

Newsletter 2014

As the sun moves farthest away from us and the city of Kolkata wraps itself in the thinnest veil of mist we slow down our super train of joy and hope ever so gently and pause to send all of you around the world tides of festive cheer and peace.

Now the moment has come to strike off the last hours in our event and activity packed calendar and get ready to begin a Grand New 2015. But it would not be possible to move on without sharing with you, every detail of how splendidous a year 2014 has been. The story of the last twelve months would not be as filled with laughter and light as those have been without each one of you sending your unconditional love and unbridled commitment to keep New Light safe, thriving and happy.



The year began with the visit of our beloved **Juthica Stangl**, the **Founder President** of California based non-profit **Shadhika Foundation** after a gap of two years. More than a decade ago it was the joint vision of **Juthica and Peter Stangl**, the **President and Honorary Secretary** of Shadhika Foundation that injected New Light with the first shot of lifeblood that was vital for the survival and growth of New Light as a long term life altering project in the darkest lanes of Kalighat, Kolkata. Today that fledgling organization is being taken to a higher ground by other donors and supporters while Shadhika is moving on to identifying other partners to support. If history is what makes us, then New Light will always be a part of Shadhika. Thanks to all the supporters of Shadhika Foundation for standing by the great leadership of Juthica and Peter Stangl and thereby supporting New Light for the past ten years and more. Juthica Stangl you are our inspiration and guide.

But before we start sharing our journey for the year 2014 we must take a few minutes to talk about the incredible generosity of our friend **Janet Grey and family**. Janet Grey, a resident of Seattle, came to New Light four years ago and left a part of her heart here. It became Janet's personal mission to raise funds for Khela Ghar, the boys home, which became a reality in the last days of 2013, made possible by the participation of the entire Grey-Rand family, Miriam, David, Charles and Brad. The family has been instrumental in creating a support group for New Light in their city. Our heart swells with gratitude and joy for making another idea possible. Thank you Janet!



It was during the first weeks of January that New Light was visited by another friend, supporter and a New Light Board member, **Lorraine Cohen Marsh**. Thank you Lorraine Cohen Marsh for deciding to spend weeks with the children and members of the staff. We shall not forget your trip to the Office of the Election Commissioner to bring the Voter's Identity of one of the women from the project. Your time and encouragement is invaluable for New Light.



On the **5th of January** seventy students from New Light took part in an event organized by a local group to mark the 125th Birth Anniversary of the legendary writer and satirist Sukumar Roy. Thanks to **Dr Anup Patel** and the Board members of **Cents of Relief** (www.centsofrelief.org).

New Light is honored by the visit of **Nadia Rahman (11th of January)** and documenting the stories of burn and acid attack survivors.

New Light is grateful to be a part of this very significant and powerful video that would shed light on the horrific crimes that many women from marginalized communities suffer. More than 15 women from various project locations of New Light were interviewed. We look forward to continued partnership between New Light and Cents of Relief.



Write -Activist **Ananda Devi** while on a trip to Kolkata as an invited guest at the Kolkata Literary Festival 2014 stopped by at New Light (**15th of January**) with members from the Alliance Française. We were delighted to receive **Ananda Dev, Brigitte Feraud, Natalie Danion, Georgina Harding, Corina Popa and Peirre-Antione Cassier**. Thanks to **Neela Majumdar of Alliance Française** for organizing the visit at such short notice.



Usually January is the month in Kolkata when most of the non- profit organizations conduct various group activities. On the **18th and 19th of January** the Alumni Association of Ballygunge Government High School invited the students of New Light to participate in a painting competition. On the **23rd of January**, 22 students from the various programs of New Light took part in a series of activities organized by Tridhara Sammilani at Monoharpukur Road, Kolkata.

