A number of activities related to the Calmed (Collaborative Action in Lowering of Maternity Encountered Deaths) programme have taken place. Here is a summary for the opening months of 2016.

1. All India Congress of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (AICOG) in Agra, India – This was a large conference attended by over 10 thousand registrants, during January 2016 (13th to 17th). I was invited to three events - a keynote address on Calmed maternal mortality reduction strategy, a panel discussion on a Government of India panel on maternal mortality reduction, and a second panel on the “Great Obstetric Syndromes”. I met many academics, government officials, NGOs, clinicians, trainees and paramedical staff, shared views and suggestions.

AICOG Agra, 2016

It was a privilege to share platform with many distinguished speakers including Sir Arul (Past President of FIGO, BMA and RCOG) and Prof. C.N. Purandare (President of FIGO) – they are supportive of the Calmed programme which received good exposure.

1. Sikkim - VTT visit to our first programme in Sikkim (this started in 2013) - Drs. Sameer Umranikar, Rachana Dwivedi and I were in Sikkim – the third visit took place from the 7th to the 12th March. President I.B. Goel of RC Gangtok, came to Siliguri the night before to receive us.

We supervised 9 Master Trainers who trained 30 trainees (Medical officers, ANM and GNM) – (208 in all) and 22 – (64 in all) ASHA trainers, at the Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences. The training lasted 4 days with an extra day for ASHA trainers training (combined with Inner Wheel Health promotion initiative)

Pre and post test scores of knowledge and skills showed highly significant improvement. There was good feedback from the trainers and trainees about the high quality of the training methods, and their positive impact in their practice. The Master trainers specially the Course Director Dr. Neeti Nepal and Deputy Course Director Dr. Chumdem Lepcha were very helpful - they ran the extra mile!

S M University - I had discussions with the Academic Staff at the Sikkim Manipal University, including the Vice Chancellor Brig. Dr. Somnath Mishra and Dean Air Marshall Dr. G S Joneja, VM, for future academic collaboration – they are eager to continue collaboration and support Calmed. We will be pleased to have future discussions in detail, once some current issues with Medical Council of India are resolved.

Rotary in Sikkim led by PDG Yogesh Verma were our hosts and supporters everywhere. Yogesh along with his wife Dr. Renu Verma (Inner Wheel past District Chairman, also a Rotarian) mobilised an army of helpers and supporters for our work in Gangtok. We thank them for the gifts and their generous hospitality.

Health Minister of Sikkim, PDG Dr. Verma and Basu in Gangtok
I also had meetings with the Health Minister Mr. Arjun Kumar Ghatani, Principal Secretary Dr. Kumar Bhandari and National Health Mission Director Dr. Bimal Kumar Rai,. They all confirmed continued support for the Calmed programme, after completion of the Rotary Vocational Training Team visits.

All pledge support for ongoing Calmed programme in Sikkim

Sustainability - As this was the last visit under the global Grant (GG 1326259), I suggested a schedule of retraining the existing trainers once a year (two training schedules for half the staff members, every 6 months). Health Secretary Dr. Bhandari agreed on principle to do that. We also discussed the importance of Maternal Death Surveillance Response (MDSR) maintained by the Government of Sikkim (NHM). It would be beneficial for Rotary led by PDG Dr. Yogesh Verma, to continue the MDSR and related initiatives with Drs. Bhandari and Rai. We suggested that the four Districts of Sikkim will be supported by 2 or 3 Master trainers who would be equipped with the training materials (Manuals, Simulators including NASG garments and Videos) for regular retraining as above. We look forward to receiving

MDSR reports ,if possible, once a year from NRHM in Sikkim. Our sincere thanks to all staff members , Ministers and officials of NRHM for their constant support for this programme.

2. Siliguri – This is an important gateway to and from Sikkim. We were hosted by PDG Dr. Salil Datta ,also an Obstetrician/Gynaecologist and primary contact for Calmed Global Grant ,and his wife Bharati ( Past Chairman of District Inner Wheel) on our way out to and also journey from Sikkim. We also met Dr. Santanu Kar , a Surgeon and his wife Maureen on the outward and return journeys. Santanu and Salil were my class friends from the Calcutta Medical College days - our sincere thanks are due to them for their support and hospitality. On our return journey , we attended a very enjoyable meeting of the RC Siliguri on the 12th March– we were given gifts and mementos –our thanks are due to President Rina Bali and her fellow Rotarians. Later that evening, dinner was hosted By Dr. and Mrs. Santanu Kar.

3. Visit to Calcutta Medical College West Bengal –I discussed details of a Maternal and Child Health Academy in West Bengal ,during a visit to Kolkata in March ( 13th and 14 th) 2016, on my return journey from Sikkim. I visited the developing Maternal and Child Health Academy in Calcutta Medical College – about 6000 sq. ft. of space had been allocated by the Government of West Bengal . The department will be linked with the main Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology ( Eden Hospital). The purpose will be to train future master trainers, arrange courses leading to award of certificates, diploma and master’s degrees. It will also continue with development work for the Calmed programme.

I had two meetings with Government and Academics – these included minister of state for Health Dr. Tridib Banerjee ( a Paediatrician) and also Principal of the Medical College Prof Tapan Lahiri ( an Obstetrician & Gynaecologist) about funding and action plans for the Academy . In particular, we discussed collaboration with Public Health Department and Social Medicine experts. The building is in place with ongoing construction and the Neonatal intensive care unit is functioning. The concept is in an early phase, but everyone seems committed to the idea and appeared keen to contribute. The major support for these initiatives comes from a distinguished group of academics whose leader is Prof Niranjan Bhattacharya – a leading light in Kolkata.

It would be good to return to the issues of development of the Academy, perhaps during a visit in the near future.

I believe we should discuss the ongoing programme and concept within Rotary and with current and future supporters and collaborators of Calmed programme. Only then we can expect to realise the full potential of an Academy set up

Calcutta Medical College – Minister, Principal and Staff in the proposed Academy (Paediatric Dept.)

Senior Academics of Calcutta Medical College at Prof Directors Office, Eden Hospital

4. Recognition – Our programme has been awarded prestigious Times Sternberg 2015 award and Champions of Change award 2015-16 of Rotary International in Great Britain Ireland

Award ceremony – House of Lords, 20th April, 2016

5. Further information :
   www.calmedrotary.org  
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRtd1vWgiD4  
   www.rotary1120.org

6. Acknowledgement : We would like to thank many Rotary leaders including Past RI President Raja Saboo, J ohn Kenny and Kalyan Banerjee ,Past RI Director Sushil Gupta who continue to provide encouragement and guidance. Other Rotary leaders include home Rotary Team – special thanks are due to DG Ray Dixon, DRFC Denis Spiller , Terry Kinsman and Elaine Craven. Our thanks are due to Rotarians from Rotary Clubs of Bhuj, Bhuj Flamingo ,PDGs from District 3051 and 3240 ,specially Drs. Salil Datta and Yogesh Verma,RC Gangtok, RC Gangtok South , Inner Wheel members and all of our hosts. My sincere thanks are also to all our collaborators, especially Prof Sir Arul , Prof Hamid Rushwan of FIGO and Mr. David Bloomer of GLOWM ,without whose support much of these would not have happened.

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