



"A good teacher is like a candle,  
it consumes itself to light the way  
for others."

New Light Annual Newsletter  
2015

Greetings New Light friends and family,

For the first time in many years, my heart is refusing to soar with the joy of the holiday season as I sit down to share our journey over the last twelve months with all our friends. Upon quiet contemplation, I realize my heart is welling up with sadness and a sense of helplessness for millions who are moving as homeless refugees. As we celebrate the birth of the best known refugee, who two thousand years ago saw the light of this world in a manger because someone gave him shelter, let us not forget how we come to be seen as humans.

The only way we wish to be remembered is as kind, forgiving, compassionate and generous. We pass through this world only once and love is the only direction we need.

On that note, I would like to extend our gratitude to each and every one of you for showering New Light with your love. In your generosity, you have forgiven our mistakes and lapses, taught us big lessons and guided us through both our lightest and the darkest moments.

Going back to January of 2015...



***“Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do, but how much love we put in that action.” – Mother Teresa***



With Mother Teresa’s words ringing in our hearts, on January 5<sup>th</sup>, Khela Ghar, our boys’ residential home was opened. Filled with love, laughter, good fortune, sunshine and happiness, the young boys ran up the stairs and into their rooms, deciding on which bunk to occupy. As we watched them, we realized that when you step into a new home, with empty rooms, empty closets, and empty

cupboards, the world feels brand new, where anything can happen – new hopes, new dreams and new ambitions. We believe that when it comes to developing character strength, inner security and unique personal and interpersonal talents and skills in a child, no institution can or ever will compare with, or effectively substitute for, the home’s potential for positive influence.



On January 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, we distributed blankets to the children, thanks to the kind donation of New Delhi Public School, Ruby Park, Kolkata. We welcomed Mr. Sanjeev Mehra at Soma Home to distribute. Thank you for giving the children this necessity.

Also on January 6<sup>th</sup>, we paid tribute to the death of 70-year-old Kathak icon - Pandit Chitresh Das. He left behind a rich legacy of his dance schools in India and the US. Since 2003, Das has worked closely with New Light teaching the children Kathak dance as a means of cultural and self-awareness and empowerment. The New Light group was also invited by the German Ministry of Culture and International Cooperation to be a part of Kinder Kulture Karavane in 2008 where the New Light children traveled to Germany for a 6-week performing tour. In Das’ teachings, he emphasized the concepts of ‘tyaag aur seva’ (sacrifice and selfless service). New Light remembers the legend – a dynamic personality and a vibrant dancer. To see more visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDXLq8Ii868>

***“The future belongs to us because we have taken charge of it.”***



New Light has the commitment, the resourcefulness and the strength of our people to share the dream across Kolkata of clean water for all. On January 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, water filters were distributed in the Sonagachi and Kalighat neighborhoods for the women and children of the red light districts. The women were also provided with training on how to use the filtration system.

Also on January 9<sup>th</sup>, New Light conducted our first all staff meeting of the year, which set us off to a great start!

On 11<sup>th</sup> of January, to mark Swami Vivekananda's birthday, 60 of the New Light and 2<sup>nd</sup> Shelter children participated in a walk organized by Nepal Bhattacharjee club.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of January, Krishna and Bisujit organized and participated in a workshop for Aanchal products in Sindrani N 24 Parganas. 63 people participated in the workshop from the village of Sindrani. New Light provides the material to produce the Aanchal products to the local women.



In honor of all the January birthdays, we celebrated with cake and excitement. Happy birthday Coco, Rajiv, Amirul, Sambhu, Rakesh, Siuli and Sikha Di!

From the 12<sup>th</sup> of January to the 21<sup>st</sup> of January, Carlos Perez Osorio filmed a documentary of all the programs. Special note to Carlos, Javier, Maria, Bernardita Alcalde for their hard work and their commitment to filming about our shelters and

programs. We appreciate the time and energy you dedicated!

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of January, Urmi Basu participated in the International Seminar on Human Development and Sustainability. The seminar examined the main challenges and strategies for human development and sustainability in the Asian century. It critically analyzed growing inequality and the neglect of local level/rural development. Multidisciplinary professionals and practitioners from the field of social work, social welfare, social



development, education, health and management deliberated issues and innovations relating to poverty, inequality, politics, gender, environmental sustainability, local institutions and policies and programs, particularly with reference to vulnerable population groups cutting across various sections and sectors. Ms. Urmi Basu was presented the ICSD-AP Distinguished Social Development Practitioner Award to recognize and honor her most outstanding contribution to social



development and social welfare of children and women in difficult circumstances through her work.

Following the conference, Professor Manohar Pawar (Charles Sturt University), Professor Barbara Shank (Dean, School of Social Work, University of St. Thomas), Professor Tan and Mr. Arif visited New Light. Mr. Arif also visited Soma Home and Sonar Tori on January 20<sup>th</sup>.



We watch sports for excitement, but even more so, we watch it for the fun. The children of New Light, along with their mothers, participated in Sports Day on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. Given the nature of sports, it's not surprising that the children learned a lot about hard work, leadership, perseverance, winning and much more. Annual Sports Day is an important event in the life of every child at New Light. This year there were about 250 participants. All received good results and some won exciting prizes too! We enjoyed ourselves and had an unforgettable Sports Day! A big thank you to our volunteers – Bernardita, Maria, Carlos and Javier for making our day so special.



