



Newsletter- April 2008

Dear Friends

It is always good to be back on this page to bring and share the latest news from New Light. Hope the last few months have been just as eventful and exciting as it has been here for all of us.

The year began with a sense of hope and expectation as many things that were being planned for a long time were close to fruition. In the very first week of January New Light was visited by two energetic and committed young women from Sydney, Australia, Phoebe Faulkner and Shara Sundell. This was



Phoebe's third visit to Kolkata as a supporter of New Light. In November 2007 she and a few of her friends had organized a benefit event in Sydney in association with the Rotary Club of North Rocks, that was a huge success. On the 2nd of January, Phoebe and Shara invited all the girls from Soma Home to the Oberoi Grand Hotel in Kolkata and hosted a wonderful afternoon of entertainment for the girls. For all of them this was a unique experience where the girls did not fail to impress us with their perfect sense of place and action. Thanks ladies for the great effort and all the love that you have showered the girls with.

The next few days of January saw the inexhaustible energy of our friend and supporter returning documentary film maker Alexia Prichard and award winning film maker Nandini Shrikand. A special mention has to be made of Nandini's effort as she was shooting the documentary on Soma Home while her 9 month old child Arman was being looked after either by the staff of New light or the older girls themselves. It shows that nothing can keep a good woman away from her work!! The documentary is still under process while we eagerly await the final result which should be available soon.



It was also during those days in the middle of January that we had the unfortunate incidence of a deathly fire accident suffered by one of the mothers of Dalit shelter at Keoratala. Thanks to the relentless effort and support of our angels from Santiago de Compostela, Berta and Marie Luz Villar and the dedication of our nurse Mita





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Mondal , that we managed to save the life of Deepa Sardar, the mother of Jamuna (6 years) and Babusona Sardar (4 years). Deepa was admitted to the burn and orthopedic department of the Bangur Government Hospital by her neighbors. Sadly when some of us from New Light visited her there the possibility of her survival and recovery appeared to be so bleak that we immediately decided to shift her to a private clinic. Today she is well enough to go back to her work albeit with some difficulty of course. Thankfully she didn't need any reconstructive surgery and the credit for that should go to Dr Shukanto Sarkar. This effort has been possible only because of the support of Berta and Luchy.



The month of January saw the return of our guide and crusader Juthica Stangl, the President of Shadhika Foundation, California.(www.shadhika.org). She has been our guiding light from the beginning and after six years her interest and involvement in New Light has shown no sign of diminishing. This time instead of being accompanied by the Treasurer / Secretary Mr Peter Stangl, Juthica brought along her friend and neighbour Ms Carol Mimran who devotes time to HIV positive immigrant women from Africa living in and around Montpellier, France. For Carol this was the first visit to India and I personally thank her for her deep sensitivity to and acceptance of everything that she saw and experienced during her short stay in Kolkata.



Their visit was followed by that of the Board members of Bono- Direkthilfe , Cologne , Germany. The Board was represented by Andreas Nordoff, Michael Muller-Offerman, Bettina Limbach and Gereon Wagener. Bono-Direkthilfe has been supporting the New Light Shelter at Kalighat from 2006.This visit was aimed mainly at meeting the beneficiaries in person and spending time with the members and staff of New Light at length. (www.bono-direkthilfe.org). Stephan Weber, the other Board member could not visit Kolkata but has been working on the KKK (www.kinderkulturekarawane.de) event for the last eight months. In August of 2008 ten children from New Light are expected to travel to Germany and take part in a children cultural caravan organized by the German Ministry of Culture and Social Cooperation. (www.utube.com/watch?v=LDXLq8li868) Utsav (www.utube.com/watch?v=W0kJBwQKYz8&feature=related)



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The group from Germany was also joined by Corrine Burri, a founder member and Board member of Chance Suisse. Chance Suisse has been assisting New Light in the education program from 2006. This year they have been joined by a group of teachers who wish to assist New Light in making the education support program more organized and sustainable. (www.chanceswiss.ch)



After a long wait of eight months Simran Iqbal, one of the beneficiaries of New Light was admitted to the Rabindranath Tagore International Institute of Cardiac Sciences for a surgery. The wait has been worthwhile as when the surgery was finally conducted Simran`s recovery has been miraculous. A special mention has to be made of Dr Bandopadhaya and Mrs Johri at the medical center who have been a great support.

On the 22nd of January after a wait of six long years New Light finally managed to have enough funds to purchase the plot of land where the HIV / AIDS care center would be built. This has been possible only because of the singular effort of our Spanish partners Mundo Cooperante. (www.mundocooperante.org)



(www.utube.com/watch?v=W0kJBwQKYz8&feature=related). The funds for the same had been contributed by the Xunta de Galicia, Spain. Since that day a lot has happened.

