

## Foreword

*A sequel to anything is challenging as the same has to live up to the reputation set by its predecessor. The first volume of Dare to Dream carved its own niche amongst the graduated sponsored youth of 2011 offering tough competition to the second volume. Yet the achievements of our youth in adverse situations are so commendable that we hope the real life stories in this volume inspire this year's graduating youth to realize their potential, be aware of the opportunities available and work towards a successful future.*

*Tenacity, ambition, hard work and focus are some of the characteristics common amongst the youth whose stories have been highlighted in this volume. Being a son of a gardener did not stop Bapi Adhikary from becoming a room attendant at Radisson Efort, a leading resort near Kolkata; Shahanaj Khatun has a white collared job with a salary of over Rs.15,000 per month yet her father sells tender coconuts for living; extreme poverty could not keep Soma Nandi from her dreams of setting up her own dance school and a conservative background did not stop Jenifa Khatun from completing her Master's degree in mathematics and becoming a High School teacher.*

*For some of the youth like Amal Maity, poverty almost put an end to his education. However HOPE Scholarship from Children International ensured that he was able to complete his education as an Diploma Engineer. HOPE Scholarship also provided Budhadev Kar and Sharmistha Majhi the necessary vocational training to become successful in their professions; while support from the Sponsorship Program led Rohit Shaw to become a consultant photograpner with Children International-SAHAY and Nita Mondal, a yoga instructor.*

*In the second volume of "Dare to Dream" 50 such inspiring stories of our youth have been shared as Children International not only focuses on the capacity building of young women and men, but also helps them disseminate their knowledge and relate their experience to their peers, spurring them to become achievers too. As good success stories have the ability to inspire and motivate, we hope that with the benefits of knowledge-sharing, we will gradually have an effective youth network across the state, where both young men and women from different diverse groups share their experiences and take on greater responsibilities in society.*

*To the youth - your time is now, grab the opportunities!*

Ramdas Pai

Asia Regional Director, Children International



**Srimanta Kayal**  
Law Clerk

My father was a daily wager and whatever he earned was never enough to meet all the needs of a family of four – my sister, my parents and I. My childhood was spent in unimaginable poverty. With a lot of difficulty my father got my sister and me admitted to the local village school because both of us liked studying, but because of crippling poverty it was uncertain for how long we could continue studying. My sister and I were resigned to the fact that like our father we too would become daily wagers, till fate intervened...

I was fortunate to get enrolled in the Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program through Bani Mandir. I was six years old then. I vividly remember seeing tears in my father's eyes when he learnt of all the support that I would be getting as a sponsored child.

For me the greatest benefit was the support that I received for education. A big part of my school fees was borne by the program along with school books and stationery to last the entire year. At times, I have received school bags, school shoes and school uniforms. New clothes on birthdays, material benefits for the family, doctors and medicines when needed, I have received so much from the program.

Intangibly, my friends in the youth group and the members of Bani Mandir have always encouraged my every endeavor and applauded my simple achievements. It would make me so proud when I earned their praise. They have always inspired me to move forward.

In due course of time I completed my higher secondary schooling and joined the university with honours in Political Science. Around this time I also graduated from

the program, but remained in touch with all the members of the organization. I completed my graduation in 2007 and now after a gap of few years I have again started studying MSW from Netaji Open University. Side by side I am also taking DTP training in computers.

Additionally, as a law clerk in Diamond Harbour Civil Court, I assist the lawyers. From them I have learned how to file cases and how to carry out investigations pertaining to the cases. This apart, I also work as a automobile loan verification officer for the State Bank of India in the Diamond Harbour region. I have completed more than four years in employment and now earn around Rs.6500 every month. This has gone a long way in easing my parents' difficulties, and my sister is also studying. I have made it my responsibility to share the cost of her education with my father.

The sponsorship program gave me the opportunity to fulfill my dream and stand on my own and face the challenges that life occasionally throws at us. I remain grateful to the program and try and help out as a volunteer whenever I can. This is the least I can do.



## Bapi Adhikary

Room Attendent



From a very young age it was ingrained in my mind that like other marginalized children in our community, I too was destined to spend my life in dire straits. My family, five in number, consisting of my parents and my siblings and I, all lived in a small one roomed hut. I did not expect to study at all, as I could see my father's daily struggles to make sure we had enough to eat. My parents sacrificed much for us children, infact I wonder if my mother ever bought a new saree every year.

I, Bapi Adhikary was spending my childhood amidst drudgery without any hopes of rescue. Then when I was eight years old I was included in the sponsorship program that opened a new chapter in my life and gave me a new direction. This was done through Bani Mandir, a popular NGO in our area. Besides, receiving support for my education and issues related to health, the staff and senior youth members of Bani Mandir, were always with me to guide me whenever needed.

The sponsorship program was never stingy in meeting my education demand and with their unstinting support I completed my class ten school leaving examination. While higher education was one option, I always wanted to become self-reliant fast and help my family. And opportunity came in the way of employment at a well-known holiday resort in Raichak area of West Bengal called Ffort Radisson. My father who would work as a part time gardener in the resort heard that they were hiring local boys and girls and came and told me of the opportunity. I prepared hard for the interview and sailed through quite easily because I was not nervous during the interview and could comfortably handle the questions that

came my way. This was possible because of the multitude of trainings I received from the program.

It is now seven years that I am working in this hotel. I am now a room attendant. I help the guests with their needs and ensure that they have a comfortable stay. Till date, I have been fortunate to have received only praise from all the guests that I have served. I take home Rs.5500 as salary and also make between Rs.1500 and Rs.2000 as tips. My future plans include either looking for better prospects in the hospitality industry or improving on my present job through promotions because I am married and have a daughter now and my responsibilities have increased. I want my daughter to study and do well in life. I have also improved our living conditions and ensure that my family lives comfortably.

I have been taught to dream by the members of Children International-SAHAY and Bani Mandir. They have instilled in me the sense of values and ethics and of course responsibility and this has made me a praiseworthy member in my community.



## Mihir Mandal

Grill Factory Owner

My father used to work in a nearby grill factory making a paltry sum of Rs.2000 per month for his family of four that is my sister, myself and my parents to sustain ourselves. It was almost impossible to meet all our expenses including education with this money and my parents were slowly being consumed with worry.

When I was around four years old Children International-SAHAY through "Bani Mandir" came into my life – I was included in the sponsorship program. I started receiving educational, health and material benefits. Through the years we were provided with support for home repair and also benefits through the community projects. Living in dire poverty, inclusion in the sponsorship program was God sent for us. Being assured of this support I too could complete my higher secondary studies quite comfortably.

But after this my life did not remain limited to education only. Even though I had enrolled in the university to study graduation I had to drop out because inspite of getting all the support from the sponsorship program, there was still acute financial crisis in my family. By then I was already a member of the youth group and having worked with them had increases my self-confidence. I believed that I could do something to help my parents.

My first job was in Kolkata with a pay of Rs.2000 only. I would stay in Kolkata and spend minimum on myself, trying to send the maximum amount home. Then slowly with time my income increased and some money could be saved. With this saved amount my father and I decided to open our own grill factory and thus was born "Mandal Engineering".

My father suddenly passed away in 2007 and overnight I

became the head of the family with all responsibilities resting squarely on my shoulders. As the program had taught me to be self-reliant, gradually through hard work and perseverance I have taken "Mandal Engineering" to greater heights.

Now there are eight local people working in my factory. After meeting their salaries and all other expenses I still make almost Rs.15000 every month. So my family too is comfortably off.

I am now into my eighth year of business and I am almost 28 years old. As the head of the family I have recently arranged for my younger sisters marriage to which all of you are most cordially invited. I would also like to mention here that if Children International-SAHAY and Bani Mandir had not stood behind me I would probably never have had the mental strength to start my own business and would spend my days working for someone else.





**Sankari Pakhira**  
Private School Teacher

I was only two and a half years old when my father left us alone in this harsh world. Left without any means of income my mother and us six girls moved into one room, letting the rest of the house out on rent - our only source of income. A family of seven, living in a single room in a place called Padmapukur was very difficult but it was not our main concern. To find food for ourselves twice a day was our main worry. You can well imagine in this hostile condition it was impossible for anyone to concentrate on studies.

Furthermore, we would all fall ill frequently because of damp living conditions and I fell ill with rheumatoid arthritis. Gods finally looked at us in 1985 1986 when I became sponsored through Taraknath Maternity and Child Welfare Center. After that all my medical needs, educational requirements, nutritional necessities were taken care of by the program. Even my sisters benefitted from educational support from the program, so much so that two of them are qualified women, earning a living as a nurse and ICDS worker respectively. Coming back to me. I too did well in my school leaving examination but the disease that had plagued me since childhood became my nemesis and I was recommended for emergency open heart surgery. All the financial help came from my sponsors to whom I will remain ever grateful. I was taken

to the Manipal Heart Foundation in Bangalore for the surgery the cost of which was one lakh fifty thousand rupees. Not only this expense but even the travel cost of my family members who accompanied me, was paid by the sponsorship program. After a successful operation I felt as if I was born again thanks to my sponsors. Now I am completely fit and married. My husband is a taxi driver and I teach in a private primary school called Sishu Sikha Kendra. I make good money too, around Rs. 4500 per month. I would also like to mention here that Children International and Taraknath Maternity and Child Welfare Center has given me a new life. Today I am alive only because of their efforts and I can never pay back their debt. All I can do is to make sure that their efforts do not go in vain and become a good primary school teacher.



KOLKATA POLICE



**Biren Das**  
Police Constable

When little children of my village in Sahapur see me in my police uniform they look at me with awe and often whisper to their mother that they to want be a police man. I now proudly wear my name tag Biren Das on my chest. But how did all this happen? Let me tell you the story...

My earliest memories are that of my father Gopal Chandra Das pedaling away in his van early in morning, either to cart vegetables to the market or reach passengers to their destinations. Every evening what he would bring home was just about enough to support our family's basic needs. Yet my mother Sabitri would weave ambitious dreams about my future. It was her burning desire to see her son study and then become employed.

In the year 1997-1998 the first step towards realizing her dreams happened when I was enrolled in the sponsorship program with the efforts of the members of Taraknath Maternity and Child Welfare Center. Gradually with the sponsorship program as my backbone I completed my school leaving examination. It was at that point that I understood the importance of education and apart from continuing my higher secondary studies I also learnt driving and mobile repairing thanks to the sponsorship program. I learnt all these trades to keep multiple avenues of earning open. My parents never wanted me to live a distressed life and so after I passed my graduation

they wanted me to start applying for jobs in the government sector.