Continuing with our busy month, students from Sonar Tori participated in a theatre workshop conducted by Goutam Sarkar from January 27<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>.

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed our longtime friend and host in Germany, Judy Englehart. It was wonderful to see her and the students that came with her. On January 29<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed Mary Banarjee who gifted New Light with clothing. Thank you so much for your kind and needed donation.

Urmi Basu and other staff members ended the month of January by setting up an open shelter for immediate victim and survivor support in Kultali, 24 S Parganas, West Bengal, on January 30<sup>th</sup>. The proposed shelter is to be operated in partnership with the local NGO, Kultali Samadhan Samity.

The start of February was colorful on the green lawns of the Apeejay House on Park Street at the Art Mela. Little painters from New Light gathered with their brushes and colours to take part in the Grand Art Mela organized by Apeejay Anand Children's Library every year. This year's theme was 'Let's Play, Chalo Khele.' From balloons and bizarre shaped kites to rainbows and colorful sceneries, the children simply let their imagination run wild with colors. 3 of our children even won prizes!



On February 14<sup>th</sup>, New Light danced for revolution with 1000 supporters from all spheres of life in Jatin Das Park, Hazra. New Light would like to express its gratitude to the Kolkata

Municipal Corporation, Council Member/Mayor, Officer in Charge, Kolkata Police and the Kolkata Traffic Guard, who have always supported us in our endeavors to make this world a more equitable and just space for women around the world. We are thankful to them for giving us their time and expertise, to help make the necessary arrangements and to acquire the various permissions, in order to make One Billion Rising a huge success.

**One billion women raped or beaten is an atrocity.**

**One billion women dancing is a revolution.**

We have broken taboos and silence everywhere, inspiring a radical outpouring of individuals and groups to reveal the world wide system of patriarchy which sustains violence against women. One Billion Rising has shown that violence against women is not a national, tribal, ethnic, religious issue but a global phenomenon, and the rising has given survivors the confidence of knowing that violence is not their fault or their country's fault or their families fault.

Through dance we expressed our outrage and joy and our firm global call for a world where women are free, safe, cherished and equal. We danced with our body, for our body, and for the bodies of women and the earth.



Kristi Williamson from [Tamalpa Institute](#) also visited New Light in February. We are grateful for her presence and for the continued partnership with Tamalpa Institute.

We also hosted visitors from Inditechs. Amy Taylor came to visit on the 18<sup>th</sup> and Arim Van Looye returned to visit New Light after volunteering in the past. Thank you for continually sending medicine and other donations to New Light. We are grateful for both of your visits and look forward to seeing you again.

Sucheta Mandal represented New Light at a Child Protection Seminar from February 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>.

Also on February 26<sup>th</sup>, Robin Chaurasiya visited New Light from the non-profit organization, [Kranti](#). We are grateful for your continued support and partnership. Thank you for all of your work for the marginalized in India.

We began the month of March learning how to tell our story through dance and meditation. On March 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, international performer, wellness educator and teacher in the art of movement and story, Zuleikha, inspired dynamic creativity and rejuvenation through movement as a part of [The Story Dancer Project](#). At New Light, we call it the Kalpataru Project, which aims to push all boundaries of expectation and experience. Zuleikha conducted the workshop with women and girls from New Light. We want to thank Zuleikha for her dedication to helping women and girls on their journeys of life and for being a committed partner of New Light.



Also on March 4<sup>th</sup>, New Light staff members Raju Mondal, Sutapa Batarcharya and Supriyo Das attended a non-violence and communication workshop at the American Center.

***“It is true that, in a country where incidents of crime against women are everywhere, there is no reason to celebrate. A single occasion is not enough to remember the injustice women go through every day. But we, as women, cannot give up. We have to stand up against any kind of abuse and also be fearless. We have to stand up against this abuse, not just today, but every day.” – Urmi Basu***

With this in mind New Light celebrated International Women’s Day with much zeal and frolic. The program was inaugurated by Ms. Sarbari Bhattacharya, CID Inspector, Anti Human Trafficking Unit, who threw light on measures to curb trafficking



of women and children and shared her experience of rescuing trafficked women and children from various parts of West Bengal.



The program was then followed by a Ceramic Workshop conducted by Ms. Falguni Bhatt Sanghvi, where 150 mothers of the community participated and showed their amazing creativity. With a sumptuous lunch and the movie Mardaani the fabulous day came to an end. Last but not the least more than a 150 mothers received exclusive goodies sponsored by leading corporates. Thank you!



On March 12<sup>th</sup>, New Light, in association with Leena Kejriwal, helped launch M.I.S.S.I.N.G., the public art project that raises awareness of the millions of girls disappearing from the face of the earth. Leena Kejriwal is a photographer and installation artist by profession. M.I.S.S.I.N.G. is a public art campaign that addresses the issue of sex trafficking and the multitude of girls who are lost to this trade. The figures for sex trafficking are very alarming and the average age of girls disappearing into sexual exploitation is between 9 and 12 years old in India. The issue is already tipping our gender statistics and will be endangering our future generations sooner than we can imagine.



The work consists of larger than life fiberglass structures set against the sky in prominent skylines in a city. M.I.S.S.I.N.G. will transform public spaces in India, creating an engaging piece of art that draws people, sparks conversations and adds beauty to our cities. Leena and Urmi conducted an interactive session with New Light girls before hitting the streets of Kolkata armed with art supplies. We were grateful to join Leena in this campaign to recognize so many lost girls.



