



TOGETHER
WE CAN...
NOURISH.
EDUCATE.
STOP ABUSE.
BE THE DIFFERENCE.

New Light Annual Newsletter
2016

2016 will pass. But it will pass only at its own pace. Not a second faster nor slower, no matter how desperately we wish for it to end quickly. And its passage does not automatically guarantee everything hard, dark and painful to magically disappear from our lives. Nor does the new year hold guarantee of being a year where every child born will survive, every person living by a precarious existence will find home and hearth, every woman will go to sleep feeling secure and respected and entire humanity will rejoice in the glory of love and peace. For that to happen globally, we all need to assume our universal responsibility of effecting that transformation.

Yes 2016 has been a terrible year with more news of war, displacement and suffering. This was the year when the impact of war has far exceeded the days after the WW II. But all we need to do is to actually take a moment to remember that terrible things have been done to humans by humans all through the different periods of recorded history. And every time we see such suffering we say never before ... Never again. Unfortunately, history continues on its path and humanity continues to suffer from short term amnesia. How is it possible that we have a pained memory of the past and let it be continued into the world of our children in the future.

The Holocaust



The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived "racial inferiority": Roma (Gypsies), the disabled, and some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others). Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, and behavioral grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah's Witness and homosexuals. By 1945, the Germans and their collaborators killed nearly two out of every three European Jews.¹

The Holocaust claimed the lives of 11 million people.

What did we learn? What are we doing to make sure it doesn't happen to anyone, anywhere again in the world?

¹ <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005143>

The Bengal Famine



As WWII was unfolding in Europe, more than 3 million people lost their lives to malnutrition, related diseases and starvation. The Bengal famine of 1943 occurred in undivided Bengal (now independent Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal) in 1943. And mind you it was no natural calamity!

Are we being informed and mindful enough to make sure that this world doesn't face food insecurity of this nature ever again?

The Rwandan Genocide:



The Rwandan genocide, which began in the April of 1994 was one of the worst atrocities in living memory. It took just 100 days to massacre as much as 20 percent of the country's population, decimate its infrastructure and sow the seeds of regional conflicts still to come. Rwanda burned, suffered and died as we all chose to look in another direction.

Let this not be repeated in our watch again.

Kosovo Conflict:



The Kosovo conflict (1998–99) in which ethnic Albanians opposed ethnic Serbs and the government of Yugoslavia in Kosovo. In 1998, Serbian special police and, eventually, Yugoslav armed forces attempted to reassert control over the region. Atrocities committed by the police, paramilitary groups, and the army caused a wave of refugees to flee the area. After a cease-fire organized by western powers, The Yugoslav and Serbian forces responded with a ruthless counteroffensive and engaged in a program of ethnic cleansing, displacing hundreds of thousands of people into Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro.²

As the conflict continued, Serbian forces and paramilitaries implemented a systematic campaign to ethnically cleanse Kosovo through various manners including forcible displacement, looting of businesses and homes, use of Albanians as human shields, detention, rape and more. The number of victims whose bodies have been burned or destroyed may never be known, but enough evidence has emerged to conclude that probably around 10,000 Kosovar Albanians were killed by Serbian forces. However, death represents only one facet of Serbian actions in Kosovo. Over 1.5 million Kosovar Albanians--at least 90 percent of the estimated 1998 Kosovar Albanian population of Kosovo--were forcibly expelled from their homes. Tens of thousands of homes in at least 1,200 cities, towns, and villages have been damaged or destroyed.³

Please watch this quick 10 minute documentary to learn more: <https://youtu.be/ulPsNrMMZ3E>

And in 2016?



² <https://www.britannica.com/event/Kosovo-conflict>

³ https://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/kosovoii/homepage.html

According to the UNHCR:

- ✿ **12.4m** people were newly displaced by conflict or persecution in 2015
- ✿ **24** people a minute were forced to flee in the past year.
- ✿ **54%** of refugees came from just 3 countries: Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia
- ✿ **Half** of all refugees are children under 18. Despite the huge focus on Europe's migrant crisis, the UN said **86%** of the world's refugees were being sheltered in low and middle income countries.
- ✿ Turkey is the biggest host country for refugees worldwide, **with 2.5m people**, followed by Pakistan and Lebanon.



In a world of instantaneous connectivity, it is impossible to be drawn into the arena of death and suffering and not take any action. And all us can do it in our own small but impactful ways.

Nothing frightens the warmongers more than the sound of the peace bell. Let this festive season resound with the sound of that peace bell. Let us band together and say no to war everywhere. Let us hold our governments, leaders, politicians, religious heads accountable to their responsibility of maintaining a world where every child has her deserved right to security, stability and justice.

I am proud to have many friends around the world who are true warriors of peace. They stand up for other people, put their lives on the line, inspire the next generation of activists and bring home the truth about real courage. Love to all of you Nicholas D Kristof, Hernanzin, Shaun Mader, Alex M Kruz, Christine Wright, Peter Kitene, Zuleikha Bethamy, Gereon Wagener, Casey Allred, Maria Melendez, Alphonso and Christina Paradinas, Monica Watkins, Belabhatia, Alban Delpino, Mari Carmen Sanzarranz, Aristrides Barmejo, Alex and Jared Lustig, and Tom O'Malley.

As we say goodbye to 2016, let us recommit ourselves to making the new year not only a better year but the greatest year ever when the world comes together to change the axis of its moral bearing. Have a good end to a terrible year and a great beginning to a grand year. Happy 2017 to family and friends. Deepest gratitude to everyone at New Light and all those who keep it going from strength to strength!

Love and Peace,

Urmi Basu

New Light 2016 in review....



We started the year off with a victory! Soma Home girls participated in the 5th W. Bengal State Boxing Meet where 5/6 reached the semi-final and final round. We are so proud of you!

For the first time ever in Kolkata, Bengali cult rock band Cactus and New Light came together to nurture the talent of marginalized kids who have been born with a rare vocal power and to provide a platform for mentoring that talent. During the month of January, members of Cactus taught the kids who have shown a strong inclination towards singing and music. On February 1st, we had a grand concert where the kids shared the stage with the internationally renowned band.