Preparing for the examinations for government jobs are tough and I worked very hard both academically and physically, often studying for more than five hours a day and then concentrating on sports to build up my physical strength. I would also send out applications as they appeared in the employment newspapers.

My hard work paid off and I succeeded in the police recruitment examination and I am currently posted in Kolkata as a constable. There is job security and I earn more than Rs.8500. But the most important part is that my mother's dreams have come true. Her son is in a secure and a stable job. It is a great success for me and I am very happy now, I cannot forget the support that I received from the sponsorship program. It was for the support that I received that I was able to complete my education and concentrate on necessary preparations that helped me secure my job as a policeman.





**Soma Nandi**  
Dancer

Hello! I am Soma Nandi, an upcoming dancer by profession, working hard to grow both in name and fame. But how did I reach this far conquering the wants and despair of a poverty-stricken childhood that is the most common impediment to the path to success? Okay, let me tell you...

Yes, I come from marginalized family. For a living my father would roam the street selling items from door to door. Often he would not return home. My mother would try and make ends meet by scavenging for dry leaves to burn as cooking fuel and collecting potatoes to sell. My elder brother is physically challenged and stayed at home but my younger brother and sister and I would go to school. As you can well imagine our dismal surroundings was hardly conducive to any kind of artistic development. I wasn't even aware that there was something called classical dancing.

I was six years old when I was sponsored through determined efforts of Taraknath Maternity and Child Welfare Center and a whole new world opened before me. Even amidst the gloom and scarcity in my immediate surroundings, the sweet melody of music caught my ears and the agility and grace of dancing appealed to me, so much so that I would always wish to see myself as a performing artiste one day. But then the reality of my life circumstances would hardly allow me to see such a wishful dream! That is when my mother stepped in. She would take stitching orders from people and work late into the night completing those orders to earn extra money and support my dreams. The sponsorship program was already bearing the costs incurred towards my education and overall general development. With Children

International-SAHAY and my mother working in conjunction I started taking small steps towards realizing my dreams. I started attending dance competition and winning in most of them. By then I had also started my training in Bharat Natyam – classical form of Indian dance. Seeing my keenness to train in dancing, the people involved in the sponsorship program, like everyone from Taraknath Maternity and Child Welfare Center always encouraged me and I was able to go places to perform live in dance programs. This undoubtedly paved the way for me to earn some money and be economically independent. At the same time the amount was not enough and I started my own dancing school called "Nritayan" from home. The going was slow. Initially there were only two students. Now there are over twenty and I must reiterate here that the continued support extended from Children International-SAHAY has actually cleared the obstacles that lay strewn along my road to success. The program has taught me that anything worth doing is worth doing well and so I have started studying dancing from Rabindrabaharati University, where I am a second year BA student. This I believe will help me to further develop my dancing skills. I am already living my dreams and wanted to relate my experience to you so that you can become achievers too.



**Madhusudan Chakraborty**  
Development Sector Worker

I am Madhusudan Chakraborty, an employee of Children International –SAHAY and also a sponsorship graduate. My childhood was not very different from many of you who are reading this book – my family had financial difficulties, my father would work in a factory as a daily labourer, my mother would look after us and my sister and I would study fighting the odds.

We would from time to time hear about Children International-SAHAY and Satya Bharati as they were involved in a lot of development work in our area like improving communities through cleanliness drives, providing education and health support to sponsored families, giving material benefits like shoes, umbrellas, blankets etc. For all these reasons, it was our fervent desire to become sponsored and in 1992, our wishes came true.

Thus at the age of eight started the upward journey of my life – whereby I received all the benefits of sponsorship like you are receiving today.

As I grew up I understood that the sponsorship program was not just about receiving gifts only. It was about shaping a young child's future. From the child core group, I became a member of the youth group on turning 12 years. As time passed I received a lot of trainings and I excelled as a peer educator under the Youth Health Corp program, so much so that I was appointed as a co-facilitator to visit and train the peer educators of other organizations. I was also continuing my studies and after finishing my higher secondary studies, I pursued a degree course in commerce from the Calcutta University. Around this time, in 2004 I graduated from the program

but even today, seven years later I still remain an active volunteer with the sponsorship program and Satya Bharati, helping out whenever I can. I volunteer my time at various youth development meets organized by Satya Bharati, my favorite being the youth camp called "Shab Peyechir Ashor" meaning that "we have everything".

I did not sever my ties with academics after graduation, instead I took a basic course in computers which included Microsoft Office, Financial Accounting, DTP, etc, and I also pursued a diploma course in hardware and networking from IIHT, Kolkata. IIHT is amongst one of the top IT training companies in Asia.

After completing this course, I worked in a computer company for three years as a technician. This was in Kolkata. I would earn around Rs.6000 then and today after joining Children International-SAHAY I take home around Rs.10,000. I feel that I have moved forward quite a bit from where I had started. Working in Children International-SAHAY is a matter of great pride for me and life has come a full circle - starting my life as a sponsored child of Children International -SAHAY, now I am an employee of the same organization! But I have more dreams to achieve yet. After completing my MSW, I want to do a lot of development work for children, I want to take over complete responsibility of my family, I do not want my parents to lead a life of discomfort, achieving all these in the future will be my real test – test of baptism by fire.

## Swapan Bag

Car Driver and Embroider



Everybody used to tell that I am a talented boy. But my condition belied it. Still, I never gave up hope. I left no stone unturned and received driving training and the sponsorship program was my backbone, my support system, thanks to which I could dream of standing on my own feet

I am Swapan Bag from Basai village in Hooghly. I just passed class 8 and then got trained as a driver through the vocational training offered by the sponsorship program. This life changing suggestion was given to me by members of Satya Bharati, who were like my second family. I did this because the need to earn money was urgent. My parents worked hard but there was never enough to meet all the needs of the family. I needed to earn so that my sister could continue her education and not become a school dropout like me. I also took up embroidery training with the help of which I managed to make some extra money. Now my monthly income is Rs 4500.

Yet, there was a time when my family was going through a very bad condition. My father was a small store keeper and my mother used to work as domestic help in houses. Later on my father even took up the job of street vendor. Looking at his plight I would be sad and promised myself that I would give them a better future. Then my father lost his eye sight and I was only 14 years old. My mother started selling vegetables in the market to support us and we lived in dire straits. But I didn't lose hope and look, now I am a successful man and I am the backbone of my family. I work three jobs now - I work in a factory for Rs.90 per day, I take on embroidery orders and I am also a part

time driver. I thank the sponsorship program for instilling faith in myself and Satya Bharati for every help and support to make the world a better place to live in. My sister is also enrolled in the sponsorship programme and I believe that like me, my sister too will benefit from this and will dream to live a life of joy and self-sustenance. I guide my sister to complete her studies. At the same time, I run my family smoothly. I hope I continue to receive success at every turn of my life.



## Biswajit Ghosh

Professional



I feel very proud to share with you that I am the first person from my family to have a university degree and I am a first generation learner too! My parents were not literate. My father was a daily labourer and my mother looked after us. I was only eight years old when I got involved in the sponsorship programme and now I have completed my bachelor's degree from Netaji Open University. This is a dream come true in my life.

My village called Gobra is in Hooghly district of West Bengal. My childhood was spent like any other village boy in the villages of Bengal, but with a subtle difference. I was a sponsored child. Even though my parents were not well off they tried very hard to meet all my requirements. The program too opened avenues for me that was unheard off in a remote village. I received all the support that I needed for my self-development including leadership training. I was nominated as a tutor by the social workers of Satya Bharati for the tutoring program and was a very active tutor. So much so that I became known in my area as a good tutor and could take up private tuitions later on to pay for my college. This was of great help as it was not possible for my parents to bear my university expenses. After completing my bachelor's degree I was fortunate enough to get a job of a supervisor with a company called Bio Caps Ltd, which makes medicine capsules.

At present I earn Rs.4500 but I haven't stopped dreaming

of a better future and hence I am preparing for examinations that will allow me to qualify for government jobs so that I can stand up as an example in front of the other underprivileged children of my own community. Thanks to all the trainings that I have received I am very popular amongst young people in my community and I use this to encourage the other young people around me to take their academics as seriously as possible so that they too can move ahead in life.





## Somnath Ghosh

School Bus Driver

Like many of you who are reading this book, I too am a former sponsored youth of Basai village of Hooghly district.

When I was only six years old I joined the sponsorship program of Children International thanks to Satya Bharati. My father had abandoned the family and my mother worked as a domestic help. My childhood days were spent in pitiful condition. There was no dream in my eyes, only tears rolled down my cheeks thinking of my blurred future. At times I was so petrified to visualize my future that I used to hide myself from the whole world believing if I closed my eyes; the harsh world around me would cease to exist.

My mother had to give up her own house and we then moved to our maternal uncle's house that was nearby so that we would not have to pay rent. My mother also took up a job in a factory and the remuneration though better than what she used to make as a domestic help, was still pretty paltry. Looking at my mother's struggles, I had vowed to myself that I would start earning as soon as possible and I left my schooling when I was in class nine. At that juncture in my life - this sponsorship program stood

by me like an anchor and trust me, I would not have been around today had they not been there for me. The social workers of Satya Bharati advised me to learn to drive a car and I got my driving license from a nearby driving school. I learnt driving in the year 2005. After learning how to drive, to help my mother I would drive a Tata 407 all over the state, whether it be the Sundarbans in the south or Siliguri in the north, delivering goods. Then I got a job as a school bus driver with the Methodist School in Dankuni. This was the turning point of my life. This job established my credentials as a good driver and slowly I became a popular driver of my locality. Today, apart from my permanent job, I am also often requested to drive private vehicles on a part-time basis. I am now 22 years old and earn Rs. 6000 per month by driving the school bus and make some more money depending on my part-time driving jobs. I have built a house near my maternal uncle's and my mother and I live there. I dream of having my own automobile business soon and I thank the sponsorship program for teaching me to dream again.