***“Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much!” – Helen Keller***

Finding a responsible person to write for a blind student in the examination hall is no less a source of tension for them than the problems created by their disability. Lack of writers is particular painful for blind students who are eligible to write exams for higher secondary education. Sudipta Saha from New Light is one such lamp in the dark who wrote the Class XII board examinations for a visibly impaired student. Sudipta did not only write his class X board exams this year from Kalighat High School but is also writing to change blind fate! He was chosen amongst many from his school to be selected as the writer for the blind. Sudipta is always ready to help whoever is in need, all the time. Sudipta, through his gesture of kindness has made the entire New Light family proud. Kudos to Sudipta Saha and we wish him loads of luck and love for his future endeavors.



On March 14<sup>th</sup>, [Stolen Innocence](#) documentary began filming at New Light. Stolen Innocence is a documentary film revealing India’s hidden human sex trafficking industry. It is an initiative of [Effect International](#). We appreciate the partnership with effect.org and are grateful to have been a part of the film. We look forward to future initiatives together!

On March 14<sup>th</sup>, we also had 14 visitors from Soumitra Ashray and we distributed school bags, food packets and other gifts at Soma Home. Thank you for your gifts and time!

On March 16<sup>th</sup>, Janet Gray and Kim Burnette visited Khela Ghar, accompanied by Sangeeta Munkherjee and Urmi Ray. Janet, her family and friends turned Khela Ghar from a dream into reality with their generous donation. Having Janet walk through the doors and meet all of the young men living in the idea that she brought to life was a wonderful moment for us all at New Light. We cannot express our gratitude enough to Janet and her family and friends in Seattle. You have provided safe shelter, nutritious food, and a stable home life for the boys at Khela Ghar and we cannot thank you enough.

Also on March 16<sup>th</sup>, New Light staff participated in a social change seminar at the American Center, called Our Voice, Our Journey. In the evening of March 16<sup>th</sup>, a New Light team, led by Ms. Urmi Basu, participated in a candlelight march and vigil organized by the Archbishop of Kolkata in protest of the molestation and attack of a 71- year-old teacher and sister. For more information about the assault, please read the following article:  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/03/14/asia/nun-raped-in-india/>

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, a support group for cancer survivors, Hitaishini, organized a meeting/seminar. Many welfare organizations attended. Sima Banarjee and Krishna Mondal participated on behalf of New Light.

On March 19<sup>th</sup>, a New Light team marched in protest for women’s rights. The march was organized by Meitree Coalition.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated birthdays of Khela Ghar, Soma Home and New Light main shelter.

On March 24<sup>th</sup>, a team from the municipal health center visited New Light, and did an awareness discussion about tuberculosis. 35 women from the community attended.

From the 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> of March, the U.S. Consulate General Kolkata, hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Conclave in association with the New Delhi based non-governmental organization (NGO) Shakti Vahini in Ranchi, Jharkhand, India. The Conclave

was inaugurated on March 27<sup>th</sup> by U.S. Consul General Helen LaFave, Minister Louis Marandi, Department of Welfare (including Minority Welfare), Social Welfare, Women and Child Development, and Minister Neera Yadav, Department of Human Resource Development, both from the Government of Jharkhand.



The focus of the conclave was strengthening partnerships in the Bihar- Jharkhand region. According to data released by the Indian Social Welfare, Women and Children Development Department, trafficking in Jharkhand has increased threefold in just the past three years. Thousands of children from this region are traded and trafficked by disreputable 'placement agencies' to domestic

homes in Delhi and other major Indian cities. Abject poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, difficult access areas, shrinking land-holdings of the local population, the thriving network of 'placement agencies' and, most importantly, the vulnerability of the tribal population have been cited as the main reasons for large-scale migration from Jharkhand to other areas.

TIP-4 Conclave emphasized enhancing coordinated efforts in addressing this problem. The goal was to bring together NGOs, government, the business community, law enforcement agencies, civil society organizations, and the legal establishment to encourage increased networking, sharing of best practices and cooperation to tackle this growing menace.

International participants from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Burma and the U.S., including representatives from government, law enforcement, the non-profit sector, diplomatic missions, chambers of commerce and business, as well as celebrities, who care about this issue, were a part of this two day conclave. The conclave was attended by Ms. Urmi Basu, Ms. Avantika Kar, Ms. Shalini Majumdar and Mr. Sudeep Deb of New Light.

During the visit to Jharkhand, Urmi Basu also attended the Seraikella district meeting in the Bholadi village in Jharkhand, where she met Chutni Mahato. Chutni is a powerful activist against the much prevalent practice of witch hunting. Marked and ostracized from her village and family at age 19 as a witch, she lived under a clump of trees for eight months with her three year old son and her cattle. Today Chutni is banding together women who suffer the same treatment and bringing legal support to them.



On March 29<sup>th</sup>, smiles, laughter and joy spread across the faces of the children at Soma Memorial Girls Home due to the visit by [BONO-Direkthilfe](#). The 7-member delegation was welcomed with smiling faces and a very Indian greeting of flower garlands and 'Chandan Tika'.