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The event called #BeBand created a landmark moment in the city where charity was not about donating material gifts but fostering the inherent talent of these underprivileged kids who do not get the chance to shine. New Light and the participating students are hugely honored by this extraordinary gesture of commitment and unconditional love shown by the rock band. We are astounded to note what can be achieved if one pushes their limit and boundaries of imagination and continues to believe in their dreams. The participating students of New Light - Rani Dey, Shibani Singh, Sudipto Saha, Sambhu Thakur and Rakesh Singh and the Bangla rock band Cactus

showed us from 'what one is' to 'what one can be' at the concert. Kudos to the spirit of audacity that the band has shown and a very big thank you to all our supporters - Designer Sayon Mitra, Vocalist Kumar Mukherjee, The Astor Hotel Kolkata, Supreeta Singh, Calcutta Chronicles Media, 91.9FM Friends, Snehasis Pramanik and all our donors, partners and well-wishers who helped make this event a huge success!



In early February, we held a Tamalpa ArtCorps Workshop. We are grateful for their partnership! To learn more about Tamalpa, watch this quick video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZ8DiUw4mWo&feature=youtu.be>



In February, we were grateful that Kolkata photographer, Alakananda Nag, selflessly gave her time to bring an inspirational lesson to students at The Light Space. Everyone was fully engaged and brimming with questions!! We are so lucky to have such a valuable resource sharing her experience with the program.

1 in 3 women across the planet will be beaten or raped during her lifetime. That's ONE BILLION WOMEN AND GIRLS. Every February through March 8th, thousands of Risings take place in hundreds of countries across the world and within local communities – to show the world what one billion looks like and shine a light on the rampant impunity and injustice that survivors of various forms of violence face.



On 14th of February, the women and girls from Kalighat rose through dance to express rage against injustices, and to show the power of global solidarity and collective action. They danced to express joy and community and celebrated the fact that together, violence can be defeated. They rose to show a determination to create a new kind of consciousness – one where violence will be resisted until it is unthinkable. Thank you Amy Parrish for the lovely pictures!





This February, we were fortunate enough to be able to hold 3 Kalpataru projects. The first one was with the women of New Light. The second project took place in Ranchi, Jharkhand and the third project took place at the Dum Dum Central Correctional Home, which was New Light's first time working with these women. The activities included meditation through yoga and pranayam, storytelling through dance and movement, self expression through paint and clay modeling, restorative health care involving Ayurvedic nutrition and diet, beauty spa and self-care leading to recovery, healing and higher self esteem.

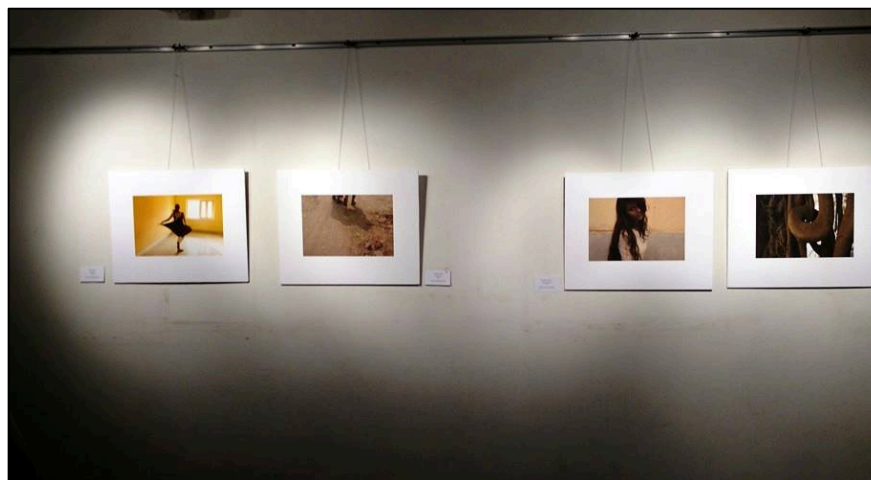
A restorative creative workshop for the survivors of trafficking led by Story Dancer Zuleikha in partnership with New Light, moves from grace to grace, as the women surprise themselves with the gradual unfolding of their undiscovered identities and creative potential. Nothing could be more profound than hearing the stories of these forgotten women. They shared the horrific stories of brutality suffered and rose in courage and forgiveness. Thank you Story Dancer Zuleikha of The Story Dancer Project and artist Falguni Bhatt Sanghvi for partnering with New Light on this extraordinary project to help survivors of trafficking. Thank you also to Ashango and [#yoginibextyrer](#), your spirit and love brought unbound joy for the women. We truly believe 'Kalpataru' a Sanskrit word for the divine tree of Indian mythology that imparts energy for changing one's destiny will also help these women to find resilience, hope and resources.



On February 23rd, the New light Media Center hosted the Jess Charnow Impromptu Quartet.



On February 26th, we celebrated the first group of graduates of The Light Space, Kolkata Chapter. There was a student exhibition as well as a special performance inaugurating our event by the participants of Blossomy's Tamalpa ArtCorp program. Congratulations to the first group of graduates Ms. Krishna Sarkar, Ms. Shabnam Shisodia aka Ishika Shisodia, Ms. Mamoni Barik, Ms. Puja Sarder and Ms. Ruby Shisodia of The Light Space. Big thank you to our educator, Amy Parrish and our partners Brooke Shaden Photography and Laura Price of Blossomy.





Thank you Monsieur Damien Syed, French Consul in Kolkata, for choosing to visit New Light on the occasion of International Women's Day celebrated on the 8th of March. We are honored and inspired. We will stay committed to take our common mission of equality, justice and protection for the marginalized forward.



In March, John Bagul, Principal of South City International School Kolkata, invited the students of New Light Kolkata to be a part of the concert series featuring American pianist Jennifer Heemstra and pianist Chanda Vanderhart organised by Calcutta Classics. Congratulations Jennifer Heemstra for your continuous effort in bringing great music to people who have limited opportunity of experiencing it.

Uber and New Light came together to celebrate Women's Day on March 10th. Members of the Uber team and volunteers came to 2 centres, New Light and Khela Ghar, and conducted educational activities



with the children. They conducted various activities such as art, craft, games, music, dance etc. Refreshments were also served by the Uber Team at the end of the program. Thank you Uber for this initiative and we look forward to an association in the future!