Thanks to **Mr. Pritimay Sengupta** for organizing the school admission of six boys from New Light at the **Ramakrishna Vivekananda Mission, Barrackpore (21st of January)**

New Light was honored to receive the members of Pende Foundation (www.pendefoundation.org) Mary O'Bierne and Andrea Reinhard and friends, Rashna and Bernard Imhasly on the **5th of February**. The visit was followed by a creative workshop conducted on **6th February** by **Mary and Mark Rogan** of **Shine a Light Foundation** (www.ishinealight.org). Thanks to Mary Rogan and the Board of Shine a Light Foundation for the support to Sonar Tori. We would also like to thank **Varsha Ghatak, Manojit Kumar Dutta, Anita Bhuwalka, Costnanza Rampini, Sanchita Dhali, Saurav Mukherjee** and **Mridula of IASAP** for bringing their love and support to New Light in February.

Lisa Stevenson and Tony Rance never forgets to stop at New Light if they are in India. In the past Lisa spent hours teaching English to the younger kids where her cocoon of love and learning transported the children to a magical world of flying creatures and talking forests. Our gratitude for your love and support cannot be expressed in words.



Between the **10th and the 13th of February** **Story Dancer Zuleikha** (www.thestorydancerproject.org) an internationally renowned artist, healer, storydancer and a long term associate of New Light conducted a workshop named **Kalpataru**. The workshop was based on the idea of holistic healing through dance, yoga, music, ayurveda, holistic nutrition and meditation. The women were all from New Light's project areas who had survived trafficking and were waging the daily war of survival through prostitution. The workshop allowed them to reconnect with their bodies and appreciate their minds again. Through Zuleikha's

extraordinary vision, grace, empathy and practice, they were moved through the process of fighting the battle of staying connected to their bodies while they continue to be oppressed by the burden of prostitution. **Kalpataru - The Wish Fulfilling Tree** pushes all boundaries of expectation and experience. Thank you Zuleikha for being the person you are and for teaching the women of New Light a calmer, more dignified way of dealing with the hardest of existential questions. The women wish for this workshop to be continued and New Light seeks special funding for creating this.

While Story Dancer Zuleikha was conducting Kalpataru, artist and designer **Kartik Manna** was conducting a **batik (tie and dye process on fabric)** workshop with the other women at New light. What emerged were extraordinary pieces of design created by



women who perhaps had never even held a pencil in their hand. Thanks to the entire team for keeping the group motivated through the length of four days and the complex processes of Batik. The finished products are all part of New Light's Anchal Project. Story Dancer Zuleikha continued her workshop with the girls at Sonar Tori on the **19th and the 20th of February**.





If we are to choose three most important days in the recent history of New Light one would surely be the **26th of February**. On that day New Light had the extraordinary honor and the rarest opportunity of sharing its work with none other than the fabled civil rights activist **Rev Jesse Jackson**. Rev Jackson went away naming New Light a miracle and left in the minds and hearts of all who were present a rekindled spark for justice and equality. Rev Jackson was brought to us by none other than one of the most humble and respected educationists **Mr. Shourabh Mukherjee**. Our deepest appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Shourabh Mukherjee for making this visit a reality.

Jhinuk, the New Light play way school was initiated by **Dr Subir Prakayastha in September 2012**. Thanks to the friends of Mrs. Chitali and Dr. Subir Purakayastha for creating the much needed facility for the toddlers. Jhinuk today has 25 children and many more are waiting to be admitted. Dr Subir Prakayastha while on a short trip to India from the US visited Jhinuk on the **4th of March** and had the opportunity of interacting with Sima Halder the teacher and a few other caregivers. We extend our special thanks to Kallol Group of New Jersey who has supported Jhinuk through Dr. Subir Purakayastha.



We would also like to thank **Academy Award-Winning Director Jeffrey D. Brown** and **Producer Jane Charles** for delivering an unforgettable tale of human trafficking adapted from Patricia McCormick's award-winning international bestseller **Sold** (released on **7th of March** - <http://www.soldthemovie.com/>)

The story gives voice to the millions of invisible children trafficked each year across the globe. **Sold** is an unforgettable experience that not only breathes life into an incredible story but also inspires viewers to action beyond the screen to stop the trafficking of children worldwide.