## Chaitali Bhat

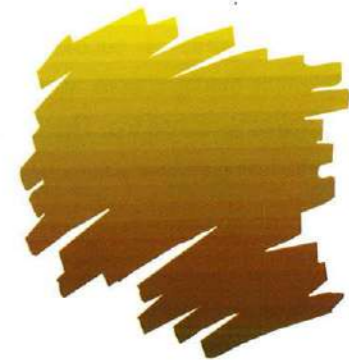
Beautician

Giving up my studies was akin to giving up my dreams. Despite being a sincere and meritorious student from Naiti village in Hooghly and doing well in my Higher Secondary examination I had to quit studying and look for a job due to the severe poverty stricken condition of my family. Finding a job had become very important, otherwise I would have been married off by my parents as it would have meant one less person to support. But what they did not know was that sponsorship program had instilled in me the strength to fight my circumstances and I opposed their ideas of getting me married. I did not want Chaitali Bhat, yes that's me, to be another statistics in the underage marriage column of some book on social development.

Looking at the financial crisis that my family was facing, it was suggested by social workers of Satya Bharati that I undergo a vocational training course and become a qualified beautician, so that I could start earning. The social workers from Satya Bharati also told my parents to stop pressurizing me for marriage. After completing my training I got a job in "Priya Beauty Parlour" in Nabagram in Hooghly district and once I started contributing financially to the family kitty the pressure of getting married was off me. Now I earn Rs 2500 per month from this job. In addition, I also freelance in my community and earn an average of Rs 1200 per month.

Even while earning I did not give up my dreams of qualifying myself academically and I am now completing

my graduation from Hiralal Paul College, Nabagram under Calcutta University. After my graduation, I would like to undergo more training and then set up a beauty parlour in my village. Reflecting on my past I feel that because I was a peer educator of the Youth Health Corp program and knew of the pitfalls of early marriage, I did not succumb to the family pressures. I feel proud that today I am self-reliant and I have big dreams for the future! All these positive things have happened in my life because of the sponsorship programme which has been there in my life since I was only six years old. Now I am an ex sponsor who wanted to share with you my story as it happened.



## Avijit Biswas Ambulance Driver

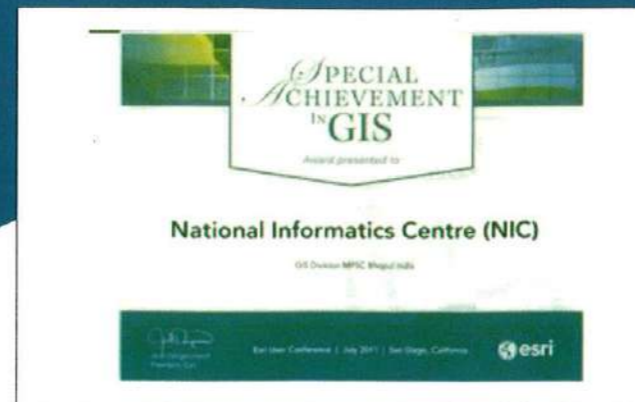


Today, I freelance as a graphic designer and the youth group children in my area in Kanaipur village (Hooghly) look up to me for help and guidance. I help them learn computers without taking a penny from them. This is because I know the value of money. There was a time when my family had to live from hand to mouth.

My parents Dolly and Dipak Biswas would make hand gloves for living. It was way back in 1999 and it was obviously insufficient for a family to live comfortably. My father became an auto driver. In order to meet the family expenses my mother used to work as a tailor. It was at that point of time that I got a boon in the form of sponsorship program. I was only eight years old then. Gradually, under the aegis of the sponsorship program and Satya Bharati I studied and passed madhyamik with a second division. Then I understood the importance of education. My parents never wanted me to live a distressed life and hence I was under strict tutelage so that I pass my examinations. After that I took a training in vocational trade from ITI, in Hooghly District. Day by day I became serious about my career and with the help of this sponsorship program I successfully completed a computer multi-media course. In fact by then I had acquired a driving license too! This became my passion and I started driving various automobiles.

Now I am working as a driver of the ambulance belonging to Kanaipur Hospital of Konnagar in Hooghly district and thereby I am earning Rs.5000 per month. I also have free accommodation given to me from the health centre. My

life has changed because of Satya Bharati and sponsorship program and when I recollect my past days, tears come to my eyes thinking of my miserable condition at that point of time. Today, I am self-reliant because I maximized all the support I got from the sponsorship program and I hope you do the same also to have a bright future of hope and colour.



## Bappa Samanta Professional

A very poor family, a small mud house, two children with no hope in their eyes, parents struggling every day...these are common pictures found in every village in India. This was the portrait of my family too living in a village near Tarakeswar. I am Bappa Samanta. My parents and a elder sister make my family. My father was a daily labourer slogging away in the field but he was also physically challenged. So with the little he earned, he found it very difficult to make ends meet for all of us. Despite this difficult situation we were enrolled in school with the hope that education might be our escape from grueling poverty. Soon it became obvious that even if my parents wanted us to study their financial condition was just not permitting the same. It was a choice between survival or education

At this point I was fortunate to come under the Children International-SAHAY's child sponsorship program which took care of my education and growing up needs to a great extent. This was possible because of the efforts Nivedita Community Care Center. Thus my parents were relieved as it not only took care of my educational and health needs but my family too benefitted as a toilet was made for the family and the thatched roof replaced with a tinned one. Looking at my father's continuous struggles so that we could do well in life and the steady support of the sponsorship program I was determined to study sincerely and establish myself to support my family as soon as possible. But I did not restrict myself to academics only. I was a very active youth and a leader from my area. As a youth leader my group did a lot of

development work in the villages. When I completed my higher secondary education I attended a career and counseling fair organized by Children International SAHAY and this was the turning point of my life. I realized what I wanted to do. I joined a vocational training course on automobile mechanic and then joined a local shop to improve my knowledge and skills. When things were looking up for me, my family was struck by financial insecurity because my father had to spend heavily to get my sister married. Things would have been really bleak for me had I not had the strength to continuously apply for jobs after going through the newspapers and soon I received a job offer from a company called Geographical Information Services. In this job, I have to survey the railway track. I have to travel to many parts of India and even as I write this I am sitting in Kathiawar, in Bihar. I make more than enough to meet my wants (Rs.7000/-) per month and send home money to my family. I will remain ever grateful to the various skill building and training programs of the sponsorship program I have undergone to make me the person I am today.



## Pintu Manna

Jeweller



Today I am surrounded by gold but there was a time when I would wonder where my next meal was coming from. Sounds amazing? Well it is true I work in a gold shop in Surat.

I had a very difficult childhood growing up. My father was a farmer. We had very little arable land and what the land produced was not enough for us to sustain us. So my father would also hire his services as a farm help to others in my community in a small village near Tarakeshwar.

Fighting to stay afloat would take all our time so the light of knowledge had not entered our homes. The family's poverty did not spare us siblings and my brother and I too had to face our share of hardships. Like, in my brother's case, one day he went away to work in a jewelry shop in faraway Surat to help improve the family's economic situation. This was the harsh reality of our childhood and youth.

As I was sponsored I received support towards good health and nutrition, a regular education and some other benefits. Thanks to the help and support extended from Children International-SAHAY's sponsorship program, through Nivedita Community Care Center since 1979, my living condition gradually improved. But the dire economic conditions forced me to give up studying in order to look for a job after my class ten school leaving examination. By then my brother had become a skilled goldsmith and was working in a large

and a well known jewelry shop. I too got a job in the same shop and now I Pintu Manna am surrounded by lots of gold.

I make around Rs.7000 per month and whenever I come back to my village, I try and help others who need it because I have not forgotten that the sponsorship program stood by me in my darkest hour. I have also learnt that the education and earn just about enough to get by, you can still have a large heart. And this is the lesson that I wanted to share with you.



## Mousumi Adhikary

Teacher



Even when my father's monthly income was 1200 rupees, I had a dream of becoming a teacher. I did not know how I would qualify myself enough to become a teacher as what my father earned was just enough to run the family.

Then I became sponsored in 1995 from Kalyan Bharati, an NGO which implemented the Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program and life became a little easier for us. From a very young age, I realized that only education could uplift our standard of living. and as all my educational needs were taken care of I studied really hard and during all this time Children International sponsorship program stood by me. I passed my Secondary and Higher Secondary education from a school in my village in Kamarkundu. Then I went on to complete my graduation in Geography and today, I can proudly say that I have fulfilled my dreams.

At present I work as a school teacher in Biswarambha School in Purbasthally village in Burdawan district for the last five years. I am also married and have a small son. Today I am an independent woman earning around Rs.20,000 per month.

Yet I often wonder about what would have happened without the education support. I would probably have lived a life of indignity and

extreme poverty. I thank the sponsorship program from the core of my heart for the timely support. I also try to guide my young friends living in abject poverty to keep them focused in their goals and to build their self confidence so that they also live a life of dignity. A lesson that I have learnt from the sponsorship program and from all at Kalyan Bharati.





## Rajkumar Das

Entrepreneur



People in my village of Kamarkundu, in Hooghly call me Raju though my full name is Rajkumar Das. When I was in class III, I was told by the members of Kalyan Bharati that I had become sponsored by Children International. And after that I have never looked back.

I got every help from the program regarding my well-being, and my daily needs. Let me describe my family to you - My father was a farmer and the entire family depended on his income and my mother looked after us that is my brother, sister, grandmother, my father and myself. So you can quite well understand that we were spending our life in extreme poverty. In 2005, once I passed Higher Secondary Examination my father wanted me to start working with him as a farmer. I realized that carrying the sole financial burden of a large family was becoming difficult but I had different dreams. I spoke with the members of Kalyan Bharati and they asked me to



avail of vocational training under HOPE Scholarship as this would ensure fast and better employability than a farmer. Thus I got the chance to train as a telephone mobile repairing technician from the George Telegraph Institute that has been building careers for the nation's youth by way of imparting vocational training at affordable rates. I passed in 2007 and immediately got a job at Sony Ericson through the placement cell of the institute. I worked there for two years and then worked at FLY and HTC mobile repairing center.

At present I work as a part time trainer with George Telegraph Institute. I visit the institute twice a week. I have also set up a small mobile shop in Kamarkundu. One can get everything related to a mobile phone in my store like new mobile phones, sim cards, mobile accessories, mobile repairing etc. The name of my store is Yashoda Telecom. Now I am happy to be able to support my father in running our family as I make over one lakh per annum. I am also proud of being able to bring financial stability to our family thanks to HOPE Scholarship.