On March 24th, we celebrated the most colorful and vibrant festival of India – Holi. Marked with much fun and fervor throughout the country and the children at New Light Kolkata surely believed the same! Songs, water balloons and bright colors were the major highlights of Holi this year. Bright colored powders, smeared on the faces, signify energy, life and joy. Let the colors of Holi spread the message of peace and happiness.





New Light thanks Kolkata Classics Club for selecting it to be a partner organization for the first event of the Hathor series in Kolkata. The series aimed to bring a rare musical experience along with services of



healthcare, immunization, civic and financial access to the children and women of the Kalighat community. The evening of April 4th saw highly talented and accomplished classical pianists Jennifer Heemstra and Chanda VanderHart present a unique four hand presentation of both classical and contemporary compositions. The crowd was brought to its feet by the charming and talented Sandeep Vyas & DJ Sanjeev who performed both western and Bollywood songs in his inimitable energetic style. More than 250 women and 200 children participated in the health fair having access to medical care and leaving happy with their bags of presents.



The purpose of this evening was to bring together communities and individuals who are challenged in accessing the beauty and joy of music transcending barriers of socio-economic levels, education, class and lineage. Happy and proud of this unique partnership.



In addition to this event, more than 200 women were recipients of groceries raised by the team. Special thanks to all sponsors and donors for making it such a huge success.

“Financial independence and owning your own bank account is not just about being liberated; it also brings happiness and lets one live life on own terms. Nothing else can bring the happiness and confidence that a penny earned oneself can.”

– As stated by one of the women of the red light community at Kalighat.

For the first time ever, bank accounts were opened for 24 women from the red light community to support them in living great lives and supporting their families to a huge extent. A big thank you to Punjab National Bank for supporting and encouraging the women of the community to be truly financially independent!





On April 16th, we hosted Train of Light, a project created with the intention to offer children and young people a total creative expression through the body language of theater, music and art. The project was conceived by Brahma Khyapa and Luigi



Gabriello in partnership with New Light with the purpose of discovering the individuality and talent of each child furthermore developing a strong sense of community feeling. We unite, share and work together to build the Train of Light and travel to spread the message of love, humanity and peace across the globe.

On April 20th, New Light Kolkata wholeheartedly thanked the law enforcement agency members of Kolkata Police for their exemplary support in the successful recovery of two minor boys from Darjeeling, West Bengal who were found approximately 614 Kms. away from home at Sealdah, West Bengal, India. We must look for the soul behind the uniform. Appreciation for the officers involved in the case who can not be named. Many thanks to Supriyo Das, Snehasis Pramanik and Md. Asiq for the operation and Urmi Basu and Sima Banerjee for the actual action. Kudos to the entire team! Together with Marg Ngo Darjeeling, we were able to rescue these two young boys and therefore believe that together we are a force for good! Proud to be your working partner [MARG NGO Darjeeling](#).

On April 25th, we partnered with the NGO Days for Girls, educating the girls on menstrual and sexual health. Together we are enabling more women to have access to quality, safe and sustainable feminine hygiene. Thank you so much for your partnership!



At New Light, we believe that our greatest asset, and the key to our success, is our people. We believe that each of us works with a sense of dignity, pride and satisfaction at New Light. We started the First Staff Meeting for the FY 2016-17 on this note addressed by Ms. Urmi Basu, Executive Director, New Light. We also take this opportunity to welcome the new members in to our family: Konkona Roy, Mohona Chakraborty and Soma Guhathakurata.

The first time you enter water, you really feel that your life is on the line, but after persevering through the dread, you find that the river offers adventure and joy. We loaded up 38 girls onto rickety wooden boats to see where the River Ganga flows. May 7th was the first time any of the children had ever been on a boat. We will never forget days like today. The kids were bursting with joy and soaked up every minute of the 60 minute boat ride. Thank you to our volunteers Annabelle Gueguen and Brooke Lindee for being a part of this exciting and memorable trip!!





“The least a human could do is plant a tree to compensate the harm they cause to the planet daily.”

On May 7th, we participated in the event, The Importance of Trees for Children: Have Fun, Get Dirty, and Plant Something! Trees are as much important to our life as food and water. Life becomes very difficult without trees or we can say that life would be finished because trees are most important aspect of giving us healthy and wealthy life stated our volunteer Ramona Marshall to the girls at Soma Home. If we want to save our planet for the future and improve our present day life too, planting trees is a must.



Rabindra Jayanti is an annually celebrated cultural festival, prevalent among the Bengalis around the world, in the remembrance of Rabindranath Tagore's birthday anniversary on May 10th. Like every year, cultural programmes & events, such as: Kabipranam – the songs (Rabindra Sangeet), poetry, dance and drama, written and composed by Tagore, were organised across all the shelters of New Light.



In May, we welcomed James Simmons and Avy Harrison and the students of the School of Business, Psychology, Nursing and Public Administration from Portland University, Oregon at New Light. We enjoyed the visit tremendously and are grateful for your support!

Thank you fellow Rotarian President Anita Nan Banerjee Rotary Club of Calcutta Rabindra Sarobar for visiting New Light Kolkata along with District Governor Jhulan Basu, Past District Governor Uttam Ganguli, Rotarian Prodosh Chatterjee, Rotarian Brojogopal Kundu and Rotarian Sandip. We are honored by the presence of so many community leaders on May 17th. Thank you members of Rotary Club of Rabindra Sarobar for your support.





May 20th became an important day for New Light and Village Volunteers as the [Mukti Project](#) came to life and we signed the agreement for space. MUKTI is an empowerment-income generation health project in partnership with [Village Volunteers](#) and with technical support from [Aakaar Innovations](#)! Another significant

step toward self-reliance. We followed the signing with the inauguration of the MUKTI project on May 24th. Training started the following day and the enthusiastic group of women could not wait to begin. Congratulations and thanks to the entire team at New Light, Shana Greene, Village Volunteers, Jaydeep Mondal and Aakaar Innovations.

On June 1st, training continued under Arnab Paul from Aakaar Innovations, Mumbai.