The evening commenced with a cultural programme performed by the girls of Soma Home and the team had a very interactive and interesting session with the children. Michael Muller-Mann and Urban Philippek





Also on March 29<sup>th</sup>, Diana Black and New Light distributed 30 bikes through Blossomy and 88Bikes to the girls at Soma Home and Sonar Tori.



On March 31<sup>st</sup>, we also distributed 16 bikes to the people of the Chindrani community in the north of Kolkata.

On April 21<sup>st</sup>, Ms. Urmi Basu participated in a panel discussion on the topic of “No place is safe or unsafe for women.” The panel was opened by the Dean of the Heritage Business School, Professor Malay Jumar Banerjee. He had attended a similar meeting organized by New Light a few months back and our conversation gave him the insight to take the discussion forward. The panel emphasized the point that women need to take the initiative with regards to their own safety. Ms. Basu was joined by Professor Bula Bhadra, Calcutta University, professor Paromita Chakraborty, Jadavpur University and Mr. Bholanath Ghosh, ISI. Ms. Urmi Basu pointed out that we live in a patriarchal society where women are meant to keep the house clean, take care of the children, look after the in-laws, etc. **The time has come when we need to educate our sons to take equal part in household work. Until we educate our sons to respect women, our public space will not be safe, neither will our homes.** She also expressed that even verbal gestures should not be tolerated and women need to raise their voice. Ms. Basu addressed the young audience and advised them that, when a girl gets raped,

she should not clean herself or change her clothes. She should go first to the police station and lodge a FIR, not a General Diary. The victim should always go to a government hospital and get herself treated. Lastly, she mentioned ‘rape should be nonexistent in a civilized nation.’ Overall, the event was well-attended and a success. We are grateful to Professor Banerjee for helping move this conversation forward.



On April 25, 2015, a devastating earthquake left thousands dead and millions robbed of their homes and livelihood in Nepal and Northern India. The earthquake shook the whole world as donations and support started pouring in. It was a time for the world to show its expression of solidarity through compassion. We appealed to everybody around the globe to disregard the political and geographical



boundaries and be one with the Nepalese people. It was time to stand unified in strength and giving to overcome a loss that was universal. In early May, New Light Kolkata conducted a meeting with the Nepalese women of the community in Kalighat to help them look for their near and dear ones in Nepal and support them in which ever way we could. The outcome of the meeting was that we yet did not know the complete scope of damage. People needed considerable support including food, water, medical care and emergency shelter. New Light then set up a donation platform that enabled its supporters to donate to the New Light Relief Nepal Fund. 100% of the proceeds helped to provide first-response care to survivors. In the subsequent days, we also conducted a meeting with the Nepal Council with the Nepalese women in the community in their local language in order to connect better. The Nepal Council generated a ray of hope amongst these women

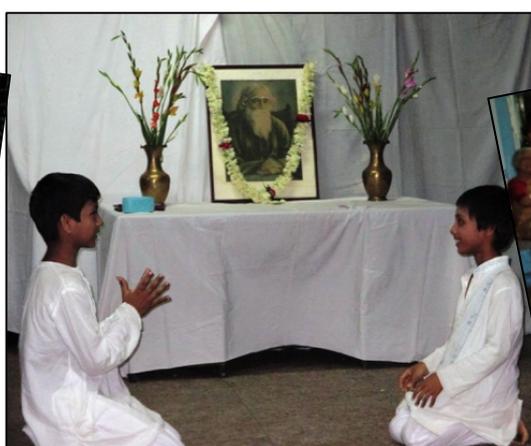


have left their friends and families in Nepal and spoke on assisting them to connect with their near and dear ones in Nepal.



have left their friends and families in Nepal and spoke on assisting them to connect with their near and dear ones in Nepal.

On May 9<sup>th</sup>, the birth anniversary of Nobel Laureate and Great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore popularly known as Gurudev was celebrated as Rabindra Jayanti. Rabindra Jayanti is celebrated on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Baisakh. It is also known by the name Pocheeshe Biasakh on the Bengali calendar. Rabindra Jayanti is a day to pay tribute to the great literary scholar. The day was celebrated with great grandeur at New Light. Children sang various songs and also recited poems written by Kaviguru Rabindranath Tagore.



On May 12<sup>th</sup>, Apeejay Trust and iCongo came together to announce Apeejay Karmayuga, a national character building initiative that aspires to democratize heroism in India. It aims to identify and reward individuals who through their virtuous and voluntary actions (Karma) demonstrate exceptional determination in discharging their Fundamental Duties against all odds, and through their practice of Individual Social Responsibility, build not only their own character but also inspire the pursuit of a Solid Character among their friends, family and the community at large. Karmaveer Chakra, the national medallion for voluntary services had been instituted by iCongo in partnership with the UN in 2008. It has been taken forward in 2014-15 with a much larger mandate with support from Apeejay Trust, the welfare trust of Apeejay Surrendra Group. Sikha Karmakar, HIV Educator and Member of Medical Team won two awards – Silver and Bronze and Raju Mondal, Teacher, won the Bronze award. The awards are as follows: Bronze – Awarded to stakeholders of Partners of Joint Awards Program Collaborations, co-branded with the Partner, selected by Internal Juries set up by the Partner as per the criteria and guidelines instituted. Silver – Awarded directly to Apeejay Karmayuga, selected by National Jury and Personal Interviews. Heartiest congratulations to Sikha and Raju for their exemplary performance and contribution to New Light and the community.