To mark International Woman`s Day on the **8th of March** many events and programs were organized in various parts of the city. New Light was invited to the inaugural show of the much talked about movie Gulab Gang by **Ms Mukti Gupta**

Thanks to Ms Mukti Gupta, the owner of Mukti World, for inviting more than twenty members and students of New Light for the opening show. The theater thundered and rocked, by the raw energy of so many activists and fighters for women`s rights. We hope to see more such films challenging the female stereotype in Bollywood in the future.

Holi the festival of colors heralding Spring was celebrated with a riot of colors by the children and adults alike on the **16th of March**.



New Light has been running a boxing training program for the girls at Soma Home for the last five years under the guidance of a national coach and international referee, **Razia Shabnam**. Five years and many tournaments later, New light is proud to say that it runs the first and the best boxing training program in any shelter home in the country.



Alka Raghuram, a filmmaker from California who chanced upon Razia's story proposed to shoot a documentary on women boxers of Bengal. Currently in the last stage of editing the film was shot on location at Soma Home and the training rink between the **19th and the 30th of March**.



Razia could not have given Alka a better subject than the boxers from Soma Home. We thank Alka for taking the stories of the girls of Soma Home to the world. New Light shares the pride and joy of this successful program with all at Mundo Cooperante (www.mundocooperante.org) the primary support group for the program.

During the same time **Shana Green, the Executive Director of Village Volunteers**, (www.villagevolunteers.org) organized a visit by Molly Hayward from Cora woman to explore the status of adolescent health among the girls of Soma Home. We are deeply indebted to Village Volunteers for years of support through volunteers and for offering to be the fiscal partner of New Light in the coming year. Our work cannot continue without your support and encouragement Shana.



At New Light we believe that every child needs every opportunity to enrich her life through exploration and experience. On **the 20th of March** as a part of a series of outdoor activities the girls and the boys from New Light went out for a kayaking training in the Ganges organized by the **Seafarers Association of Bengal**.

Thank you **Joshua Bennett, Executive Producer of Half The Sky** for revisiting New Light on the 26th of March. We are proud to be a part of this ground breaking documentary based on the book by the same name by **Nicholas Kritsof and Sheryl Wu Dunn**. Nick's and Sheryl's travels around the world, to places where women are valued less than cattle and female genital mutilation is an accepted traditional practice, motivated them to create a global movement that

empowers women and girls through education, health care, reproductive rights and higher social justice. Thank you for being our guide, inspiration and fellow soldiers-in-arms. You are the reason why Operation Starfish exists.

March is the month when most schools end their academic year and the students get busy with their final exams. Day after day, week after week, and months on end the teachers at New Light guide the children to finish their academic course. Many of these kids would have dropped out school long ago if not for the commitment and hard work of the teachers. They are the guiding lights for the students. The Trustees of New Light extend their appreciation to each one of you.



As spring sets in the air and we notice signs of new beginning everywhere New Light gets busy with the start of the new school year. The month starts with an orientation meeting of the new team members and subsequent visits to all the program locations. The new members are introduced to



the mission and vision of New Light while they go through the process of Meet and Greet.

New Light has been working with the victims and survivors of trafficking for a number of years. It need not be mentioned again that women and girls from rural areas of India, where livelihood is a challenge are often the main target of traffickers for new recruitment into sex trade and other kinds of slavery. As a measure to rehabilitate women in prostitution and empower women and girls in the villages through economic independence, **New Light launched Anchal Project in September 2009**.

On the **5th of April** a team from New Light went to one of the most important source areas for trafficking, Murshidabad in West Bengal. The team conducted an extensive network building and conducted a meeting with 45 women at Bharatpur Bagan School and launched the Anchal program locally. The response was overwhelming and the participation of women has grown by many folds in the last eight



months. Thank you **Dr Elizabeth Dean Hermann and alumni of RISD, Colleen Clines and Devon Miller** for being our guide in this experiment.