On June 13th, we took a special trip to the beach - this was the children's first time on a beach! Our volunteer from the USA, Brooke Lindee, had been planning this trip for over two weeks and insisted that we take the children from Soma Home and New Light Shelter II to the beach. During these two weeks, the staff at New Light Kolkata, Sima Banerjee, Krishna Mondal, Urmi Ray, Supriyo Das, Puja Prasad, and Sutapa Bhattacharya, made the necessary arrangements to make this trip a memorable one for the children and the entire team! Mandarmani is a seaside resort village in the state of West Bengal, India, lies in East Midnapore district and at the northern end of the Bay of Bengal. It is one of the large and fast developing seaside resort village of West Bengal. It is almost 180 km from Kolkata Airport on the Kolkata - Digha route. Red crabs crawling around the 13 km long beach is a special attraction of Mandarmani. It is argued to be the longest driveable beach in India.



over two weeks and



Thank you www.necessities.me for your interest in collaborating with New Light Kolkata Every penny counts in the kind of work we do and your support means a great deal. Gratitude to all in this great initiative!!

Belle has a deep passion for the transformative powers available to girls, both old and young, in the practice of martial arts. While her primary focus over the last decade has been in the Japanese style of karate known as Shotokan, Belle's 20 years of martial arts experience includes formal training in Muay Thai with cross training in Krav Maga, Boxing, and Jiu Jitsu. Early martial arts experiences include several years of Tae Kwon Do, as well. Belle competed in karate, winning over six U. S. AAU national titles in fighting and forms competitions, and won a World Championship in fighting in the 2009 WKC Karate Championships in Fort Lauderdale, FL. Belle has also been trained in the women's self defense program called Fight Like a Girl (FLAG), and has studied predator and victim behaviors as they relate to violence against women and children. She continues her learning and training, and is overjoyed to put her knowledge to use with Green Tara Project. At the end of June, for two weeks, Belle provided self defence classes to our girls at Soma Home and Sonar Tori. Thank you Belle for this incredible opportunity!



On June 28th, girls from Soma Home participated in the 'Crucible of Dreams 2016' - An initiative taken up by the Niche Club of La Martiniere Calcutta for Boys, to provide a platform to NGO children to showcase their talent. The girls from Soma Home secured the 3rd position in the dance competition. Congratulations girls!

At the beginning of July, the girls of Soma Home performed a theatrical performance combining songs, spoken dialogue, acting, and dance. The story and emotional content of the theatre included humor, pathos, love, anger which was communicated through the words, music, movement and technical aspects of the entertainment as an integrated whole. The audience was mesmerized by Mother-Daughter relationship portrayed through the musical theatre. We thank our dear volunteer Brooke Lindee for conceptualizing the entire show and to Steinunn Ruth Trisha, Tiffany Hamidjaja and Meghan Hampsey for supporting the show throughout.





On July 14th, Casey Allred of Effect.org brought the second volunteers' expedition to New Light for a deeper understanding of the issues that contribute to human trafficking in this part of the world. The seven member group from Google and Salesforce addressed technology barriers to create solutions through a hackathon over the course of a few days. Thank you

Project Manager, Sandy Singh, and the entire group for partnering with New Light. From Kalighat to Sonagachhi and Behala to Falta the team held together brilliantly in the face of experiences that nothing could have prepared them for. Thank you Arunabha Biswas of Sundarikabartika for helping us visit the brick kilns of the south. What a rare opportunity!



July 23rd marked a significant day of transition for some of New Light's little girls. Gouri Mallick (6 1/2 years), Sagorika Das (8 years), and Sonia Mondal (7 years) are moving into Soma Memorial Girls Home today. Thank you Mundo Cooperante and Fundacio Meridional for helping us to sustain this beautiful home for the past ten years. Amistad International and Karen Kotoske we remember your unconditional love and support each day of our existence. Your help with seed money is a beautiful garden today. Thank you Mari Carmen, Sanz Arranz, Vera Kolesnik, Berta Villar and Luchy Villar for your life saving care for Gouri in the first days of her life. Thank you Christine Wright for your loving and warm embrace for Gouri each day of your stay. Dr. Shankar Chatterjee, Dr. Udit Gupta and Dr. Sukanto Sarker, thank you for having given these children a life full of hope and health. Deepest gratitude. Thank you Sima Banerjee, Mita Mondal, Sanjeev Sen, Sanjib Ghosh and each and every other team member for raising the girls the way you have. Thank you Urmi Ray for your ever present heart in giving the children the best we can. And thank you Krishna Mondal for dedicating each day of your life for the children of New Light shelter. I know there are still so many of you who have given your love and care for these children ... I send you my gratitude. Francesca Marino we are on this journey together.. The best is not here yet.



On July 29th, Actor-Activist Bobby Chakraborty conducted an anti-addiction workshop at New Light. We are proud to have you on board Bobby. 'I AM THE KING OF MY MIND' or 'AMI AMAR MONER RAJA' was the mantra of the anti-addiction campaign organized by Bobby Chakraborty, inside the deep lanes of Kalighat at New Light, where addiction, tobacco, alcohol or drugs, is very common. The campaign proved to be a huge success amongst the women of the red-light community.

On July 30th, we hosted the 2nd graduation for the Light Space. New dreams, new aspirations for the graduates - Krishna Sarkar, Shabnam Sisodia (Ishika), Pooja Sardar and Ruby Sisodia. Way to go girls!!

On August 4th, we celebrated a fantastic accomplishment! It was a proud moment for us at New Light! New Light Kolkata student, Rukshana Khatoon, joined IIHM, International Institute of Hotel Management, Kolkata. Thank you Dr. Subarna Bose and Sanjukta Bose for your consistent support to New Light year after year. Personal gratitude to each and every member of Chowringhee Rotary Trust for your help. Congratulations Rukshana!