## Malay Manna

Sales Person



I come from a very poor family of Beraberi village in Hooghly district. I, Malay Manna never dreamt that I could do something in my life that would make me feel proud of myself. I did not go to school, I did not do anything worthwhile except whiling away time. My father was a weaver and a daily wage earner. He would bring home Rs. 60 per day. With this money he could somehow provide us with food and shelter, but school was out of the question. Infact everyday it was becoming difficult for us, even to manage our daily needs. We didn't have any financial security in our family.

At this point of time I was fortunate enough to come under the Children International-SAHAY's child sponsorship program which took care of my education and growing up needs to a great extent. This happened through a local NGO called Kalyan Bharati which is very well known and respected in our area. I got admitted to a school easily. All this brought some relief to my parents as the program not only took care of my educational expenses, but also provided me with material benefits like school books and stationary to continue my schooling. Thus the program rescued me from a life of drudgery. It brought colour into my life and gave me the



support to dream of a better future. Getting proper education became a smooth sailing for me. I was reasonably meritorious and had great interest in studies right from my childhood. As time flew by and I became a youth, apart from studying I also joined the Youth Health Corp program. This program developed my communication skills and built my confidence. Imagine my surprise when I was selected from amongst many others by Children International-SAHAY to attend a job interview being conducted by Bata Shoe Company. I had completed my higher secondary examination by then and I was overjoyed when I got through the interview and got selected for the job. Initially it was hard to get into the discipline of a regular job that meant reporting to work at a certain time, handling difficult customers, working till late, but I enjoyed my job. As I improved in my job, I realized that I wanted to do more in life.

So even though I was drawing more than Rs.8000 per month I left the job as I wanted to study MSW and join the development sector. Right now I am looking at the various options and will join the course soon. My neighbours and others were a little shocked that I could leave my well paying job to study but like all of you I too have been taught by the sponsorship program to stand by my own convictions.



**Kamal Bag**  
Teacher

It is true that my family at one point of time was poverty stricken but it is also true that I Kamal Bag from a little known village of Kalagachia near Pailan holds a masters degree and is a teacher by profession, my elder brother and sister are graduates and till date my two younger sisters have passed the school leaving examination after their class ten. Let me share with you how this happened...

When I was very small my father use to work as casual labour in a very small scale factory and he still does the same job. Yet my parents had big dreams for their children. That is perhaps the main reason why my father always told us children the importance of receiving good education and motivated us accordingly. Unfortunately there was a big gap between his dreams and the reality.

At this juncture the Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program with CINI- Child in Need Institute came into our lives, and then there was no turning back. The program took good care of my education by providing support in the form of books and copies, school fees, school uniform and stationery. Moreover, in order to improve upon our overall living condition, the program kept assisting us with other relevant material supports. I must admit here that the program's unflinching support coupled with my father's dream about my future went hand in hand to build my confidence and inspire me to strive hard and do well. As the years flew by, I could therefore see myself do well in my academics. I passed

my Higher Secondary Examination with scholarship support from the sponsorship program. After passing out I studied graduation with honours in geography and completed my Master's degree in the same subject. All the while I would also give private tuitions to children in our locality to help my family with their need. In the year 2009 I appeared for the School Service Commission Examination and finally qualified the same in two steps (both written and interview).

Finally my father's aspirations for me have come true and from 2010 I am working as an assistant teacher in a Government sponsored school in Midnapur. I am now a respected member of the community because of the education that I received. Today I am noted as a helpful honest school teacher always willing to help the students. And the main reason that I could receive the education is because the sponsorship program stood by me in our hour of need. As I take the challenge of being an essential part in building a better world for my students, there are many roads to take and more mountains to climb. The journey never ends.



**Shahanaj Khatun**  
Professional



Can you imagine a daughter of a tender coconut seller, and a Muslim girl at that too, working in a multinational company? Well it is possible and this is how it all happened...

I live in a village called Parbatipur and lived on the meager amount that my father made as a tender coconut seller. From a very young age I was told that girls were to help with household chores and not study. What is the use of education if one has to eventually marry and leave home. I was very lucky indeed that before all my desires could be stifled, I got enrolled in the Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program through CINI- Child in Need Institute when I was four years old. The year was 1990.

After joining the program a whole new world opened before me. I became aware that children could be agents of change in their communities and my friends and I were actively involved in this program. And somewhere I feel we have been able to make a difference as people in my village have accepted that girls too can work and be independent. As the years passed and I grew up, I became very active in the youth council and received a lot of trainings like the leadership training and the trainings on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health. All these trainings helped in making me the person that I am today.

Simultaneously, I completed my Higher Secondary Education and a training in tailoring with direct support from the program. The tailoring course helped me earn so that I could marginally ease the financial burdens of my family. By the time I entered university and started my

graduate studies I had become a sponsorship graduate. Financial crisis became acute forcing me to stop studying. Yet again this program and members of CINI-Child in Need Institute stood by me during my hour of need and a special grant was made available so that I could complete my graduation in 2009 from the Calcutta University. Then I got admitted to the MSW degree course under Vidyasagar University. While in the second year I got a job offer from the multinational company Gontermann Pieper's India Ltd in the year 2010 and the starting basic salary was 10000 rupees. This was a princely sum for me and I accepted the offer. Recently that is in 2011, on the basis of my performance, I have got a promotion with a special increment of Rs.15000 per month.

Now that I am earning my family is leading a life of comfort. My biggest success is that I have been able to arrange my sister's marriage without placing any burden on my father. I dare to dream now! My dreams are now even bigger! I want to study MBA from a good institution and with your good wishes I am sure I will be able to achieve this dream of mine too.



## Prasanta Roy

Development Sector Worker



When I look back at all the bridges that I have crossed, all the obstacles that I have overcome, all the accolades that I have received I deeply appreciate the support of Children International-SAHAY's sponsorship program.

I was born and raised in Burma Colony, a village of near Pailan. My father passed away when I was very young from complications due to a cerebral attack. I used to live with my mother and elder sister. They made up my entire world.

After my father's demise my mother frantically started looking for a job and got one as a seamstress. I remember those days when my mother used to work very hard late into the night so that she could make enough money to take care of us. Struggle for survival was a daily routine in our lives. Despite all the hardships my mother wanted us to study and enrolled me in school, though it was uncertain for how long I would be able to continue. I had just started school when in 1989, I was fortunate to get enrolled in Children International-SAHAY's sponsorship program with CINI- Child in Need Institute. It was a big relief for my mother as apart from other program services my education was well taken care of by the sponsorship program. I also received books and other school supplies from the program. Even, I got tuition fees, school fees etc and my family received a lot of inputs from the program starting home repairing and latrine construction. To honour my mother's wishes of seeing her son succeed in life and to respect the support that I received from the program I started doing well academically. I got very actively involved in all the different programs run by the youth council and eventually became a youth leader. Then came the golden period of my life...

I represented Children International-SAHAY in the Youth conference held in Kansas City in the USA and organized by Children International. This was in 2004 and the great days that I passed will forever remain clearly etched in my memory. As days turned into years, I completed my graduation from the Calcutta University in 2007 and started studying MSW from Annamalai University. Presently, I am in my final year of study. Along with my studies I am also working as a program officer in an organization called Prayasam which works in the field of child protection and participation and I get Rs.8000 as my remuneration.

I have made my mother proud. Her dreams have come true. Her boy now works, and she does not have to any longer. It is the time for her to celebrate my success. I will continue to work in the development sector as an acknowledgement to all that I have received from Children International-SAHAY and CINI, they have given me a lot and now it is my turn to give back to the society.



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## Sanjib Sarkar

Librarian

confidence and satisfaction. Armed with this confidence after graduation I completed my masters degree in Library Sciences (MLib.) from Netaji Open University. Then initially I joined a part time teacher in Lohachar High School and now I am a librarian in this school with earnings of more than Rs.18,000 per month.

As a 32 year old person, when I look back at the days left behind I realize that the constant interaction, deliberation and discussion with the youth group members and my participation in various social awareness campaigns carried out by the youth, helped me to become able, confident and a responsible member of the society. Today, I understand and acknowledge that this has been the foundation of the success that I have achieved in the field of my work and career.

When you are born in a very poor but large family with many mouths to feed, you start life with the odds stacked against you, but the power to change the odds in your favor lies within you. If I, Sanjib Sarkar from a remote village called Baragram could do it, then so can you.

My father depended on seasonal jobs to earn enough to meet the demands of us five brothers and sister. He could barely make enough for the large family to survive, yet he was very keen to see us go to school and study. My brothers and sisters were already in school and I was very keen to start school too.

Then I was included in the sponsorship program as members of Rural Health Development Center had included my name as one of the children eligible for sponsorship and that opened a new chapter in my life and gave me a new direction. Besides, receiving support for my education and issues related to health, the staff and senior youth members of Rural Health Development Center to which I belong, were always with me to guide me whenever needed. I started taking more interest in my studies and the encouragement and guidance that I received helped me to progress particularly in the field of education. I fared well in all my school leaving examinations and this gave me an added sense of



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**Lutfar Rahman**  
Data Entry Operator

A resident of the backward village of Patharpara, in South Dinajpur, almost 400kms away from Kolkata, I am Lutfar Rahman from a poverty stricken farming family of eight members. Our landholding was too small to yield enough to feed so many members, and everyday existence was a struggle, which is why my brothers all started working once they were old enough to be physically able to.

I would have followed the same route but a sudden light of hope came into my life in the form of Children International – SAHAY sponsorship program which was implemented by the Rural Health Development Centre, a well known NGO in our area. The program provided me with all kinds of support towards my education, health and nutrition and several kinds of family benefits, all of which gradually pulled me and my family out from the darkness of poverty and wants.

As the years passed and I grew up and continued being in the sponsorship program, more opportunities came my way in the form of special trainings and workshops on drama, developing leadership skills etc. These opportunities strengthened my character and built my confidence to face the challenges in my life with determination. To enhance my marketable skills, the program also made available computer training and shortly afterwards I became the youth manager of the

Youth Resource Center run by the sponsorship program at Rural Health development Centre premises. This was in the year 2002 and I graduated out of the program in the same year. As I was the youth manager of the Youth Resource Center, I could bear the expenses of my graduate studies and completed the same around 2006.

Then started my struggle to find a job so that I could earn and help my family. I started out as a primary school teacher and then in 2007 itself I got employed as a contractual data entry operator for a Block Primary Health Center. The computer training that I had received from the program had helped me get a job! After I accumulated some experience, I changed my workplace once again and today I work as Data Entry Operator in Harirampur Panchayet Samity and my salary is Rs. 16,000.