Bengali New Year's day was celebrated with a feast by all at various project locations of New Light on the **15th of April, 19th and the 21st of April** saw induction training and orientation visit by resources and consultants to different programs of New Light located in and around the city.

Residents of **Sonar Tori** , Sanchita Mondal, Krishna Sarkar and Sima Halder participated in a dance



movement event organized by Kolkata Sanved , a long term service partner of New Light, at the celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the organization on the **29th and the 30th of March**. We take this opportunity to thank our partners **Bono-Direkthilfe** (www.bonodirekthilfe.org) and **Fundacion Meridional** (www.fundacionmeridional.org) for years of consistent support in strengthening **both Sonar Tori and Soma Memorial Girls Home-Hogar Meridional**.

On the **9th of May** ten students from Soma Home and Sonar Tori went to Palampur in Himachal Pradesh to participate in a workshop organized by **Kranti from Mumbai**. The workshop held at the Sambhavana Institute involved theatre, yoga, creative writing and martial arts. For many of the participants this was the first time they travelled out of Kolkata. They came back full of exciting travel stories, contact with

new friends and an experience that ll stay with them for many years to come. Thanks to **Trina Talukdar, Robin** and the entire Kranti team for this extraordinary initiative.



May does become quite unbearable in this part of the world and to still have enough energy and motivation to plough through the days, New Light organizes a summer camp during the school break. This year between the **21st and the 27th of May**, five different sessions of creative and explorative workshops were conducted at New Light Media Centre. The students showed a high degree of interest in the various activities and soaked up the experience like parched ground. Singer-song writer, guitarist and the lead vocalist of **Lim and the Hellhounds, Rahul Guha Roy** gave his time generously and infused the students

with love for writing songs and creating music. Thank you for the music Rahul.

Trained in Indian classical music and a renowned jazz musician of the city, **Ishita Chakraborty** left the students by the beauty and the depth of classical instruments which are constantly being undermined in this age of Bollywood music. Ishita, we look forward to your presence among us really soon.



Thanks **Falguni Bhatt Sanghvi,**

artist, ceramist, creator of installation and keeper of our creative energy for pushing the boundaries of imagination in our kids. Without you they would never have learnt about how to make masks with papiermache or handmade books. Your gift of love and imagination is deeply cherished by all.



Sushanto Ghosh, trained by Pandit Chitresh Das and a gifted kathak performer held a workshop with many of the students of Sonar Tori and Soma Home. We thank him for his yearlong engagement with the girls with deep patience and diligence. **Prosenjit Jana**, choreographer and dancer undoubtedly was the most popular as he brought a bit of Bollywood magic into the lives of the children. And finally it was **Sagnik Majumdar** and team that let the children explore the world of robotics. None of this would have been possible without our donors' support and encouragement. Your commitment lets the young lives at New Light experience what seems to be removed by a few light years from their everyday reality. We also thank our volunteers and interns, **Ricardo Kammermayer, Pallavi Menon and Lucangelo Bracci Testesecca** for helping the teachers and external resources throughout the entire workshop period.



On **the 12 of June**, Sanlaap a leading NGO working with survivors of trafficking, conducted a daylong seminar on Rescue and Reintegration of survivors of trafficking at the office of the district welfare department. The District Magistrate, Assistant DM, other officers of the welfare department, law enforcement agency workers and NGO partners attended the seminar. New Light was represented by **Krishna Mondal, Shibnarayan Bhattacharjee and Urmi Basu**.



We thank **Hem Dhillon and Vishal Sinha of Stomp Media** for inviting 15 senior students of New Light to attend a 12 hour long EDM festival in Lake Land Country Club. Thank you **Stomp media and Hem and Vishal Sinha** for your generous contribution to New Light from the proceeds of the event.