On August 15th, we hosted an independence day celebration with the members of Rotary Club of Calcutta Golf Garden, students and faculty from IIHM, International Institute of Hotel Management, members from Ixia Technologies and our international volunteers. The day started with the flag hosting by Ms. Urmi Basu, talks on importance of Independence Day followed by a cultural program by Mr. Saikat Mitra, President, Rotary Club of Calcutta Golf Garden, Ms. Baisakhi Majumder, Secretary, Ms. Papia Adhikary, member, Ms. Anita Nan Banerjee, Past President - Rotary Club of Calcutta Rabindra Sarovar, Mr. Jhulan Basu, Past Rotary District Governor – Rotaract, RI District 3291 - Kolkata, South Bengal & Andamans and other prominent members. 175 children participated in the programme. A sumptuous lunch was sponsored by IIHM for all the participants

of the programme. The children greatly enjoyed the programme which gave them platform to perform, interact with members of different organizations and thus enhance their skills and abilities.



On August 16th, we were proud to announce that we are partnering with TamashaSD, in order to raise awareness and funds for their cause! Keep an eye out for ways you can help TamashaSD and New Light promote gender equality in underdeveloped regions of India through education and life skill training. In the meantime, check out the video below to learn more about this amazing charity!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4N-7UzV4ho&feature=youtu.be>

On August 16th, we also said “See you soon” to our volunteer, Tom. It is hard to say goodbye to someone who is less of a volunteer and more of a friend.

On August 17th, we sent big hugs and love from India to all skydivers! We are so appreciative of all of you - Serinda Swan and the whole team! Thank you so much! So far they have raised \$112,000 as a part of the 18 for 18 Project Rescue! To learn more, please visit: <https://www.crowdrise.com/18for18/fundraiser/serindaswan>



Beauty for Freedom Ambassador, Ashley Ramos, produced a music event in Soho Tuesday Aug. 30th as a fundraiser for the Project India initiative. Beauty for Freedom, in partnership with New Light, will teach over 100 survivors of human trafficking and at-risk youth in October as a part of the Project India Initiative.

Tagore's vision of celebrating Raksha Bandhan or Rakhi was totally different. According to him, Rakhi is not only a festival of the siblings but it's a celebration of



mankind and of humanity. He promoted the concept of unity and harmony among all members of the society. He believed that it is the responsibility of all the members of the society to help and protect each other and encourage a harmonious social life. At New Light, we believe the same. On August 26th,



Sandipan volunteered to celebrate Rakhi with 20 women from Kalighat along with the children. He started a campaign where he collected money from his friends to buy the gifts for Rakhi. He made stronger our belief that Raksha Bandhan festival is the celebration of fellow feeling and concern. Kudos to you Sandipan!



On September 3rd, the kids at New Light Kolkata had a mid year Christmas!! Old friend Aristides Bermejo arrived like Papa Noel with a bagful of goodies. Thank you Cristina and Afrika for your love and commitment to the kids.

“A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning.”

On September 6th, we gathered to celebrate Teachers' Day. The day was observed to pay respect to all the teachers at New Light Kolkata. The children performed and made arrangements themselves to make the day special. We thank all the children who have come into our lives through New Light and without them we would not have been able to become what we are today.



On September 16th, we celebrated another proud moment for the New Light family. From three years to eighteen, from a shy withdrawn child to a young confident woman... What a journey it has been!! Congratulations Barsha Sarkar for your move from Soma Home to Sonar Tori!



On September 24th, we had a fun trip with the children of New Light to New Town Eco Park. The park is spread across 480 acres of land and is surrounded by a large water body with an island in the middle. The lush green playgrounds and various fun drives have made this a place of attraction for children.

This park is a favorite for the kids as it has several kinds of fun drives and lot of activities to play on the lush green playground. 50 children, accompanied by senior staff members, care givers and our volunteers from Canada and Australia. The children played games on the lush green lawns and were also provided packed boxes of snacks at the end of the day. It was a full day activity and the children came back home at 6:30 pm quite exhausted. The magical moments that the children experienced would make a mark in their memories for quite some time now! We would like to thank Dr. Bonnerji for sponsoring this fun filled trip for the children.



At the beginning of October, there was an air of anticipation for the most important festival in Bengal, and for the Bengalis, Durga Puja! An important aspect of Durga Puja is the tradition of wearing new clothes. It is evident during the puja days when people especially children swank their creaseless dresses. It is an old tradition to buy new clothes during the festive session and new clothes always make children glad. Repeating the gesture since the past couple of

years, New Light Kolkata, like every other year, distributed new clothes to the children at all the shelters run by us - New Light main shelter, New Light Shelter II, Jhinuk, Star Fish,

Soma Home, Sonar Tori and Khela Ghar. Although it is a Hindu festival, religion takes a back seat on these five days in October: Durga Puja in Bengal is also a secular carnival, where people from all backgrounds, regardless of their religious beliefs, participate and enjoy themselves to the hilt. We wish a very happy Durga Puja to everyone!!

Special thank you to the Rotary Club for the donation towards clothing for both the children and the mothers.

Though Monique volunteered at New Light for a considerably short period, she left a deep impression on the minds of the children. Her daughter, Sienna (7 years old) was so touched by the stories of the children at New Light, she wanted to help immediately. She had her first lemonade stand in October and raised money for New Light! She also said she wants to have more lemonade stands – so there is more to come! We whole-heartedly would like to thank Monique and Sienna for this heart warming gesture.



On October 24th, New Light celebrated the 3rd anniversary of “HTS-Operation-Starfish.” New Light started the play school for toddlers and other out of school young children in Sonagachi, the biggest sex worker district in Kolkata, in October 2013. The primary objective is welfare of toddlers and older out of school children whose needs are largely neglected. It has now been 3 years since we have been focusing on providing basic schooling, promoting school going habit and on grooming children to join the mainstream schools at the right age. Equally importantly, the facility addresses the health and nutritional needs of the children; they receive nutritious snacks and lunch. Provisions are also in place for regular health checkups and vaccination.



Happy Birthday Starfish!

On October 25th, we happily announced New Light's association with [Clean Water For Children](#) and Rotary Club of Calcutta, Chowringhee, for setting up tube wells and for providing clean water to children and their families in the Sunderban region of West Bengal in India. The project aims to protect the long term health of the villagers and giving them the chance to a better future.

On October 28th, New Light celebrated Diwali, the festival of lights. The fireworks and the food shared amongst friends and family helped make this festival a happy one for the New Light family. We are so grateful to have celebrated this incredible light-filled festival with one another. Thank you to Shaun Mader and Jared Lustig for capturing our smiling faces.