For a poor farmer's boy, to reach where I am has been possible because of the sponsorship program which given me the confidence to dream big and make the effort to realize it, and the helping hands of the members of Rural Health Development Center who have always stood behind me.

## Nabadwip Das

Franchise Owner



There was a time when I did not get enough to eat and today I am entrepreneur. Sounds like a dream? But it is true. My name is Nabadwip Das and I belong to an extremely poverty stricken family in a village in South Dinajpur. Education was an alien concept in families like us struggling against all engulfing poverty, so even if my brothers and I were keen to study the financial conditions would just not permit it. Infact other than I, my other brothers are all school drop outs because of extreme poverty

I was spared their fate as my name was included in the Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program by Rural Health Development Center and, I must admit, this inclusion was primarily instrumental in clearing away the darkness that was almost swallowing our lives! With the program extending all kinds of support towards my education, healthcare and other basic needs, my father could at least plan and work out ways for spending towards my siblings' proper raising. Consequent to all this valuable support the family could gradually find its way out of the gloom and despair of poverty and enter a new world of good health and growth, hope and happiness. All along the members of Rural Health Development Society stood rock solid behind me.

The days and years flew by and soon I was a graduate both in the academic field and from

the sponsorship program with the mantra of healthy, educated and self-reliant youth buzzing in my ears. I then decided to be an entrepreneur and after doing a bit of research decided to open a franchisee of INGS College of Engineering and Technology. Today, I have three employees and after meeting their salaries and all other overheads, I still have a profit of around Rs.6000, not bad for a startup company.

I would like to share with all of you that there are many pitfalls to opening your own business but the sense of achievement is immense. My heartfelt thanks to Children International-SAHAY and Rural Health Development Center for having instilled in me the faith to move forward on my own and start a business.

## Paran Naskar

Entrepreneur

I grew up with five people cramped in a one-room hut in deplorable condition but today I rent a room for business. How did this come about? Please read on to find out.

Our family had many financial difficulties and with four children it was hard for my parents to provide for all of us. My father had a small grocery store but what he earned from there was not enough to provide his family with a proper meal, clothing and the minimum education. Had Children International- SAHAY through Mass Education not extended the much needed support by including my name in the sponsorship program in 1986 my future would have been very bleak indeed.

As a sponsored child I received support towards good health and nutrition, a regular education and some other benefits like home repairs, toilet construction etc. While the benefits I received helped my family through many rough patches, by the time I completed my class ten they were really struggling hard to keep the family afloat. I was anxious to help. While I did not have any professional qualification, the skills imparted to me during the leadership trainings were my biggest assets as I was a confident person. While doing odd jobs in my village of Atasura I realised that there were no shops selling readymade garments and cosmetics and I had found my

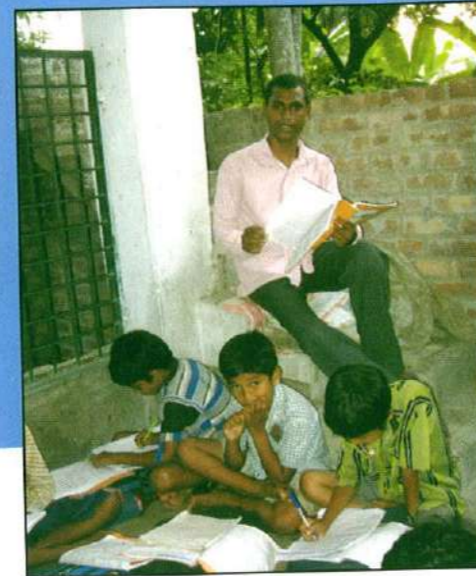


niche. I started a shop selling these items so that people in my village did not have to travel to nearby markets of Mograhat or Dakshin Barasat to procure the items. I have named my shop 'Sree Krishna Varieties' and I really enjoy my work. Currently I can take home Rs.10,000 and the burden on my parents have eased. They can afford to smile in pleasure now. My shop is six years old and my next plan is expand my shop by renting a room next to my shop. Life is so different now. When you have skill and basic education you can build your dreams. I am a proof of that.



## Gautam Manna

Teacher and a LIC agent



I would like to share with you that it is possible to achieve your dreams if you stay focused. It has happened to me. I am Gautam Manna from Baruipur. My parents are not literate, yet I am a reputed private tutor, in my locality, I have a masters degree in History and I also run a coaching center. How did all this happen?

Even though my parents are not literate, they were insistent that we that is my younger brother, sister and I study. Being a sponsored child of Children International- SAHAY and Nishtha also helped achieving this as all my education needs were met by the program. Our parents had a small vending business and ran the family with money earned from this. From a very young age I would give private tuitions to children in my village to help my parents. Little

did I know then that this would become my livelihood one day! With support from my parents, Nishtha and the sponsorship program I passed my M.A in History and now I run a coaching centre in my own home. This journey has not been easy. I had to struggle very hard to establish my reputation as a good teacher. Once this was done and people began to trust me with their children's future, I also became a Life Insurance Agent for many of them. They felt that both their children and their money were in safe hands.

Now I earn more than Rs.6000 through coaching students. Then there is the income from running the LIC agency. Today I support my family and feel extremely proud of the fact that I can meet their expectations. I have recently married and now I would like to look for a permanent job, as the coaching center and the LIC agency can be looked after by other members of the family. There was a time when my parents had to toil hard to get one meal a day for us and today I thank God and the sponsorship program for making me eligible to take care of my family.





**Sahadev Mistry**  
Factory Worker

Poverty was not a deterrent to becoming self-reliant even though my father was a daily wager and we would always suffer from financial crisis. The crisis was so acute that in spite of being sponsored and getting all the support that I could from the Children International sponsorship program and Nishtha I still could not complete my class X school leaving examination. I had to find a job to keep my family afloat. I started looking for a job and it was an uphill task. Luckily for me I got a job in a company called Bhartia that manufactures railway parts for the Indian Railways. I started from the lowest rungs but because of my hard work I received promotions and for the last two years I am the supervisor of the workshop. I earn Rs 6000 a month and I run my family entirely on my own and with ease.

Recently I got married too and I have a child of my own. Thankfully, because of the support that I received from the sponsorship program, I could become self-reliant so my child does not need to be sponsored. I am a content person today and my hope is that my job as a supervisor be made permanent.

Can you imagine the pride that my parents feel

when they see me Sahadev Mistry, son of a daily wager Bimal Mistry from a small village of Kochpukar near Baruipur working as a supervisor in a railway workshop. Despite grueling poverty the sponsorship program has given me the opportunity to stand on my own feet and my suggestion to all of you who are in the sponsorship program is to make most of all that the program has to offer to become self-reliant men and women.



**Kakali Sardar**  
ICDS Worker

There was a time when I had to depend on free books to study in the primary level, or borrow from my friend and today I impart knowledge to others. It has been a long journey for me Kakali Sardar to reach the place where I am now. Let me share my journey with you.

I belong to a small village called Julpia in South 24 Parganas. We had small amount of tilled land which was our only source of income and our family of four that is my parents, my younger brother and I depended entirely on this income to survive. It was a tough job. As both my brother and I were sponsored through Children International- SAHAY and Nishtha, we received many benefits, like education support, health care, shoes, clothes, umbrellas trunks etc so that we could continue to study without further distressing our parents with our wants and needs. While studying in the university I came across the opportunity to

receive ICDS training and I grabbed this opportunity. Once I completed the training I was offered a job with the ICDS program and I joined but unfortunately this meant leaving the university and my bachelor's degree remained incomplete. Today, I earn Rs.5000 per month as a teacher and am counted as a successful young woman in my village. Now I run my family with comfort and my brother is studying without any financial worries. I too feel a little disappointed when I think of my incomplete studies but I have made up my mind to take the departmental examination and become a supervisor. Now you can see how help can change the entire course of life. I am an example of the guiding and helping hands of Children International-SAHAY and Nishtha which has made me a successful person with dreams and not tears in her eyes.





**Rajat Ghosh**  
Medical Representative

Earning Rs.8500 every month was a fairy tale for me Rajat Ghosh. My father had studied till class XI and was a contractual worker with the forest department and my mother looked after us. As my father was a contractual worker he would work for six months a year. For the rest of the year he used to be without any job and stay at home in Julpia village near Baruipur. So my childhood saw extreme financial stringency.

My luck change when I got involved with the sponsorship programme of Children International through Nishtha, a NGO very active on our area. My life took a new turn. With the education support that I received from the program I could continue studying and with time I passed graduation and took computer training too. Infact to me the educational support that I had received remains the single largest benefit of the program.

After my graduation I joined a computer firm in the Information and Technology Hub of Kolkata and started earning Rs.7500 per month. Commuting from Baruipur was a problem so I used to live with a friend in Garia and attend office from there. After working for two years with this company, I got a better offer and presently I am a medical representative with a pharmaceutical company called 'Ophtho'.

Though I earn more in this job I would prefer to get back to a career in computer and so I am looking at the various options of studying computer networking. Once I am qualified I would then like a job as a networking person. I am now 24 and want to shift back into IT sector before I settle in life. Today I can dream of a future, make plans for the future because the sponsorship program and the members of Nishtha, my second family gave me the courage to do so. I hope that this fairytale will have a happy ending and overcoming that tough period and we will all live happily ever after.



**Amrita Dhar**  
Marketing Officer

I write for a magazine, I paint, I want to be a teacher, I work for a reputed company called Mangalam Food Products and I am also a former sponsored youth who has come a long way to build a successful life for herself in a society where the youth from the marginalized families have to struggle to have their voices heard. Let me share my journey with you...

I was born in 1987 to Rita and Sanjib Dhar in a large family of uncles aunts and grand parents. We lived in a place called Batanagar, a little away from the sprawling metropolis of Kolkata. My father use to work in an office and his income supported our large family. So there was never enough for any of the extracurricular classes that I wanted to attend. The members of Council for Social Development entered my name in the Children International- SAHAY child sponsorship program and once I was sponsored in 1990 the sponsorship program took care of all my needs, be it health, education or material needs like books, school uniforms and school bags or intangible benefits like various trainings and art workshops that I had the privilege to attend. This holistic support extended to me made my family too greatly relieved as they knew that I would make something of life with this help.