8th of July was marked by the visit of Executive Director of Shadhika Foundation, **Ms Kimberley Burnett**. During her visit, Ms Burnett spent hours with the residents of Sonar Tori engaging in a conversation about their future plans and life goals. We thank Kim for her time and support to New Light through Shadhika for years.



All the children from New Light's Jhinuk, Dalit shelter and Soma Memorial Girls Home were administered typhoid vaccine on the 10th of July.

We thank **Jon Rubenstein and Authentic Management** for sponsoring twelve members from the New Light team to attend **Landmark Forum** at various locations all over the country. The sponsorship allowed four members from New Light to take the Forum session at **Landmark** in



Bangalore between the **11th and the 15th of July**.

16th of July was celebrated as foundation day at Dalit shelter. Members of the Trust and other visitors and guest were invited to the project location by the children. New Light's Dalit shelter started in **July 2003**, completed 11 years of operation in 2014.

Members of **Soumitra Ashray**, a group of St Xavier's alumni visited Soma Home on the 23rd of July with gifts for the residents. We thank **Mr Anindya Tarafdar, Rachna and other members** of Soumitra Ashray for taking the lead in creating and maintaining the partnership with New Light.



On **9th of August** journalists from **Al-Jazeera Television Network** interviewed some women from Kalighat and the students at Soma Home.

A baseline survey of more than 300 women engaged in prostitution was launched in Kalighat and Sonagachi area. The survey was conducted with the objective of assessing the quality of services rendered to the community. Many of the residents of Sonar Tori conducted the survey under the guidance of **Prof Sudhangshu Shekahr Dutta**, an erstwhile member of the New Light team.

Independence Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm in all the project locations of New Light on the 15th of August.

New Light bid farewell to a much loved and appreciated **volunteer Stephanie Johanna Magdalena Walter on the 28th of August.**



The American Centre, Kolkata arranged for a workshop on **Social Media Management on the 3rd of August.** The workshop was attended by four members in key positions from New Light. We are grateful to the office of the **Consul General of the United States of America** in Kolkata for the constant support in our fight against trafficking in persons.



5th of September is marked as **Teachers' Day** in India. On this day teachers are given a special treat and the students put up a short performance to entertain them. This year was no exception. The teachers and the students enjoyed the day likewise.

The girls from Soma Home were taken to watch the biopic based on the extraordinary boxer **Mary Kom** on the 14th of September. Their response to the story of **Mary Kom's life** was recorded by cinematographer Raja Roy as a part of the documentary on girls who train in boxing. We thank the members of Rotary club of Mega city for visiting New Light and interacting with the students on the same day.

While life was going on as usual in Kalighat, thousands of miles away in New York a series of fund raising events were happening for New Light. Dermatologist and aesthetician **Dr Sadik** of Sadik Dermatology launched the **yearlong campaign Beauty for Freedom on the 14th**



of September at the beautiful and atmospheric SoHo loft of DJ Scarlet Etienne. Beauty for Freedom is a campaign that involves the beauty industry in raising its voice against trafficking and human slavery.

Our deepest appreciation and gratitude to **Monika Watkins and Theodora Johnson of Artinmotion** for organizing **Drink for Good NYC on the 17th of September.** This would not have been possible without the total commitment of the group including **Isabella Katz, Megan Powers, Robert Galinsky, Linda Li, Courtney, Lyric, Mark** and all the business owners who donated so generously to support New Light. And at the centre of it all this was our long

term supporter, friend, Board member **Shaun Mader.** I am personally indebted to Shaun for his unwavering commitment and love for all at New Light. Thanks to **Ms Eleanor Ambose, Steven Adams, Brian, Andrew, Susan Quinn** and others from my extended family in LIC, NY.

