



GARY NYLANDER/ The Okanagan Sunday

Jeannie Haynes-Stall holds a photo of Beryl, 73, who lives on the outskirts of Calcutta. Haynes-Stall is a volunteer with Help the Aged.

Trip moves woman to help India's aged

■ **Donations from Canadians used to run health-care, food and emergency assistance programs in 10 developing countries**

By Okanagan Sunday Staff

Canadians can now donate money directly to poor seniors in India thanks to the compassion and concern of a Kelowna woman. Jeannie Haynes-Stall took a trip to Calcutta earlier this year and was shocked to see the way many older and impoverished Indians are forced to live.

"There's no pension or benefits or a safety net for many people, so if misfortune befalls them, they wind up completely on their own," Haynes-Stall said Wednesday.

"At 75, they could still be looking for work, because they don't have any savings and they need a bit of money to get by," says Haynes-Stall, who was born in India more than 65 years ago but emigrated as a young woman.

She described a typical older couple's situation this way: "They lived in a shack

on the fringe of Calcutta, with no water or electricity. They had to walk two kilometers to get water, and took baths in a cemetery. We just can't imagine how hard a life they have."

"When I was in India, I met someone I knew when I lived there, and she had really fallen on hard times. It was very emotional for me, because that could have been me if I'd stayed in India," Haynes-Stall said.

When she got back, Haynes-Stall contacted Help the Aged, a non-profit international development group that helps destitute older people in Canada and foreign countries. Using donations from Canadians, the society runs health care, food and emergency assistance programs in co-operation with local non-profit groups in 10 developing countries.

The Adopt A Gran program also lets people make donations that go directly toward needy seniors. "Donations of \$10 or \$20 a month may not seem like much to us, but they could make a real difference in the life of a needy older person in Calcutta," Haynes-Stall said.

For more information, and to see pictures and read profiles of older Indian people that Haynes-Stall met and set up for possible sponsorship, visit the website www.helptheaged.ca