Imagine my pride when I saw my paintings gracing the walls of Academy of Fine Arts, in an exhibition organized by Children International-SAHAY. As days went by I also completed my education with a masters degree in

political science from Rabindra Bharati University. At the same time looking at the acute financial needs of my family I worked at several jobs one of which was conducting surveys for Doordarshan, the government owned broadcasting company and the other was for Bata Shoe Company. The interview for the job with Bata was arranged by Children International-SAHAY and I use to work as a cashier in their prestigious showroom in Rashbehari but had to unfortunately leave the job due to family reasons.

Once again I was jobless and I would often scan the newspapers and send in job applications. This was a long and arduous process as most often I did not receive any answers to my applications. Then came the big break and I got a job offer from Mangalam Food Products. This happened after a series of interviews and today I am a marketing and reception officer with this company taking home Rs.10,000 every month. My working hours are from 10 in the morning to 7:30 in the evening six days a week. As I am now employed the financial load of running our large family that would rest solely on my father has eased a bit. But I have not given up my dreams of being a teacher and hope some day soon I am able to achieve this too. I have learnt that hard work is a path to success and I wanted to share my story with you so that you too can focus on your goals and not give up when the going gets tough.



## Bidesh Bhowmik

Yoga Teacher

My father is a farmer and my mother is a home maker. We have a little land, part of which is used to grow staples and the remaining is used for betel leaf cultivation and we live in Moyna in East Midnapore. Monthly income was hardly Rs. 600 to Rs.700 per month, certainly not enough to run a joint family of seven to eight members. We lived in a very small house and at that point of time our only concern was to have a meal a day. My parents wanted my sister and me to study. But a family who has befriended poverty should not dream so big! That's what everyone told us till in 1993 I got sponsored and my life took a new turn. I still remember my parents' happiness at this news delivered to them by social workers of CINI - Moyna Rural Health Development Center. For them it would now be comparatively easier to send my sister to school. Both of us siblings could now study in comparative ease.

Not only did I get an opportunity to study but I also attended various workshops on theatre, origami, yoga and gymnastics etc. I passed Madhyamik Examination in 1999 and in 2000 I also participated in a one year yoga course organized by the sponsorship program. This really sparked my interest in yoga and I became a member of the "Om Ashtanga Yoga Physique Association". In the year 2002 I became the State level Yoga champion of Yoga and participated in the national level championship in 2004. After completing my higher secondary examination in 2003 I completed a course on software, hardware and mobile repairing which was

offered by the sponsorship program. The course was conducted by the state council. All these achievements have been possible because of the sacrifices of my parents along with the endless help from the members of CINI- Moyna. Now I run a weekly school of yoga in my village. At the same time I also have a small computer and mobile repairing shop and at the end of the month I manage to earn Rs.5000 to Rs.7000 rupees per month. My parents are now very happy, my sister has gotten married and I have replaced the mud hut of my childhood with a two storied home with electricity. The challenges and the hardships that I have faced in life and overcome have been possible because of the constant support of my parents and the members of Children International sponsorship program and CINI- Moyna and this is one opportunity that I have to acknowledge my debt to all of them and thank them profusely.



## Buddhadev Kar

Carpentry Shop Owner



I earn Rs.8000 per month from my own business yet have studied only till Class IX. Sounds impossible! but it is true. I was born into a very poor family in a remote village of East Midnapur district in West Bengal. My father Shyamchand Kar was a daily wager. My mother Arati Kar also used to work as a domestic help in order to help my father. We were a family of six and the meager income of my parents was the only source to survive. While children my age started school I would accompany my mother to the homes where she worked to help her in any way possible. We used to live in a small mud hut and had next to nothing to wear. In this way we were slowly growing up.

Then in the year 1990 I became sponsored by Children International- SAHAY through CINI- Moyna Rural Health Development Center and started school. Since I started late and was older than my peers, I never used to find any interest in studying. But I always wanted to make things with my hands and wanted this as a career. I wanted to drop out of school and start making handicraft items but the social workers of CINI- Moyna would always discourage me by saying that even for making handicrafts a minimum amount of education was required. As a result of their efforts I continued studying till class IX and then expressed my wish of getting some kind of vocational training. Looking at my enthusiasm the members of CINI- Moyna admitted me to a carpentry course. At the end of the course we were given a tool-kit so that we could start work without any investments. The cost of the vocational training was also borne by the sponsorship program. As I did pretty well in the course I was helped to join as an apprentice carpenter in certain shops by the

organisation and in this way I became a skilled carpenter. Today, I Buddhadev Kar have my own shop and four boys are learning the trade under my supervision. I started small by completing orders of making furniture from my home. At that point I would earn Rs.4000 to Rs.6000 per month. As my reputation spread and orders increased I rented a small shop where I have these boys training under me. Soon they will be good at their work and assist me.

Currently, I earn Rs. 6000 to Rs. 8000 per month and once they start helping me it will increase further. Today my parents do not have to work for others anymore. I have built a small house and I am living a contented life with my parents, wife and my son. Knowing how tough life can be, I also regularly save a portion of my income in the bank to secure my son's future. I am thankful to this sponsorship program for providing me with the vocational training in carpentry without which I would not have come this far.





## Amal Maity Engineer



I am Amal Maity. You may wonder why I am stating my name all of a sudden. This is because this name is associated with a lot of hard struggles. I come from a very poor farming family with a small landholding. The village is an obscure one in East Midnapore called Shyampur. What my father Rabindranath Maity earned through farming was our sole source of sustenance and never enough for a family of eight. In the year 1992-1993 our monthly income was Rs.400-500 and quite impossible to run a family of eight persons, (four elder sisters, one elder brother, my parents and I) with that meager amount of money.

Gradually, my sisters grew older and my father had to sell of his land and borrow heavily to get them married. In fact we were in a financial mess with my father being unable to pay off the loans. Daily struggle and poverty became our constant companion. My brother quit studying and started working to help my father but his efforts did not make much of a difference in our lives. Had our maternal uncle not helped us then, I do not think we would have survived this crisis.

At this point when I had only seen struggles in my young life, I was enrolled in the Children International sponsorship program with CINI- Moyna Rural Health Development Center as implementors and my luck changed thereon. While my brother's fate compelled him to leave studying, I was lucky enough to get a chance to live my dreams. I made most of this chance and participated in all the activities. I became the leader of the

youth group of my village and was involved in various activities organized by the sponsorship program. All these boosted my confidence. In 2008, I passed Madhyamik Examination in first division with 61% of marks. I successfully got through polytechnique examination and studied Automobile Engineering from Jiaganj College of Engineering & Technology. I received HOPE Scholarship for two consecutive years that is 2008 and 2009 to help meet my expenses in this engineering college. In May 2011, I completed the three year diploma course in Automobile engineering and was an engineer - something that no one in my family had ever imagined. Soon after I joined Exide as a service engineer and today I live in Mumbai and earn Rs. 25,000 which is beyond my wildest dreams. I also have faith that I will be able to build a house for my family to live comfortably. From a small unknown remote village of West Bengal to Mumbai - this journey of success has been possible because I was sponsored in 1997.



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## Sunil Bera Indian Army



When my father was fighting dual battles of disease and poverty, my brothers and I were very small. My father was a betel leaf farmer as cultivating betel leaf is a very popular profession in our village of Purba Dakshin Moyna, in East Midnapore district. We did not have any land of our own to till, but my father used to work in the lands of other farmers as a share cropper. Our family and that of our uncles had shared accommodation of a two roomed mud house with a thatched roof. While my mother always wanted us to study and stand on our own feet, my father's financial problems seemed like a barrier to my mother's dreams.

Then I got included in the sponsorship programme of Children International and SAHAY implemented by CINI - Moyna Rural Health Development Center popularly known as CINI - Moyna. The year was 1990. I still remember that day as it was the turning point of my life. I remember how my mother used to toil late into the night to earn extra money so that we could take full advantage of the sponsorship program and not drop out of school.

My mother was a part of a self-help group organized by CINI- Moyna. From the self-help group she took a loan of Rs 2000 and started a poultry business at home. She used to help my father in his work and also sell eggs door to door. In this way my mother fought with poverty. As we grew up she found it more difficult to run the family as our needs increased. Slowly, it became difficult for my brother to study and he left studying when he was only in class seven to help my father in the fields. In addition to this he started to work as a daily wager in various homes for additional income. As I was sponsored by CINI-Moyna, I could continue my studies and in the year 2000 I passed

the school leaving examination with 67% of marks. At this juncture seeing the daily struggle against grinding poverty of my family members I was too traumatized to continue studying and quit studying in class eleven. For one year I was out of school. But the constant efforts of the members of CINI - Moyna and my mother's dreams for me made me return to school. I continued my studies and in the year 2003 I passed Higher Secondary Examination with 57% of marks. Then I joined Tamralipta University with English Honours. That day I saw the tears of joy in the eyes of my parents. While in the university, in 2004 I cleared the Indian Army Clerkship Department examination and joined the service corp. Now I am extremely proud of serving my country and I am happy to be able to make lives a little easier for my parents and brothers. Today I think if I had not returned to academics thanks to the counseling I received from the staff of CINI - Moyna, if I had not been able to increase my self-confidence and self-worth through the various trainings received from the program, my life would have gone in a different direction. I would not have been able to bring joy to my parents' lives. I have already bought some land in my village and built a proper house with a bathroom for my parents. The house has electricity and most importantly I have been able to get proper treatment for my father and all this has been possible because the staff of CINI - Moyna and the sponsorship program did not give up on me when I was a school dropout.



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## Tinku Bag

Beautician



I have been associated with the sponsorship program for almost 14 years. My father was a daily wager and he would go out to look for work only when he felt like it. Though we were only a family of four, my father's erratic work habits made it very difficult for my mother to run the family. My father was basically an addict and since he never used to earn money properly it was very difficult for my mother to feed us. I used to go to the Balwadi Centre in our village of Paschim Nischintapur, near Boral to study.

At this point, members from Economic Rural Development Society visited my home and took my name as a child who could be sponsored. Then I became sponsored and my schooling was assured. As there was never extra money for meeting my other academic needs, I would attend every free coaching center. In this was I completed both my secondary and higher secondary examination.