Our deepest appreciation to **Chhun Tang** for designing the New Light Logo, for designing something that is visually so powerful yet simple and aesthetically so very refined. **To us, the logo represents a burst of life while the various colors represent different emotions and the hands up in the air are like radiating rays of a blooming flower.**



© Shaun Mader



Most of us experience numerous coincidences in our lives and don't ever stop to think through those. Sometimes one really has to ask oneself about the laws that govern such coincidences in our lives. It was best put by our dear friend **Jaclyn Metfus** when she quoted none other than **Quincy Jones** saying coincidences are God's way of being anonymous. My meeting with Jaclyn and subsequently with friends and supporters like **Olivia Wilde through her project Summit.org**, **Barbara Burchfield** and her joint project with Olivia Wilde, **Conscious Commerce**, designer **Yoana Baraschi**, **Ina Bond** and friends from **The Zimmerman Foundation** have all been a part of a cycle that moved by less than six degrees of separation. Another one of such moment coincidence for us was when singer-songwriter, three Grammy winner, legendary blues musician **Ben Harper** found New Light through Jaclyn Metfus. On the **19th of September Ben Harper** dedicated a very intimate soulful concert at **New York Society for**

Ethical Culture to raise funds and support New Light's latest program Khela Ghar, home for at risk boys. Thank you is a small word for what and how we all feel at New Light. And to Jaclyn we send our best love and prayers. We also thank the Managers at **Red Light Production** and members of the Board of **Force Film Foundation** for helping us with the entire project from start to finish.

On September 30th Kolkata saw the beginning of its biggest festival Durga Puja. The five days of Durga puja are days for non-stop fun and feasting. Like in every other year the kids from New Light were taken out for a Parikrama and treated to goodies and the famous Kolkata street food. Thanks to all the teachers at New Light who took turns in keeping company with the children while their families waited at home. We also thank **Bappaditya Mukherjee** and the team at **Prantakatha** for bringing gifts of new clothes to the kids at **Starfish**, in Sonagachhi.



October 2014 was a month of emotional rollercoaster for all of us at New Light. The joy of Durga puja and its week long revelry came to a dead stop on the 9th.

After many hours of untold suffering, beautiful ever smiling and loving **Kartick Mondal** became a star in the skies of all the children at New Light. Kartick Mondal, our beloved Keto, was granted his angel wings in the year 2011, when he became a member of the New Light family. With an ever smiling face and a joyous nature, it took him no time to make a place in our hearts. But, in an extremely unfortunate incident, we lost our beloved Keto on October 8, 2014. Young Keto fell victim to domestic violence and succumbed to his burns on the eve of October 8 2014. Through his short, yet very memorable life, Keto has taught us that children, in any way, should not be victims of domestic violence. Should not be victims of homicide. A young life, lost so early, is unbearable and keeps us wondering about the safety and security of the child, even at home.



Keto's life would seem too short to many, but those who were touched by him understood that the quality of existence far exceeds the quantity of time in which one lives. His gentle smile could melt the hearts of those around him. With Keto's passing, we remind ourselves that his life is one to be celebrated, although we will miss him every day, especially his winning smile. He will forever remain in our hearts. With his courage, he led us to believe that each day is a blessing and an opportunity to create lasting memories.

Keto is survived by his father, grandmother and the New Light family.

Life at New Light would never be the same again after the horrific accident on the 9th but the rule of life dictates that we continue. At times the window of mourning closes much before we actually would like it to. Our hearts don't want but the mind guides us to a place where we learn to accept death and loss. This was one such time. In the weeks that followed Kartick's and Sujit's death everyone at New Light sought comfort in each other and vowed not to let such an incident revisit anyone known and unknown. It is a challenge that New Light team understands.

Corporate partners like **Cognizant**, **Hindustan Lever Limited**, **Indian Institute of Engineers** and a number of individuals including Dr Dipanjan Dutta visited New Light in the days that followed.

Diwali 2014 was not about joy and light but fear and loss this year. With every cracker burst or every sparkler lit we thought about Kartick and Sujit and the dangers of fire accident. We thank our priceless volunteers **Megan Powers, Sukanya Burman, Daryl Simon Jr and Sarah Harrison** for helping us through those days.

