



# Newsletter- December 2006

Dear friends

Once again we are at that time of the year when the sun has turned mellow and the air a little cold .The last of the monsoon showers have said goodbye to this part of the country leaving behind fields of gold ready to be reaped in the next few weeks. It is also the time when i feel i have been trying too hard.. Now i feel one must try but not too hard as then the essence of effortlessnes is gone. Honestly it took me three drafts to get to this point and there is so much to share with you all that i have to essentially depend on my random thoughts here on.

The year 2006 began with a visit by the Board members of Shadhika Foundation , California Ms. Juthica Stangl, Mr. Peter Stangl, Ms. Kim Burnett and Dr. Anando Stangl, without whose support New light could never have reached where it is today. While they were in Kolkata we were fortunate to receive two more very special guests who have become champions for the cause of trafficked girls and women . The voice of Nicholas Kristoff and the photographs of Naka Nathaniel ring loud and clear against modern day slavery linked with sex trade and sex industry. Nicholas` article in the summer of 2006 brought us volunteers who would remain friends of New Light for the rest of their lives., Thanks Max, Bryan , Sydnee and Helen.

This year also allowed us to make major expansions to our existing structure ..both physical and administrative. We included the open terrace which by now is a familiar image with all those who have visited us into our integrated workspace. Instead of operating under an open sky we now have a covered area that can be used as a multifunctional space. This gives the teachers and the children a feeling of belonging to a more structured space thereby fostering a semi-formal learning atmosphere.

The summer month of May was reserved for a field trip to Sikkim . A total of thirty including children and staff had gone for a week long visit to the mountains. On their return they created wonderful artwork based on their first ever long trip outside Kolkata. I take this opportunity to thank all the accompanying staff members of New Light for providing such good care to the children.

As i write this there are one hundred and forty seven (147) children and young girls registered under the care of New Light making it one of the big operators in any given red light area of the city as well as the country. In six years the number of beneficiaries has increased by fifteen times and the dropout rate has remained at five percent.

In August the children celebrated the Annual carnival with the help of Spanish volunteers on a magical mystery tour of Around the World in Eighty days . The volunteers worked under the guidance and coordination of our dreamer architect friend Xavier Pinto Sanz , the very able associates of Mundo Cooperante Alban and Eva and funny men Carolo and Julio. The event was designed to introduce the children to different cultures and different ethnic groups that come together



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to make our beautiful world. Thanks to all those who made this experience possible for the kids. In August we also formed a new partnership with Fundacion Meridional , a foundation based in Madrid that has been working in Columbia , Ecuador and other Latin American countries. Among our other new partners are BONO-Direkthilfe, Chance Suisse, FAWCO, Provence Chapter, Xunta De Galicia and Amistad International.

The same month the children also took part in a photographic exhibition organised jointly by the Oxford Bookstore Gallery and the Daywalka Foundation , named Antare-Bahire(Inside-Outside) depicting their worlds within and without the boundaries that they live in.

The following months of September , October and November saw the celebration of many festivals and events that were thoroughly enjoyed by the children. ( Please refer to our photo gallery).

New Light continues to provide health care to the children, the women and the larger community at Kalighat on a regular basis. A new clinic was started at the Dalit shelter in Keoratala in September. We thank our volunteers Berta, Luchi, Elena, Jose and Laura for making this possible. So far more than 400 patients have been attended to at the new clinic. Thank you all for this incredible support.

The legal aid cell run by New Light with technical support from the Daywalka Foundation achieved a landmark legal operation by way of registering a will for appointing a guardian by a HIV+ father for his children. This has been the first step towards making a succession plan possible for the children of PLWHA. We thank our legal advisor Moitreya Dasgupta Trivedi for her time and energy.

This note can never end without me extending a special thanks to my friend and partner in vision Hernan Zin. From the beginning of the year he has been traveling extensively in the war torn countries of Sudan , Palestine , Ghana , Lebanon and many others. His blog has inspired many to help associations located in such places to provide support to the child soldiers and other unfortunate young people of those places. His images have contributed in creating Calendario Solidaridad. More power to you Hernan!! Wherever he is we know New Light will always be with him. Thank you Hernan for your faith in New Light.

And finally as we move closer to the last few days of 2006 after having celebrated our 6th Birthday, a Christmas party and an annual feast for all the members of New Light i need to pause and say how fortunate i feel. I know i have many friends and some of them believe in me. It is with this knowledge that i move forward with renewed energy and motivation to continue to dream.

Thank you and wish you a Merry Christmas and a wonderful 2007 ahead of you.

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