As the need to earn was very pressing I took the opportunity offered by the sponsorship program to join a vocational training course from Progressive and Creative Institute of a beautician. After taking this training I would attend to the various needs of the women in my locality like cutting their hair, doing their bridal makeup etc and helped my mother run the family. Slowly my reputation spread as a skilled beautician and I started getting more clients. But to keep more avenues of income open I would give private tuitions and also learnt computers. I have also completed graduation with Commerce from Ashutosh College.

I am considered as one of the good beauticians of my

locality. At the same time I am considered a good private tutor too. I also have a third job that is working in an Airtel shop in my locality. With these three jobs I make more than Rs.8000 a month and the cloud of financial stringency is no more in my family. We are happy! I too can now build dreams for my future which includes having my own saloon.

Also let me share with you that I am getting married soon and all the expenses of my wedding will be borne by me. A girl, shabbily dressed who used to run door to door for some work, is arranging for her own marriage ceremony, the most auspicious day of her life. This would have remained a pipe dream without the support of the sponsorship program and Economic Rural Development Society in my life.



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## Nita Mondal

Yoga Teacher

For a long period of 13 years I was involved with the sponsorship program and that has helped me rise above gender inequality and unemployment prevalent in my village in Boral. I belong to a family of eight members and I remember how difficult it was for my parents to meet the family expenses. My father had a very small grocery shop and my mother use to make paper packets to supplement the income so that my three siblings and I could study.

Then the sponsorship program came into my life so that I, Nita Mondal could become an healthy, educated and self-reliant youth. The sponsorship program through Economic Rural Development Society took care of my health, educational needs and nutritional requirements etc. This eased the burden on my family enabling my other brothers and sister to

study too. With the passage of time I became an youth and joined the youth group to eventually become a youth leader. Being a youth leader meant that I had to travel to different places to attend meetings and trainings and this boosted my self-confidence to a great degree. Then in the year 2008 a great thing happened. I was sitting idle after taking my school leaving examination with no concrete plans for the future when I was offered a year long training course in physiotherapy and yoga from the youth council fund. I saw this as an employment opportunity and grabbed it with gratitude. The course was conducted by the World Yoga Society.

Simultaneously, I also continued my academics and right now I am pursuing B.A from Burdawan University. Side by side I am also referred by the World Yoga Society to various clients seeking personal yoga trainer/physiotherapist. After almost three years in this profession my income has risen to Rs.8000 now and with this money I have made helped my father expand his grocery shop and my sister in her academics. My next step is to set up my own business as a physiotherapist and I am looking forward to achieving this dream too.



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## Sima Debnath

Nurse



Florence Nightangle has always been my inspiration and I get immense satisfaction in alleviating sufferings of little children. I work as a staff nurse with Institute of Child Health, the first pediatric institute in India dedicated to the health and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. But how did a girl like me coming from a marginalized family and living in a remote village near Boral start working for such a prestigious institute? Let me tell you the story of Sima Debnath.

My family settled in this village after the partition of Bengal as a refugee family. My earliest memories are of my mother stitching for other people and of my father working as a carpenter. It would always disturb me to see my mother hunched over some stitching in poor light, straining her eyes and complaining of headaches. I would always try and soothe her pain and make her feel better. I think the seeds were sown then for the profession I was to follow later. My brother and I were keen students and as I was sponsored I could concentrate wholeheartedly on academics without worrying about school fees or school text books. I was helped all along by members of Economic Rural Development Society who were like my second family.

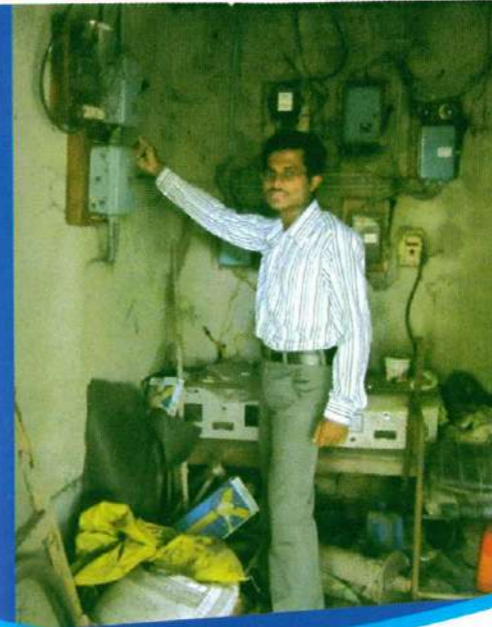
By the time I completed class twelve I knew my calling which was to be nurse. Without anyone being aware of it I went to the Institute of Child

Health, Park Circus, Kolkata and did well in the qualifying examination for becoming a trainee nurse. When I shared the news of my success with everyone there were wide smiles on everyone's face. Since then I have trained for three years as a trainee nurse and now I am staff nurse of the Institute. I am 25 years old now and it gives me immense satisfaction when mothers trust me to take good care of their children.

My future dreams include being a matron of a children hospital and I know I will get there some day. As of now with a salary of Rs.8000, I have managed to ease things for my parents and enjoy spending time with them when I come home for holidays. Something that we all missed doing when I was a child.



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## Prabhat Mandal

Electrical Engineer

The main worry in my family after my birth was that there was another mouth to feed, and as the new baby was a boy arrangements would also have to be made about his education...how would all this be possible? My grandfather had studied till class two and would teach village kids till class four in the village school, and my father worked in a bag factory to run the family. We did not have any agricultural land to fall back on, so my parents knew that only way for me to break the shackles of poverty was to get educated and become self reliant.

So you can imagine their joy when in the year 1991 after a home visit by the members of Ashurali Gramonnayan Parishad (AGP), Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program enrolled my name as a sponsored child in its register. I was only three years old then.

My family believed very strongly that the sponsorship had opened a door of endless opportunities and urged me to make the best use of this chance for an all-round development. The program not only bore the major expenses towards my education but also ensured that I could avail of health check-ups and related medical treatments the year round. Besides, I was also provided with clothing and other family benefits. The useful articles, advice and guidance provided to me by Children International-SAHAY coupled with the leadership trainings and the valuable experiences I picked up while in the youth group also went hand in hand towards opening a new horizon of opportunities before me.

I was always keen in studies, the program extended the HOPE Scholarship to me for continuing my higher secondary level education, and with the support of the program I completed my class ten school leaving examination with 78% marks and higher secondary examination with 72% marks. Then I started pursuing a BSc degree course with honours in Chemistry. While I was studying, the Falta Special Economic Zone had grown in stature and imagining possible employment opportunities, I decided to qualify as an engineer rather than complete graduation in Chemistry. Now I am a diploma electrical engineer having completed a three year diploma course from Gyan Chandra Poly Technic Institute, and noteworthy is that I scored 84% marks in my final examination.

In 2011, I got my first job in Falta Special Economic Zone with Prabhat Techno Electrical and Engineering company as a junior engineer and within one year I had become engineer, shift-in charge of Kohinoor Paper and Newsprints Private Ltd.

Today, I am a self-sufficient and economically independent person, with a salary of Rs.8000, and I am the backbone of my family. I have lived up to the expectations of my parents and it fills my heart to see the happy and contented look on their faces.

I still have big dreams. I want to make it big in life and through further studies so that Children International -SAHAY, AGP and my parents continue to be proud of me.

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## Jenifa Khatun

Government School Teacher

books and other supports that took care of my education and growing up needs to a great extent and so gradually our living condition improved.

From the time I was very young I always wanted to be a teacher and enlighten minds. As I became a youth, the leadership training and the Youth Health Corps taught me many things like how to overcome my problems and remain firm in my convictions come what may. My education too went on well and I passed the secondary examination in 2003 with star marks that is over 80% in the aggregate. In 2005 I completed my higher secondary studies and soon after, when I attained the age of 19, it was time for me to graduate from the sponsorship program. However, I continued interacting with the Children International-SAHAY staff seeking their guidance and valuable advice on my career. 2008 saw me graduating with a BSc degree with honours in mathematics from Calcutta University. Something almost unheard of in our community, especially for a woman. Then of course came the School Service Commission and after qualifying today I am a science teacher in a higher secondary school – Baradapur Adarsha Milan Vidyapith.

As women get married early in rural India and once I had completed my graduation I was married, and today even though I am only 23, I already have a small daughter, who I am guiding to follow my footsteps.

My present earnings are over Rs.20,000 and with this money I have been able to make life comfortable for my parents. I am also studying for a master's degree in maths and my ultimate goal is to become a college professor. If you are curious about my choice of profession – well teaching is my way of contributing towards nation building by empowering young minds just as Children International-SAHAY has made me empowered.

I was a little girl born into a large family. My father would work as a tailor in a small shop in our village of Karakhata and my mother would look after us. My younger brother was physically challenged and half of my father's meager earnings would be spent in buying medicines for my brother, and my earliest memories are of my mother always asking my father for money to buy household items. The seeds of independence were then sown in me and I vowed to myself that I would never do that. I am Jenifa Khatun and let me tell you that anything is possible if you put your mind to it. I am an example of it.

When existence was a daily struggle, then one day, I was fortunate enough to come under the Children International-SAHAY's child sponsorship program and life took a new turn. This was possible because of untiring efforts of Ashurali Gramonnayan Parishad. If I fell ill there were doctors and medicines available, there were school



## Shantanu Ghosh

Engineer



Don't climb trees, don't do this, don't do that, this was a everyday story in my childhood. My parents were finding it very difficult to bring me up the way they wanted to. I was born into a lower middle class family in Ashurali village. We did not have any family landholding and my father worked in a building materials and hardware shop in the next village. So it was difficult for him to eke out a living for our family of four – my sister, myself and my parents. We were poor and our circumstances were very trying indeed. Yet one good thing was that my father wanted us to study and become self reliant and that was perhaps the main reason why he wanted to see my sister and me in school. Sadly though, the gap between my father's desire and his capacity to see his desire fulfilled was a bit too wide which, quite naturally, led him to worry about ways of achieving the same.

So one day he went to see whether the name of Shantanu Ghosh, yes that's me had found a sponsor. Fortune smiled on him and the family was overjoyed to have my name figure in the Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program. And thus started a new journey for me with the help of Ashurali Gramonnayan Parishad (AGP).

I was a very naughty child but being in the sponsorship program and learning new things I slowly matured into a discerning youth. I learnt how to be a leader, learnt how to keep one's home and neighbourhood clean, learnt about becoming a healthy person both in mind and body. In all these I was helped by the members of AGP.