The end of October and the beginning of November were marked with days full of graffiti art, design thinking, photography, fashion, music, poetry and painting as [Beauty for Freedom's](#) Project India hit the streets of Kolkata. Monica Watkins and her team of artists, creatives, and designers from New York arrived full of energy shortly before Diwali to start the three-week program of workshops for the New Light kids.



The workshops helped the children creatively express themselves while discovering their potential, learning about and embracing their inner beauty and increasing their self-esteem. The team brought art to children who have very little access to it. To learn more about Project India, watch this quick video: <https://vimeo.com/194659754>



We started out with a photography workshop led by Monica Watkins, Suwana Perry and Anirudh Agarwal on Wednesday, October 26th. Anirudh taught 20 New Light Center, Sonar Tori and 2nd Shelter students ages 10-21 the basics of photography and then each team of students was given a camera to take pictures of Kalighat and the surrounding areas. Their pictures will be published in a book and 100% of proceeds from the sales of this book after production costs will go to Beauty for Freedom and New Light.



On Wednesday Nov. 2nd, we had a poetry and writing workshop taught by Karen Francis, Huffington Post, at Soma Home. Check out her

experience published in the Huffington Post here: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/karen-j-francis/a-beautiful-journey-in-ko_b_13573976.html.

Also on Wednesday Nov. 2nd, we hosted Lavanyashakti, a beauty, wellness, fashion and style workshop. Lavanyashakti, the feminine power that rules the universe, is pure of existence and transcends all barriers of human experience. Lavanya Shaktimoyee is one who seeks a higher existence through beauty, courage, compassion and love.





This workshop aimed to expand and explore all aspects of beauty as it is understood in the modern world. With increasing challenges of facing each day in an ever crowded commercial world it is hard to retain one's unique sense of being. Therefore, to create an ever morphing yet beyond seasonal concept of beauty we searched for beauty born of inner purpose, strength, positivity, and action.

Lavanyashakti

Beauty for Freedom and New Light presents a full day beauty and wellness workshop with international beauty, wellness and fashion experts, with an opportunity of having your personal portfolio shot by New York based fashion and celebrity photographer

Wednesday, November 2nd, 2016
9:00am to 8:00pm,
The Rosewood Hall, The Park Hotel, Kolkata

Limited entry of 50 through pre-registration at Rs 5000 only!
E-mail - info@newlightindia.org
Call - 24733132

Entry closes on 29 October, 2016

New Light would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who took out time to be a part of this one-of-a-kind event to make Lavanyashakti a grand success! First and foremost, we have to thank our co-hosts, moderators and experts for the panel:

- ✿ **Monica Watkins**, Founder of Beauty for Freedom and [ART IN MOTION](#), model, artist and philanthropist spoke to the women about self-confidence, skin care, make-up, and fashion. She helped the girls walk down the runway in style. Her vision for not only Lavenashakti, but Project India, is amazing and we were blessed to have her lead us in this workshop.
- ✿ **Diandra Forrest**, an African-American Albino fashion model, taught the women so much more than beauty tips. As an albino growing up within a predominately African American neighborhood, she grew up with teasing and ridiculing. She taught the women that being comfortable in our own skin is absolutely beautiful.
- ✿ **Suwana Perry**, Co-Founder of [Trillion Watts](#) and COO of [Descendant of Thieves](#) clothing brands and Model, taught the girls about skin care, modeling, self-confidence and strong work-ethic. Her smile is contagious and her positivity was felt by everyone in the room. Suwana, after moving to NY after high school graduation, modeled for Elle Magazine (cover), Glamour, Elite, Ford, Q Models, Storm and many more.



- ✿ **Tina Mukherjee**, a leading fashion choreographer who has choreographed some of the biggest shows in Kolkata and other parts of Eastern India, taught the women about the importance of a healthy regime. She is also a fitness enthusiast and she taught the women a quick, at home workout routine to help make fitness a part of daily life. She also shared her tips on modeling and walking the runway, as well as beauty tips and tricks.

- ✿ **Shubha (Pinky) Kenworthy**, a self-taught Kolkata-based artist and former model, shared with us her beauty tips and tricks, including how to maintain our hair and make-up. She also shared expert knowledge on skin treatments. Her

rule: if you can eat it, you can put it on your face.

- ✿ **Rachael Thompson**, originally from Australia, completed her yoga training in Rishikesh with the dream to pass the joy and benefits of yoga practice to others. She started the workshop off in a great tone through pranayam and yoga. Rachael also is a volunteer with New Light and we are so grateful for her yoga expertise.
- ✿ **Shaun Mader**, professional photographer and Creative Director of [Kreativ Works](#). Thank you to Shaun for photographing the entire event, including headshots of the workshop participants.





Thank you also to Snehasis Pramanik for the posters and design and to GL Technologies for the graphics and web design. This incredible day would not have been possible without thanking our venue and media partner [The Park Hotels](#) and [The Telegraph](#). Please read the following article to learn more:

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1161103/jsp/calcutta/story_117121.jsp#.WCmMC-F97eQ

Over the next few weeks, Suwana Perry and Scarlett De La Torre led watercolor painting workshops. Scarlett and Diandra also led a vision-board exercise that the Soma Home girls enjoyed tremendously.



Shaun Mader led our Human Centered Design Workshop with co-facilitators Alex and Jared Lustig. Special thanks to Mistu Saha for her incredible help with translating and co-facilitating. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to be with us for an entire week. After learning the process and the basics of Human Centered Design, the 9 woman team from Sonar Tori tackled the Design Challenge – “How might we improve access to sanitary napkins and menstrual health education?”





Craft stores may be filled with coloring books, craft kits and pre-cut models, but some of the best ways to foster creativity require only the simplest materials and a few complicated directions.

