brought all the like-minded people of health care sector on to a common platform 70 years ago, which can be done only by a visionary, like Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey.

Service to humanity is service to GoD. CHAI is reaching remote areas, which others are not able to reach. CHAI will have the satisfaction of having left indelible foot prints where ever it has worked. It is indeed possible with committed and dedicated services, advocacy and capacity building efforts.

At present, India is ranking very low in the public health sector among the developing nations. We have very far to go before achieving universal access to health care. Governments have ambitious plans to reach all the people, but resources and financial allotments are not in the same line. Hence private health sector has grown. On national level governments are very poor spenders in health sector, hence the outcomes are also low and quality is being compromised. Cost of health care has become very expensive and poor people are not able to access medical care. Nowadays the cure is worse than the disease, she observed.

Even though the catholic hospitals do not have multi specialities, amenities or auras like private hospitals, they make up for them in caring, dedication and selfless service. The distinguishing factor of Catholic hospitals is that they only do what is necessary for the patients and not any unnecessary investigations and procedures. She appealed to the Catholic institutions to continue the same dedicated services in spite of the difficulties they face.
In India, the benefits of many schemes are reaching only to the fittest but not to the really deserving persons. CHAI can help bridge the outreach deficit and play an instrumental role in reaching really poor and deserving people.

The country has a long way to go before achieving universal health. She concluded her address with the prayer that CHAI may have the strength, the resources and the capacity to provide universal health care and to reach everyone.

**Address by President of CHAI:**

Fr. Julius Arakal said he has observed that the staff of CHAI, who are usually hurried, busy and serious, were looking very happy, joyful and glorious. He congratulated everyone on behalf of the Executive Board Members for their team work, spirits and commitment for the day a big day. Normally the organizations run after media for coverage. But when a hospital treated a young tribal child without any payment, the media covered it in a big way. This is the identity of CHAI, serving people regardless of position or money. This day inspires us to think twice about our identity and values, he concluded.

Later he felicitated three staff members Ms. Jessy Joy Joseph, Mr. N T Sebastian and Mr. Arokiasamy of CHAI who have completed 25 years of service in CHAI. They were presented with shawl, citation and cash gift.

**Vote of Thanks:**

Dr. Srinivasa Rao, National Manager, Axshya Project, Global Fund Round 9 of CHAI proposed a vote of thanks. He thanked all the guests and invitees for their gracious presence as well as all the volunteers and supporting staff for their hard work in making the event a success.
The photo exhibition on “Glimpses of 70 years of work of CHAI and on the life of Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey” was inaugurated by the chief guest Mrs. Minnie Mathew. All the participants witnessed the milestones of the journey of CHAI and the life of Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey through photo gallery.

Following the public meeting, the inaugural ceremony and blessing of Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey’s statue was held. The statue of Sr Dr Mary Glowrey, the “Servant of God” was unveiled by Sr Fatima JMJ, Vice-Provincial of JMJ Province, Hyderabad, and blessed by His Grace Archbishop Thumma Bala.
The statue of Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey was sculptured by Mr. Sivavara Prasad, a national award winner.

Special novena prayers were also conducted remembering Sr Dr Mary Glowrey and her services to humankind.
An eye-testing, diabetic screening and dental check-up camp was organized by CHAI during the occasion in collaboration with Dr. Agarwal Eye Hospital, Secunderabad, Karvey Diagnostics for Diabetes, Hyderabad and Dr. Gowd's Dental Hospital, Secunderabad. The camp was inaugurated by Roja Rani, Registrar, Nursing Council, Andhra Pradesh.

Through the camp 188 persons’ eyes were tested; 146 people were checked for diabetes and 83 dental cases were examined. The general health check-up was done by Dr. P.C. Rao of CHAI. People from neighbourhood of CHAI office and cantonment area availed free medical services.
Tree planting

Tree planting inside the CHAI premises was inaugurated by Chief Guest, Smt Minnie Mathew and she was joined by Fr Julius Arakal, Ms Mariamma Thomas, Ms Christine Lazarus, four-student-interns from Canada, Sr Dr Lalitha and Sr Fatima.

Concluding Moments

The celebration came to a close at 1pm, but the medical camp continued its services till 5 pm of the day. The events made 70th foundation day, an unforgettable day!

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