On May 27<sup>th</sup>, Julie Schofield conducted a Poetry Workshop with the girls of Soma Memorial Girls Home. Julie is from The United States of America and is here on a Fulbright-Nehru Grant to spend time and impart knowledge to the children. The philosophy behind the workshop is that writers will learn to be better writers by working with other writers who are engaged in similar efforts (writing poetry is one) and who share similar goals. Together, this community of writers reads, critiques, praises, and questions each others' work. The shared goal is to understand what makes a poem work and why, and if it doesn't work, to help the writer understand what might be revised so that it will work.



At the end of May, we recognized and honored two of our students – Mary Mondal and Sudipto Saha. Their marks are not only a measure of their merit but their resilience in the face of odds. Mary Mondal's and Sudipto Saha's spirit makes them stand out and their determination and hard work was all that they needed to score. The two students from New Light who had appeared for Madhyamik (Secondary) examinations scored 61.5% and 51.5% respectively, making the New Light team proud of their achievements. Kudos to Mary and Sudipto!





We also celebrated the May birthdays and said goodbye to one of our finest German volunteers, Anna. With a heavy heart we all said goodbye to Anna and we wish her luck and success in her future endeavors. Before she left, she organized a wonderful cultural program where the children at New Light sang, danced and made merry. It was quite a spectacle which all of us enjoyed to the core.



We also ended the month with a huge congratulations to these four young women for passing their higher secondary examinations! You've run the course and passed the exams! There are no secrets of success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure. Applaud to Lata Mondal, Supriya Majhi and Mamoni Barik for successfully clearing their Higher Secondary Examinations. Special mention and applaud to Lata Pandey from Sonagachi, whose education is funded by New Light and who also scored a dashing 87% marks in Accountancy in her HS Examinations. The girls are ready to join university education in Accountancy, Hospitality Management, Dance and Geography. Well done!



On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, we remembered Kathak maestro and creator of Kathak yoga, Pandit Chitresh Das. Nrityanjali Dance Centre under the energetic and talented leadership of Sushanta Ghosh dedicated an evening of Kathak to Panditji at the ICCR, Kolkata. We are incredibly proud and blessed to have the girls from New Light continue under the mixed tradition of Lucknow and Jaipur Gharana. Congratulations Supriya Majhi, Krishna Sarkar, Indira Sarkar, Barsha Sarkar and Rukshana Khatoun for your brilliant performance. Panditji would have been very proud of you.



New Light has always focused its time, energy and money on empowering the young women of Sonar Tori and today we proudly present the 'faces of tomorrow'. On June 18<sup>th</sup>, young women from Sonar Tori knocked down the barriers of a so called male dominated industry. Today Sanchita and Rina are blooming with confidence; they have an edge and are facing the challenge skillfully. Thanks to HP Petrol Pump with whose guidance and mentoring the two young women left feeling truly empowered.



On the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, Students Olympic Association, Bengal, in association with Students Olympic Association, Kolkata, organized the 1<sup>st</sup> Students Olympic State Games. We are extremely proud to announce that 6 of our girls from Soma Home representing St. Sebastian School won gold medals in the games mentioned below. Heartiest congratulations to the girls!

- Barsha Sarkar – Gold Medalist in Martial Arts
- Sahanaz Khatun – Gold Medalist in Kho Kho
- Madhabi Kar – Gold Medalist in Kho Kho
- Nargis Khatun – Gold Medalist in Kho Koho
- Smriti Misra – Gold Medalist in Kho Kho
- Supriya Das – Gold Medalist in Kho Kho



Rainy June weather was not enough to deter the children from Khelaghar and our volunteer from Germany, Natascha Rissman, from going on a much-anticipated outing: a trip to the Alipore Zoological Gardens! On the morning of the trip, everyone was so excited. The children couldn't wait to see their favourite animals: crocodiles, elephants, tigers, lions and naughty monkeys. Not only was it a wonderful outing, the children gave us all the reason to never forget their laughter!



Zoological Gardens! On the morning of the trip, everyone was so excited. The children couldn't wait to see their favourite animals: crocodiles, elephants, tigers, lions and naughty monkeys. Not only was it a wonderful outing, the children gave us all the reason to never forget their laughter!

One of the things children like is to mess around with is clay and on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, the girls of Soma Home spent a wonderful day at

Falguni's studio writing poetry on clay tablets. The poems were written by the girls at Soma Home at the poetry workshop conducted by Julie Schofield was inscribed on clay tablets made by the children themselves in the Ceramics Workshop conducted by Ms. Falguni Bhatt Sanghvi.



HUL CSR Team known as ACT Team invited New Light to join in their Project Sunlight on 4th July 2015. It was essentially a fun filled day of drawing, quizzes, sapling planting etc., while raising awareness of environment conservation. 30 children from New Light, Khela Ghar and Soma Home participated in the event.

Rotary Club Chowringhee in association with the Oberoi Grand Hotel presented Parampara Boulevard - a lifestyle exhibition that housed designer apparels, accessories, bags and shoes from across the country on the 13th of July. Amongst the

much glitz and glamour shone New Light's stall displaying ethnic hand crafted products like kantha stoles, hand painted lanterns and kettles, decorative hand painted trays, hand-made jewellery, hand painted greetings cards and many more items prepared by the children and the women who are a part of the Kalighat community. We thank all those who made a generous contribution by buying the products. The proceeds benefitted the children at New Light. We also thank all those who stopped by our stall to applaud us on our work and for encouraging us to do better each day!