Our architect volunteer from Barcelona, Javier Pinto Sanz began his work on the design lay out immediately the result of which he shared with a group of experts when he arrived in Kolkata on the 12th of March 2008.



It was only last week when we completed the initiation ceremony for building the structure. For all of us at New Light and many people around the world it was a very important day marked with a feeling of solemn resolve to bring the best of care and support to many people affected by the deadly HIV virus.

On behalf of the trustees of New Light I wish to extend our deep gratitude and thanks to the family of volunteer Dalmau Oliveras Julia of Barcelona for sending us the first private contribution towards the hospital project. Dear Dalmau



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please be sure that your brick would be the first one to go in when we begin the foundation work. Muchas gracias!

The end of January saw the departure of our web manager Rabia Khatoon. Rabia has been with New light, designing and managing the website from the very beginning. It is wonderful to see her taking on the responsibility

of Uddami Computer Training Center as the senior teacher. We are sad to let her go but at the same time understand how important her time and work is at UCTC. Here s wishing her a very successful year ahead.

New Light website from now on will be designed and maintained by Euphoria Infotech (I) Pvt Ltd. (www.euprohriainfotech.com)

For those of you who have been following the development of the case of Sheikh Malek Vs State, we are happy to share the information of his release from Juvenile Protective Home on bail after six months on the 14th of February. We are happy to have been able to help Malek and his family. Thanks to Advocate Bivash Chatterjee for his effort on this case.

New Light has been receiving support from Amistad International, California (www.amistadinternational.org) and its enigmatic Director Karen Kotoske



since July 2005. Dr Kotoske has been a champion for the cause of saving the girl child and bringing education to the remotest parts of the world. After 17 years of existence Amistad International today supports 12 projects around the world ranging from Ulan Bator in Mongolia..to Varanasi in India !! Like many other individuals Dr Kotoske came to know about New Light from Juthica and Peter Stangl and immediately offered the seed money for setting up Soma Memorial Girls Home, a safe shelter for young girls from the red light districts of Kolkata at risk of being sold into sex trade. Over the last three years our partnership with Amistad International has only become stronger and deeper. After many months of planning and exchanging many e mails we were finally



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more than happy to receive Dr Kotoske along with an Amistad Board member Melanie Boyd at Kolkata on the 19th of February. During their short visit Dr Kotoske and Ms Boyd were able to visit and interact with the beneficiaries of all the three programs run by New Light.

Our architect volunteer Javier Pinto Sanz arrived in Kolkata on the 12th of March with his laptop loaded with innumerable working drawings of the

hospital project and most energetically shared his vision with all the local associates on the 17th of April. The first meeting of all the associates involved in the hospital project was held at Solace Spa, Sunny Park, Kolkata. We extend our sincere thanks to Mrs Yashodhara Khaitan for making the space available to New Light on that day.

After a three month stay at Hogar Meridional and complete recovery Simran Iqbal went back to her home and family on the 23rd of March. The girls of Hogar Meridional-SMGH said goodbye to Simran with a beautiful Speedy Recovery party. The evening was special as we all knew that Simran had been blessed by a special light that would keep her well and ensure a long life for this lovely child.



For the kids of New Light April seems to be the cruelest month as this is the time for their annual examination. The teachers at New Light as expected always have a hard time getting all the kids to concentrate on their regular course work and think less about field trips and carnivals. However like in the past years we are extremely happy and proud to share the wonderful grades most of the kids have obtained and their successful passage on to the next level of schooling. We most sincerely remember and thank our donors and supporters for making this minor miracle possible. Our existence attains the highest justification at moments when we see successful kids entering the New Light premises with thousand watts smiles and eyes bright with expectation. Congratulations girls and boys...!!



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As a reward for their good academic performance the older boys were taken on a trek to the Sandak Phu- Phalut route on the 26th of April. The images would explain their experience better than my words!!



On the 16th of April New Light was visited by Mrs Anuradha Koirala , the Founder Trustee and Mr Bishwa Khadak , the Executive Director of Maiti Nepal. Anudidi, as she is

popularly known has been a pioneer in the fight against human trafficking and the organization has received many international awards in this field. Maiti Nepal has chosen New Light to be its working partner in the field of anti trafficking in Kolkata. We are happy to be a part of this partnership.

We all said a tearful goodbye to the house mother Shubhashree Roy of Hogar Meridional-Soma Memorial Girls Home on the 19th of April. She had to return to her family home due to personal reasons. We wish her luck and good health.

On the 29th of April the girls of Soma Home participated in a dance performance named Dance in Outreach held at Goethe Institut, Max Mueller Bhavan Kolkata , organized by Kolkata Sanved and West Bengal Chapter of World Dance Alliance. Our special thanks to Sudeshna and other trainers of Kolkata Sanved for spending much time and energy in preparing the girls for this performance.