In the days between the 2nd and 21st of November two separate teams from New Light Unmochan went on rescue missions to Dehradun and Mumbai respectively. The missions were immensely successful and the victims have been restored to their families and other suitable shelter home support. We thank members of **West Bengal Police, Kolkata Police and the CID, the Indian Railways officers, Mumbai Police and the staff of Dehradun Nariniketan for their assistance.**



This work would not have been possible with the partnership of **Kultali Samadhan Samiti.**

On November 13th, **Earthday Network** led by Neela Majumdar, launched Trash to cash program involving the women from the community. New Light partnered with the group in organizing temple flower waste that can be turned to eco-friendly cash generating products like colored powder and floral incense.



On the 15th of October Abhijit Gayen, one of the students from New Light completed his degree in Hospitality Management from International Institute of Hotel Management in Kolkata. He is currently working at the Park Hotel in Kolkata.

November 14th,
Children's Day saw
the launch of **Khela**

Ghar, New Light's Home for boys in Behala, Kolkata. The event was opened by an eminent Judge from the Alipore Bench, Kolkata and was attended by the members of the local Council. All the mothers of the twenty boys who are expected to reside at Khela Ghar were invited to the event. Our special thanks and deep gratitude goes to all the donors especially **Karen Kotoske of Amistad International and The Good Works Institute from California.** We could not have moved forward without the active support and encouragement of friends like **Jaclyn Metfus, Janet Grey and family including Rachel, Kimberley Burnett, Shadhika Foundation** and hundreds of other friends from all over who a part of this project.



New Light Boys' Home, Khela-Ghar, is a part of New Light's efforts to provide young boys of women who are in prostitution, the opportunity to grow up in a safe and secure environment and realize their full potential. The boys' home will help remove the male children from the violence filled environment of Kalighat, primarily, where they are exposed to crimes and other socially undesirable practices. The Home's aim is to bring and retain as many children and young adults as possible into the mainstream by providing formal education; job oriented training and different vocational activities so that they can lead a life with dignity.

<http://epaper.telegraphindia.com/details/118956-17559765.html>



Thanks to **Sarah Harrison** our volunteer from Canada, conducted an hour long yoga session with the young students of New Light on the 24th of November. New Light remains committed to creating a robust and meaningful yoga program in the coming months.

November 27th, 28th and 29th saw the girls of Soma Home and Sonar Tori attending a painting workshop at New Light Media Center. It was a day long affair that generated a huge amount of interest in the process for the students. We extend our appreciation to the resource persons for the workshop.



1st of December for us at New Light is not only observed as **International AIDS Day** but also as the **Foundation Day**. As is the practice the morning saw a huge number of women both from within New Light's community and outside attend a seminar on HIV/ AIDS awareness, safety and protection at the New Light Kalighat



shelter. The hour long seminar did not only remain confined to discussing AIDS/ HIV care but also included topics like gender based violence, civil and human rights, succession plan for the next generation and legal challenges that the women face on a daily basis. We thank all our external resources for joining us at the seminar. We thank **Inditex** for supporting New Light in strengthening a community like that of Kalighat with HIV/AIDS care and support.

The most significant day in December after the Foundation Day was the **16th of December**.

The barbaric rape of 23 years old, young professional Ms. Jyoti Singh, who was initially referred to as 'Nirbhaya' in Delhi on December 16, 2012 and her tragic death in a Singapore hospital, shook the collective consciousness of the nation and led to the demand of stringent laws and measures. New Light, since the past two years, has been diligently working on the principle of reduction of gender violence and abuse thereby creating a just society with millions of 'Nirbhaya's' everywhere.