On July 17<sup>th</sup>, New Light distributed new school shoes to the girls at Soma Home.

At the end of July, we received a donation from Westside School's first celebration of 'International Day of the Girl Child' in October and 'International Women's Day' in March.

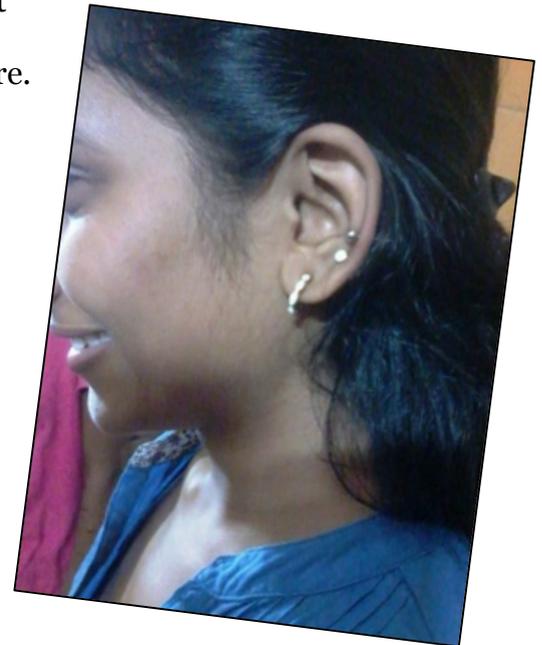
Apart from raising funds

for noble causes, they have also endeavored to raise the students' awareness of the issues affecting girls and women across the globe, by ways of running a quiz, organizing talks and through presentations. Kudos to the Westside School in Queensway Gibraltar!



In early August, we welcomed HSBC corporate employees at New Light for HSBC House's Joy of Giving Week. The corporation donated goodies to the children and it was a time of generosity, unity, and above all happiness. Thank you HSBC!

In early August, the girls at Soma Home also received a package from our wonderful volunteer Anna. We loved the gifts but we loved the letters you wrote to the girls even more. Thank you again for your hard work.



***"If a country is to be corruption free and become a nation of beautiful minds, I strongly feel there are three key societal members who can make a difference. They are the father, the mother and the teacher." A. P. J. Abdul Kalam***

Independence Day is one of the most honoured Indian holidays, both for what we celebrate and how we celebrate it. It is easy, however, to take liberty for granted and forget how hard the struggle was to achieve it 69 years ago. New Light celebrated India's 69th Independence Day with great pride and much grandeur. We thank the management and the students of the IIHM, International Institute of Hotel Management for hosting the celebratory lunch. Ms. Urmi Basu, reflected on why we need to remember this day, shared some stories and events from the past for the young students at New Light.



In mid-September, New Light staff visited our Aanchal team in Murshidabad. In the words of Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus ... "When tiny, tiny things start happening a million times, it becomes a large thing." It lays down the foundation of a strong economic base. With women participating in building this economic base, it becomes the foundation for better social and

economic future ... A big thank you to our team in Murshidabad who help us achieve our goal of empowering women every single day!



***“The best teacher is the one who suggests rather than dogmatizes, and inspires his listener with the wish to teach himself.” ~ Edward Bulwer-Lytton***

In India, September 5<sup>th</sup> is celebrated as Teacher’s Day as a mark of tribute to the contribution made by teachers to the society. The 5<sup>th</sup> of September is the birthday of a great teacher Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, who was a staunch believer of education, and a well-known diplomat, scholar, and President of India. Teacher’s Day is one of the occasions that is looked forward by the teachers and students alike. This year, the students at New Light, Second Shelter and Soma Home dressed up as representations of their teachers and entertained us. They also performed to the tunes of popular Bollywood and Hollywood music, enacted skits and recited poems written by great poets. On this day the students made us realize what it means to be a teacher and we were also reminded of what it felt like when we were students.



On September 24<sup>th</sup>, we received a fantastic donation from Samantha. What a delight it was for all of us here!! Thank you so much for donating clothes, bed linen, medicine, books, crayons, craft items and toys for the children at New Light. We are so grateful to you for your gifts! The children were just overwhelmed.



[Crayons of Hope](#) Foundation is a not for profit organization with a mission to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable children by creating scope for reflection, self-expression and peer learning at an early age by developing the habit of reading for sheer joy. On September 29<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Swati Moitra, Chief Operating Officer, walked into Khela Ghar with her team and helped the young aspiring boys build a hyper cool library of their own using just a wall. They equipped it with a start-up stash of 100 books and a world map, a light bulb and a few more accessories to begin with and also helped in





electing a little librarian to take care of it. Rahul Shaw was elected to be the librarian of Wall O Books. Kudos to him! They aspire to take one child and connect him to

another child in another part of the country using just a postcard. On October 15<sup>th</sup>, they also set up a Wall O Books at Soma Home. To know more visit

[www.wallobooks.org](http://www.wallobooks.org) / [www.facebook.com/wallobooks](https://www.facebook.com/wallobooks). New Light would like to thank Crayons of Hope Foundation for their association with us and for this amazing initiative.



On September 30<sup>th</sup>, the girls at Soma Home witnessed and were a part of a most engaging workshop on Sexual and Reproductive Health conducted by our volunteer from USA, Gina Guddat. She has been a part of New Light for the past few days and has been an amazing volunteer. Our association with Gina is through Village Volunteers.