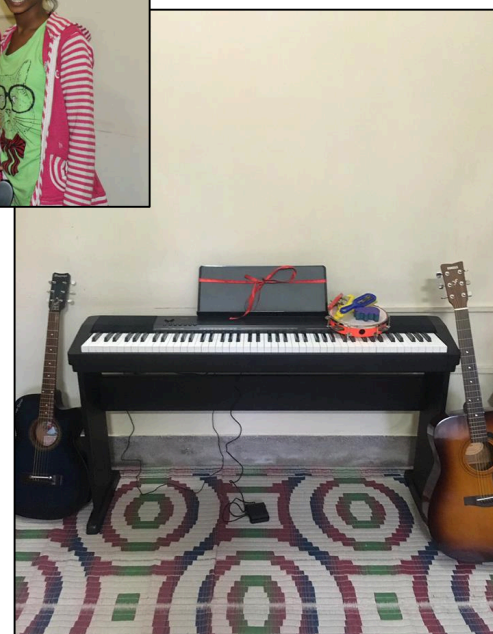


Monica Watkins, Shaun Mader and Anirudh Agarwal, brought the most extraordinary community expression through photography, art and graffiti, bringing love and light to where it is needed the most. Thank you to ODDKREATIVE for the graffiti expertise.

What better way to inspire the imagination of a child than encourage them to paint beautiful, creative murals on the walls they see everyday? So we encouraged the children to go ahead and express themselves. The photographs on the wall are photos that the children took during the photography workshop.



Scarlett De La Torre conducted many music workshops at Khela Ghar and Soma Home as a part of the Beauty for Freedom workshops as well. She taught the children guitar, piano, singing and more, including gifting New Light with a piano and guitars!





On the 14th of November, we had three reasons to celebrate! The children at Khelaghar, the boys' home, not only celebrated Children's Day but also proudly celebrated Khelaghar's 2nd birthday. New Light completed two years in its effort 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 Home provides safe shelter, formal and remedial education, counselling, comprehensive healthcare, nutritious meals, therapeutic, creative and recreational opportunities to the male children, aged between 4 to 18 years of prostitution workers. These services are imperative to ensure their physical safety, and provide them the opportunity to realize their full human potential.



We would like to thank all our well wishers, supporters, donors, volunteers and friends who believed in our common goal and aim to 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 choose a life with dignity.



Along with Khelaghar's birthday, we celebrated Biswajit Gayen's birthday too!! The children sang and danced to celebrate the day. We were honored to have with us Juthica Stangl, Mother of New Light, for the celebration. Also a thank you to Scarlett De La Torre, Alex and Jared Lustig for being a part of this event.



Soma Memorial Girls Home also celebrated Children's Day with song, dance and poetry readings.



On Nov. 19th, the children at New Light main shelter spent a pleasant winter evening at the park.





In mid-November, Avantika Kar traveled on behalf of New Light to the Project Inspire 2016 Grand Finals. New Light, in partnership with Village Volunteers, won the People's Choice Award by raising the highest amount from supportive donors within 30 days, during the crowdfunding stage and the Financial Inclusion Award. Project Inspire: 5 Minutes to Change the World is an initiative to help young change-makers create a better world for women and girls in Asia Pacific. Our project MUKTI runs a biodegradable sanitary pad company which empowers vulnerable women who have lived a life

of abuse, either trafficked or born into inter-generational prostitution, by employing them. Employed women will be equipped with bicycles and micro-loan system of pad supplies to sell to women and girls in the red light district in Kolkata, India, educating on safe hygiene practices.

Piyush Jain, CEO & Founder of Impact Guru, is seen here with the Indian finalists and representatives: Aparna Saxena ([Colorss Foundation](#)), Riyanka Ganguly (Village Volunteers), Avantika Kar (New Light), Aditya Kulkarni, and Avinash Joshi ([CareNx Innovations](#)). Please read the following article to learn more: <http://bwdisrupt.businessworld.in/article/Indian-Organizations-Win-Big-at-Global-Competition-Aimed-at-Empowering-Women-and-Girls-in-Asia-Pacific/25-11-2016-108809/#.WDokPRYuoF8.facebook>

In late November, Urmi Basu spoke to the students at [Swarthmore College](#) in the Pennsylvania, USA. Huge thank you to Swarthmore for hosting Urmi and the discussion of global women empowerment. Please read the following article for more information about Urmi's visit: <http://swarthmorephoenix.com/2016/12/01/from-red-light-to-new-light-urmi-basu-on-global-women-empowermen/>

At the beginning of December, we celebrated New Light's 16th birthday! 16 is a very lovely age filled with magic adventures and never ending energy. So we had to live it up to the fullest extent. Had a ball on our birthday and we even plan to have a blast on the days coming after that and for ever.





On December 1st, New Light along with its partner organizations West Bengal Voluntary Health Association, OFFER India, Global Health Strategy and Network for Positive People, demonstrated information on prevention of HIV/Aids keeping up to the theme of this year's World Aids Day: Hands up for HIV Prevention. The campaign looked at ways to improve prevention strategies, identifying key areas among specific groups of people who are vulnerable to transmission – adolescent girls, young women and transgender in particular.



The welcome speech was addressed by Acting Consul General, Ms. Shelly Dittmar and the keynote speaker was Dr. Jones who spoke about the campaign in detail. The day was followed by a presentation on pediatric HIV: challenges and response, a session on corporate role addressing the discrimination and encouraging inclusion of people living with HIV AIDS, corporate hospital policy/facility in treating people with HIV/AIDS, policy of NACO about mainstreaming of people living with HIV AIDS and a beautiful performance by the children of Anandaghar.



Representatives from New Light spoke on the topic 'Silent suffering of women with HIV in red light area' and 'Voice from the transgender community'. The day ended with a vote of thanks by Dr. Mousumi Rao, Medical Advisor, US Consulate, Kolkata.



The day wouldn't have been such a huge success without the support of The American Consulate who organized the World AIDS Day at the USIS, Kolkata.

We also celebrated World AIDS Day at New Light Kalighat. The sessions included a yoga session by our volunteer, Rachael Thompson, followed by a talk on causes and prevention of HIV/AIDS by Ms. Pratima Basu, Counselor, Chittaranjan Seva Sadan and a talk by Ms. Ksabita Manhotra from Network of Positive People.

We would like to take this opportunity to whole heartedly thank [Innerwheel](#) Club of Calcutta Eastland, Dist 329 for being a part of this special day and spending time with the women from the community and also for their generous donation.

The day ended with much fun and frolic where Ms. Angana Basu taught the women to make jewelry out of thread and beads, which the women enjoyed making a lot cos the desire to create is one of the greatest yearning of the human soul!