Nirbhaya Diwas could not possibly wish for more power than the presence of none other than activist, writer, dancer, choreographer Eve Ensler, the creator of the global movement for violence against women, One Billion Rising (www.OBR.org). Eve Ensler during her visit to Kolkata, on invitation from Kolkata Sanved (www.kolkatasanved.org) one of New Light's partners danced with the girls at the atmospheric Swabhumi, on the 18th of December to **mark Dance For Revolution**. We thank Sohini Chakraborty for creating this extraordinary event for all the young people of Kolkata. The following day, on 19th of December the girls from Soma Home opened the event at G D Birla Sabhaghar where Eve Ensler read out portions from one of her most powerful writing Vagina Monologues. What an opportunity for the girls to be on the same stage as this iconic leader of women's right. Thanks to Anuradha Kapoor and Swayam (www.swayam.org) for inviting New Light to be a part of this outstanding evening.





Last but not the least, the year ended with the much awaited Christmas Party. Christmas proved to be a great time for extra hugs and cuddles. In the season full of love and joy, laughter of the children filled the air at New Light on 23rd December. The children sang Christmas carols and danced to the tune in glee. Thank you Utpal (lead guitarist of the band Mantra) for bringing smiles on the faces of the children through the music that you played!

This note will not be complete without my personal thanks to some special volunteers and interns that we have had at New Light over the year. **Spicer Khakoo Shirali**, your love and diligence in accomplishing what you came out here to do have been extraordinary. The kids are richer for your affection and special gifts. We

thank all your friends back in New York for being such a significant part of your journey **to New Light**.

Megan Powers, I do not know how I would have dealt with the dark hours without you. Your dedication, unconditional love and support through some of the hardest days in the past year have been invaluable. We cannot wait to have you back here soon.

Special thanks to **Ricardo Kammermayer, Stepanie Johanna Magdalena Walter, Sukanya Burman, Daryl Simon Jr, Sarah Hrrison, Sarah Bartley and Alison Burnett** for bringing so much joy and love to the children. We eagerly wait for your return. Our deepest gratitude also to **Les Enfants de personne, Children's Hope India, FACT, Force Film Foundation, Lend a Hand Foundation, The Soroptomists Intenational, St. Helena, Katherine, Kerry and James Forbes, Mr. and Mrs. V.K. Tejpal, Mimi and Ashish Bali, Laura Price and Blossomy.org, Murice Gabriel, Serenda Swan and 18 for 18, The Rotary Club of Calcutta Chowrenghee, Mr B K Khaitan, Bhojohari Manna (Restaurant), Bibi Sen, Ina Bond Foundation, Metin Mitchell And Company, The Apeejay Foundation, The Park group and so many others who have helped us move forward with so much dignity.**



And finally to the extraordinary friends and members of New Light board **Mr. B K Jha, Dr Bani Sequeira, Krishna Mondal, Shibnarayan Bhattacharjee, Richard and Ann Grace, Anchal and Sammy Chand, Russ Salsman, Lorraine Cohen Marsh, Urmi Mukherjee and Shaun Mader**. Thanks to our advisors **Dr Mariette Correa, Sangita Todi, Rajni Jhunjunwala, Dr Nasser Iqbal, Dr. Rajan Gupta, Neeta Sethia, , Dia Basu and Christina Nathanail**. New Light's work would have remained hidden in the dark alleys of Kalighat and Sonaghachhi if not for the support of **Mr Sumit Dasgupta of The Telegraph. Thanks to Mohua Das, Rashbehari Das** (our dear Rashuda) **and Pabitra Das** for your continuous engagement with issues that New Light fights for. You uphold the beacon of light of media responsibility. **Jimmy Tangree** and the team at **Red FM** please keep you music alive for those who have so little to live with Thanks to **Mastiska** for managing our web presence.

With only a few hours remaining to the end of the year, we realize the power of collective goodwill. New Light would not have been able to accomplish any of the things it did in the past twelve months if you were not there. So from the trustees, the team and all those who receive the gift of your love and support, I extend my deepest gratitude and appreciation. For those who I have failed to mention here please remember you are in our thoughts, even though the names are not on our lips.

Let us now pledge to make 2015 an even better and bigger year for all!!

Wishing you love, light and peace in the New Year.

Yours sincerely

Urmi Basu