Huge congratulation to Amar Gupta, one of New Light's champions! Amar was the winner of the 2D animation film category by India International Animation and Cartoon Film Festival (IIACFF-2015). We are incredibly proud of you Amar. May you always create magic with your mouse!!



On October 8<sup>th</sup>, Kara Kahler, a pilot by profession and a volunteer at New Light conducted a workshop on aviation and related information, and a morality development workshop with the children at Soma Home. Thank you Kara! The children had a wonderful time!!



The Weekend Leader.com (TWL) is a pioneer in positive journalism - a one of its kind media venture managed by experienced journalists with a self-imposed mandate to focus primarily on positive news and features. Headquartered in the South Indian city of Chennai, TWL's vision is global and driven by universal values. New Light Kolkata featured as "A chance trip down the lanes of Kalighat changed my life." We would like this opportunity to thank Mr. Gurvinder Singh for featuring us and for compiling such a great article! Read the article here: <http://www.theweekendleader.com/Heroism/2275/new-life.html>

In mid-October, Soma girls participated in the Reliance Life drawing Competition - Heartiest congratulations to Kajol Mullick, Winner and Neha Sengupta, Runners Up.





On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, a New Light team of staff and students participated in the Annual Cake Mixing event at Flury's. Thank you to The Park Hotel Kolkata and Apeejay House group for being a front runner in

service to community always. It was such an exciting and joyous day for the kids of New Light. Thanks to all the members of Cactus and all others for showing the way with your music, love, engagement and guidance. Team New Light is extremely thankful to all for sharing these moments with the young.



**King:** *The two of you wander about the island of cards restlessly - you swim in the water, climb hills, clear paths through the forests with an axe. Why?*

**Prince:** *You people keep sitting up, twisting to the side, turning your backs, rolling on the ground. Why?*

**King:** *Such is our custom.*

**Prince:** *Such is our desire.*

**King:** *That's dangerous. Desire in this land of cards! What do you think, friends?*

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, New Light hosted the annual Carnival. The theme of this year's carnival was Tasher Dosh, Land of Cards, one of the most significant and popular opera by Rabindranath Tagore. The participants presented Tasher Dosh through a collage / fusion of audio-visual, dance, music, mime and other elements of stagecraft and what we spectated was not the regular dance drama as we know. A big round of applause to Pritam Chakraborty and his entire team for presenting to us this enchanting dance drama and for their continuous dedication, time and support to the children of New Light in order that they could put up such a splendid show! Special thanks to Nilanjan Basu for capturing the moments to remember.





On November 9<sup>th</sup>, we hosted the Light Space Opening. The gates for the photography school The Light Space are now open for the survivors of human trafficking and those vulnerable to trafficking and gender based violence. Classes on every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. For more info visit [www.thelightspace.org](http://www.thelightspace.org). The Light Space is

in partnership with US based photographer, Brooke Shaden Photography, US based non-profit Blossomy and New Light.



On November 16<sup>th</sup>, the children at New Light spent a wonderful time with ALL Kolkata Chapter, a non-profit organization; one of the apex International Women's Chamber operating from India. The organization represents women leadership and acts as an active agent for social change by boosting education and women empowerment in & around India. Thank you ALL for bringing joy and laughter on the faces of the children at New Light Kolkata on a special occasion as Children's Day!



Shout out to Lindsay Daniels Photography! With the help of MasterLab, Lindsay Daniels organized a photography fundraiser for New Light. Thank you for your continued support and your enthusiasm about our work.

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, we honored World Aids Day and the goal of ending aids by 2030. The day wouldn't have been such a huge success without the support of Ms. Antara Banerjee, Dr. Mousumi Chatterjee, the entire team of Rotary Club of Greater Kolkata and, of course, the entire team of Standard Chartered Bank, Chowringhee, for their demonstration on prevention of HIV/Aids. The federal theme of World Aids Day was: The time to act is now. We couldn't agree more. We also celebrated New Light's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary!





In November, we also welcomed [Effect Expeditions](#), who brought a team of individuals from Google and Salesforce to learn about human trafficking and work on tech-based solutions to end it. We are grateful for their partnership!



In December, we were incredibly fortunate to recognize one of our all-star New Light students. Krishna Sarkar... We are so proud of you. You have become the real Ambassador for the mission of New Light. A real champion. Krishna Sarkar was a keynote speaker at the Women of the World breakfast meet organized by [Seattle International Foundation](#) in Seattle, where she will be sharing the stage with none other than the incredible power house Dr. Kiran Bedi woman extraordinaire. This annual event brings together over 300 leaders from philanthropy, media, business and the nonprofit sector to discuss and advance Washington state's role in global development, and in particular the importance of advancing the economic and legal rights of women and girls around the world.



Krishna, the child of a woman in the sex trade, has been with New Light since the time the organization was founded. When it was no longer safe for Krishna to continue to live with her mother in Kalighat, where she would have been an easy prey for traffickers; New Light shifted her to Soma Home. She was later shifted to Sonar Tori in 2012 when she turned 18 years of age. Krishna has successfully completed her high school education and is now enrolled in a higher secondary school in Class 12. Along with studies, she has immense interest in Kathak (Indian Classical Dance) and has been undergoing training for many years. She aspires to become a Kathak Teacher and wants to look after her family on her own terms, one day.