As yoga means "Union", the practice of yoga is about strengthening the union between our bodies and our minds and gaining greater control and power over our thoughts. As we become more conscious it leads us to think more positively and is reflected in positive actions and a more peaceful existence to share and pass on to others.



Yoga practice, including the asanas, pranayamas and meditation is so beneficial for children, like anything taught at a young age it is easier to shape yoga into part of the child's lifestyle and create good habits for their future. Teaching yoga to the students at New Light gives them something different to their daily routine and it provides not only physically benefits them by keeping them active it improves their concentration and discipline in a fun engaging way.

Our volunteer, Rachael Thompson has been teaching Yoga to the children at various New Light shelters for the past 2 months and she says:

"Teaching yoga to the various students at New Light has truly been a rewarding experience and I have been overwhelmed at the student's positive energy towards the whole practice of yoga, not just the asanas but the meditation and pranayamas, I have been impressed at how willing the students are to meditate and calm their minds!

Knowing that this is benefiting them physically and mentally is very and is especially important for the well being of the beautiful students of New Light who come from an adverse background."

Thank you Rach, we will miss you and we appreciate all of the time and energy you have given to New Light!

On December 11th, Ben Harper performed a sold-out solo acoustic benefit show at Bimbo's 365 Club in San Francisco. New Light is so incredibly thankful to Ben Harper and his wife, Jaclyn Metfus Harper, for their continued commitment. With your generosity and kindness we are able to continue providing a safe home and education to the boys of Khela Ghar.



rewarding



On December 16th we marched in the memory of every woman who has suffered abuse and violence in India and elsewhere in the world. New Light organized a silent march to build mass awareness about crimes against women and girls, and as a sign of protest against heinous crimes.

While Vijaya Diwas is celebrated in Kolkata, the country forgets the fateful night four years ago when a brave young woman, Jyoti Singh Nirbhaya, was brutalized and gang raped on a bus in Delhi. And on a global scale the plight and impending death of 100,000 civilians including children and women in Aleppo doesn't move the world to action. We are fueled by blinding rage against the atrocities of war and genocide. Let this day not be forgotten. Remembering Nirbhaya.



In mid-December, after eleven hours on the road and crossing three major riverways by car and boat, we sunk the first of a series of deep tube wells (800 plus feet deep) in the remote parts of the Sunderban Mangrove Delta. Thank you Andrea Moeder Spicer and Clean Water for Children New York for partnering with Rotary Club of Calcutta Chowrenghee. Alyshale Wiscoleman your presence is of incredible value to the group. Thank you also to Avantika Kar and Snehasis Pramanik for your constant support. A big thank you to the members of the Sunderban Green Environment Association, you are our inspiration. Thank you to all the donors for your support and faith in us.



Dec. 23 was St. Sebastian School's Annual Sports Day. We are very proud of the girls of Soma Memorial Girls Home!

- Shibani Singh – Won 1st prize in 3 legged race
- Madhobi Kar – Won 1st prize in Flat Race
- Rimpa Shadhukhan – Won 1st prize in 3 legs, 2nd prize in Flat Race
- Sagarika Das - Won 2nd prize in Frog Race
- Ritika Dey – Won 3rd prize in frog race





Christmas is one of those holidays that just seems to be filled with cheer and wonder. Therefore, carol singing, surprise Santa, yummilicious dinner and a joyful party marked the Christmas celebration at New Light this year. Around 140 children, women, staff and guests were part of the pre-Christmas celebration.



Jennifer Heemstra and Dr. Susan Williams of Kolkata Classics Club shared some holiday cheer with the children, singing carols. We were honored to have amongst us Dr. Patrick Bose for the celebration. Thank you Spicer and Andrea for spending time with the children at New Light and for volunteering to dress as Santa yet again!

The changing season is a herald of new beginnings, of a life more beautiful. On every corner of the street we see cheer; yes, it is that time of the year!!

Season's Greetings to all our friends, partners, well wishers, donors, supporters and all those who have stood beside us through thick and thin. Special thank you to all of our volunteers and interns: Gourav Hinduja, Heather Lambert, Shравan Nevatia, Vijali Hamilton, Shalini Bandopadhyay, Arpita Chaudhury, Madeline Mackey, Bikash Jaiswal, Gouthami Banoth, Quico de Sals, Francese Sales, Alsina Briongos, Melissa Jane, Kimberley Chandler, Nikki Scott, Suhita Das, Pritha Dey, Sunnie Niklaus, Silvia Fadelli, Sara-Jayne Moss, Victoria Fox, Shobhna and Ashok Shah, Katharina Maria Hein, Selina Quintal, Luigi Gabriello, Angelique Mulholland and Alberto, Ramona Marshall, Vibha Jumar, Annabelle Gueguen, Pooja Agarwal, Ellie Coburn, Susannah Mair, Juanita Headley, Deepti Mary Minj, Anikta Ghosh, Manmeet Bhatia, Crystal Nicholson and Freya, Belle Staurowsky, Brooke Lindee, Steinunn Ruth Trisha, Sadaf Hossain, Edward Dixon, Stuti Guha Thakurta, Nikkon Balia, Tiffany Hamidjaja, Simran Kalra, Marta Gomez Anaya, Priyanjoli Bose, Meghan Hampsey, Radhika Mukerji, Nayantara Mukerji, Vaneesa Meng, Zoe Lu, Tom McEwan, Shramana Roy, Samragyie Bose, Monique Lumas, Stephanie Dau, Donta Morrison, Suman Rajak, Malvina Feriancova, Tasmiah Akhter, Cecilia Farmer, Lauren Austin, Natalie Rykiel, Samina Quettawalla, Shikha Jain, Bridget Carter, Ambika Maskara, Rachael Thompson, Alex and Jared lustig, Rachel Leacock, Soma Shaw, Madhumita Banerjee, Shreya Manot, Ankita Ghosh, Sobitha Manoharan, Pivitha Sivanesan, Geerthana Nanthakumar, Christie Anderson, Ishara Dhambagolla, Aritri Chowdhury, Joyita Chakrabarti, Rohan Nancy, and Karishma Sethia.

May the new season usher in lots of happiness for you and your family.