Thank you SIF for giving life to this story of triumph over fate! May Krishna's life motivate and inspire millions of young women around the globe to claim their own space under the sun. There are innumerable people to thank, who have helped Krishna become who she is today. Gratitude to all of them.





His name is Anirban and he is a recipient of an education donation made by Dr. Sumit R. Das. He is honoured to have received this scholarship and is grateful for the opportunities it will provide him in pursuing his major in Physics. Without a doubt, this scholarship will play a key role in achieving his educational dreams. Thank you Dr. Das, Department Chair (Department of Physics & Astronomy, University of Kentucky), for your generous contribution and for investing in the futures of students like Anirban. *(Picture with Mr. Shibnarayan Bhattacharjee, Trustee, New Light.)*

Thank you Laxton Junior School and Mr. Potter for your very kind donation. Your generosity will make an immediate difference in the lives of the children at New Light. The donation received is accepted wholeheartedly by the staff and children of New Light. You are making a difference! Thanks again for your kindness. Also thanks to Mr. Vikash Jayaswal for your time, patience and help throughout the whole process.



***“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”  
- Leo Tolstoy***

In a crime that sparked sustained and angry protests in several cities in India and around the world, a 23-year-old student was gang raped and beaten in Delhi, India, on December 16, 2012. She died from her injuries 13 days later. On December 18, 2015, we walked for change. We walked for Nirbhaya. Alone. We walked to mark Zero Tolerance day for rape in India. A day to observe genuine equality and foster mutual respect between the sexes. We do not cry for vengeance but a demand for justice and equal rights in safe public space.





Despite the outpouring of public anger, little appears to have changed in the past three years, as we hear of new incidents every day. It is time to make Nirbhaya the symbol of courage and resistance by immortalizing her spirit by creating a National Day in the memory of every woman who has suffered abuse and violence in the country and anywhere in the world.



We also want to recognize Fatima (name changed). We are so proud of you - for the strength you have shown in fighting your battle. In December, Fatima, a Victim-turned-Survivor-turned-Anti-Trafficking Advocate, had a great reunion with her family! Fatima stands with her mother and an activist from South Bengal at the New Light Media Centre.



Uber kolkata and New Light came together to celebrate the season of giving. By selecting SLEIGH on the Uber app, the Uber elves came to the doorstep to collect the supplies that people wished to donate. Read more: [t.uber.com/UberSLEIGH](https://t.uber.com/UberSLEIGH)

Our very last event of the year was celebrating Christmas with our New Light family. It was a peaceful and love-filled evening. Fun was had by all!



We ended our year in thanks. We are especially grateful for all of the volunteers who have donated their time and resources helping New Light to fulfill our vision. Special thanks to Natascha Rissmann, Anna-Lynn Ridderbusch, Sarah Rogers, Martha Van Heerden, Megan Powers, Sarah Harrison, Sarah Bartley, Carlos Perez Osorio, Maria, Bernadita, Javier Servente, Vidhi Jhawar, Zach Wagner, Samantha Clement, Victoria Saha, Chelsea Cendrowski, Beth Hill, Emmy Wagner, Kathleen Daly, Nikita Srmbikal, Tanya Malik, Bhashwar Faisal Khan, Anchita Sen, Shikha Jain, Camilla Midtgaard Eriksen, Olivia Blythe, Rachel Durrant, Ankita Sen Negi, Ananya Barua, Mayukh Ghosh, Hetal Ganatra, Anuja Bhanot, Omkar Pradhan, Anwasha Das, Neeraj Nayal, Kevin, Gina Guddat, Kara Kahler, Shreya Kundu, Anuradha Sarkar, Joshita Medhi, Ramon Galvan, Dipali Das, Carly Shipmaker, Gaurav Hinduja, Joy Dasgupta, Srijita Banerjee, Barbara Hartley, Frances Gillard, Karin Linn Dimmlich, Dayna White, Kshama Kanakoor, Katelyn Kearner, Ben Regan, Daryl Simons, Sukanya Burman, Inna Dagman, Sayantani Mukherjee, Shraavan Nevatia, Vijali Hamilton, Cristina Gonzalez, Poulomi Sarkar, Aprita Chaudhury, Bikash Jaiswal, Quico de Sals, Francese Sales, Alsina Briongos, and Melissa Jane.

We also want to thank our gracious donors without whom New Light would not continue running year after year. Special thanks to Fundacion Meridional, Ben Harper, 18 for 18- Serinda Swan, Federacion Mundo Cooperante, The People for Progress INC, Force Film Foundation INC, CTM Sister Productions, Eighty Eight Bikes, Clifton Foundation INC, West Side School (Gibraltar), BONO Direkthilfe, Commonwealth Foreign Exchange INC, Shadhika Project INC, Les Enfants des Personnes, Amistad International, French American Charitable Trust, INDITEX, Siddha Group, Beauty for Freedom, Drink for Good, Art in Motion, Batey 106 Project, Rotary Club of Chowringhee, PPI, and Soumitra Ashray. Again, it would not be possible to run the various programs that New Light runs without your continued support.

May the New Year be filled with an abundance of love and joy that only a mind without fear can experience.

Be free ... Travel light ... Give unconditionally ... Receive graciously ... Let the illusion provide true direction.

Sincerely Yours,

Urmi Basu and the New Light Team