And the biggest opportunity that the sponsorship program gave me was the HOPE scholarship support when still in school and from then on there was no looking back for me. I must admit here that the program's

unflinching support coupled with my father's dream about my future went hand in hand to build my confidence and inspire me to study what I wanted to. I wanted to be an engineer!

So with the help of the scholarship program I studied instrumentation engineering and I am now a diploma engineer earning Rs. 8000/- a month. Through the college placement cell, initially I was placed with S.S. Energy Pvt.Ltd and presently I am a trainee engineer in the plant operation and maintenance department of Kohinoor Paper and Newsprint Pvt.Ltd. I will be confirmed on successful completion of my training.

My sister is studying in class nine and is also a member of the Children International-SAHAY youth group. And I always encourage her to take all the trainings available and learn all the new things that she is being exposed to, as these will help her in the future.

Today I am happy to have a job and being able to ease my parents' lives, and I must say that it is owing to Children International-SAHAY's timely support in our hour of need that I could work towards my present success and my father's dream for me could come true.



## Shyamal Ray

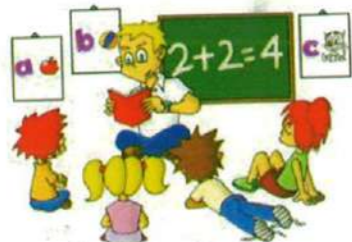
Teacher



I was born into a lower middle class family in Srirampur village which most of you have not heard of. It is in Nadia district and pretty far from Kolkata. My father worked hard as a daily wager, doing odd jobs for people to make a living and support our family of five – my father, mother, a sister and a brother older to me, and of course me. True we were poor and lived in very dismal conditions with not enough to eat on all days but my father always wanted us to be educated. So my elder sister would tie bidi to contribute to the family income and study too. My brother, likewise. I was then too young to go to school. All I remember of those days is that I waited eagerly for my turn to start schooling as I too wanted to study. That was my only focus in life though a tall one. Infact most of neighbours in our tribal village would try and tell my parents that education was of no importance and we should all be put to work. Before I continue further let me introduce myself - I am Shyamal Ray and I would like to tell you of my journey so far crossing the many hurdles that have come my way but remaining steadfast in my focus.

While my father wanted to send all of us to school, the ever widening space between his wants for his children and his ability to fulfill those wants would make him feel very concerned about our future.

Therefore in 1993 my family was delighted to see my name figure in the Children International-SAHAY



sponsorship program and since then it has been all the way forward for me with the help of Sreema Mahila Samity. The program took good care of my education by providing support in the form of books and stationery, school fees, school uniform, health care etc. The program also assisted us with other relevant material support so that our already stretched finances would not snap. My father's faith in me and the program's support made me determined to work hard and do well and I must mention that right through school I have never slipped beyond the first rank in class. I was amongst the poorest boys in my class but left my classmates behind where academics was concerned. It is also worth mentioning that I topped the school leaving examination from my school with 81% marks. Around this time my sister got married and also got a job with the ICDS program. Her days of tying bidi were over.

As the years flew by I also finished my schooling and joined college. Amidst our daily struggle for existence both my brother and sister got jobs as teachers in primary schools and this increased my strength of conviction that I too could break the shackles of poverty. I started applying for various jobs while in college and in the year 2011 became a teacher in a primary school too. Now one of the poorest families in the community had three teachers in the family. This was news indeed and an eye opener to other families like us who felt that nothing could improve their lot in life.

Now I am in the final year of my bachelor's degree and after completion of the same I want to study more. Alongside I will also continue teaching and make sure that my father's efforts and that of Children International-SAHAY along with Sreema Mahila Samity do not go in vain.



## Bulbul Khatun

ICDS Worker

I was born into a family that struggled very hard to make ends meet. I belong to a community where girls completing high school are rare and girls with university degrees are almost unheard of. Yet against all odds I do have a university degree and a career too. I am Bulbuli Khatun from Srirampur, a village bordering Bangladesh in Nadia district.

My father Rajjak Mondal was a daily wager. At times he would find work, then we would all get to eat. And then there would be days when there was no work for him, and we would all go hungry. I remember often that we five sisters would drink a lot of water to keep the hunger pangs at bay.

Then in the year 1999 members of Sreema Mahila Samity came to our door to inform us that I had become sponsored and this program was instrumental in bringing some hope into our lives. With the program extending all kinds of support towards my education, healthcare and other basic needs, my father could at least plan and work out ways for spending towards my siblings' proper raising.

While my sisters were not all that keen on education, I was adamant that I would study. So while my sisters got married one-by-one I still continued studying. Something quite unheard off in a rural community, and a Muslim one at that too.

As years passed I completed my higher secondary education and enrolled in the university for a degree course. By then, in 2007, I had graduated from the program, but because of my ambitions that were nurtured by the sponsorship program I could get a job with Childline run by Sreema Mahila Samity to support my education expenses and also help my family. Subsequently, I joined the ICDS program and have also completed my graduation. Now my family runs on what I earn and I feel proud to have achieved this despite being a Muslim girl from a conservative background.

My future plans are to study further and then find a good teaching job because I want to be financially independent before I marry. If I was not sponsored I would probably have studied till grade VIII, as do most girls in my locality and then get married and lead a life of drudgery and poverty, and my children would also follow in my footsteps. But the program has taught me that we have to raise ourselves beyond this vicious poverty cycle and that's what I am trying to do.



**Manoj Das**  
Volleyball Player

If the play field beckons, is it possible to ignore the call? I could not and would be at the fields come sunshine, hail or rain. I am Manoj Das from Daspara a small settlement near the river Ichchamati. My community is made up of marginalized families. Most are dailywagers. Some work as daily labourers and some at curing leather. In the evenings men – young and old while away their time by playing cards or just hanging around. This description might sound familiar to some of you as it is common picture in many villages but what happened to me was a anomaly in this frame.

I loved games and I enjoyed studying too, but for my father who would earn our daily bread by weaving baskets and fences there was never enough to support the needs of our family. I was fortunate enough to be enrolled in the sponsorship program in 1999 through the initiative of Sreema Mahila Samity and this was the first step towards fulfilling my dreams. The program took care of my education and growing up needs to a great extent. This brought some relief to my parents as it not only took care of my educational expenses, but also provided me with opportunities in the field of sports to which I was greatly inclined. It was through the program that I came in contact with Daima club and saw a volleyball for the first

time. I had a natural aptitude for the game and soon was one of the better players in the team. The continued support of the program as well as my hard work paid off, and I got a chance to take part in the Zonal, District and State level volleyball meets.

I have recently graduated from the program but the ties still remain strong and I visit the Sreema Mahila Samity office whenever possible. Right now I spend my mornings in a shoe shop, working to earn some money for the family, in the afternoon I am in college as I am studying BA second year in Kalyani University and the evening are spent in playing volleyball. I might have started from zero but now I dream of entering the national volleyball team. I have not let go of my dream of becoming a sports person even in the most trying circumstances and I hope all of you too follow your dreams even if the path is strewn with boulders.



**Dipen Garai**  
Central Industrial Security  
Force Staff

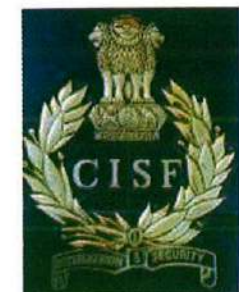
Jethia is a small village in the block number 1 of the district of Bankura. I live there. Our family was poverty stricken and we had to run our family with little amount of income made from farming our small plot of land every year. But despite the difficult situation my parents were staunch believers in education and admitted my brother and me to the primary school in our village.

In the year 1993 when we were studying in the primary school, a big change came over our lives in the form of the sponsorship program from Children International. This was possible because the members of Gandhi Vichar Parishad visited our home and then recommended me for the Children International- SAHAY sponsorship program. We used to get every support from the program and slowly our parents started to dream about a bright future for us. After passing madhyamik with this sponsorship as my support system I got another scholarship called HOPE. With time, I passed my graduation with B.A. honours in Bangla. My parents wanted me to start applying for jobs in the government sector. But by then my brother Apurba had been selected for the Indian Army and was training in Pune.

Seeing him, I too got influenced and took the examination for Indian Army. Though I did well in the written examination I was disqualified in the physical examination because my height did not meet the minimum requirement. I was disappointed because like my brother I also wanted to work towards protecting our motherland.

I then started looking at alternatives and worked very hard both academically and through physical trainings. I then took the Central Industrial Security Force (C.I.S.F) qualifying examination three times and finally my perseverance paid off and today I am waiting to join the C.I.S.F.

So even if I am not out there fighting a war, I am going to be guarding the industrial installations of my country like big factories, steel plants etc. The sponsorship program has always taught me how to be useful to others and I am proud to be useful for my country.





**Indrajit Sarkar**  
Saloon Owner

If you ever visit Gidah Rastapara, a small settlement near Barrackpore, do visit my saloon. Ask someone on the roads where is Indrajit's saloon and they will point it out to you. There you will spot me, Indrajit Sarkar busy at work that helps me earn more than Rs.7000 per month. But this was not always the scenario.

My childhood was spent in abject poverty. My father was a bus conductor and even though he tried very hard, he found it difficult to make both ends meet. Often he went without work for days and weeks on end. So naturally, he earned very little, so much so that poverty had become an integral part of our lives. Our mother would spend long hours hunched over the sewing machine to help my father. The family's poverty did not spare us four siblings and we too had to face our share of ordeals.

Even though we were struggling for our livelihood, I was enrolled in the school but it was uncertain for how long would I be able to continue. When I was in class three a ray of hope entered my life in the form of Children International sponsorship program through Socio Legal Aid Research and Training Center. I was extremely happy to know that I would get all the benefit's that my next door neighbour's son did too, especially the education support.

But my family was besieged by problems and when I was in class nine, I started accompanying and helping my maternal uncle, when he would visit people to cut their hair. And soon I became a skilled barber.

At this point my family crisis reached its height and I had to rethink my priorities. As much as I wanted to study, I could

not ignore the financial crisis my parents, sisters and brother were going through. So I dropped out of school and joined a saloon as a barber. Whatever little I earned went towards helping my family. All the while that I was employed I kept thinking of one of the program goals that is of being self reliant and felt the need to do more. My faith and confidence in myself had also increased with the trainings that I had received from the sponsorship program and at the urging of my friends I rented my own shop and started my saloon. This was the best decision of my life.

Today, my little village saloon is doing well and I am earning enough to bear the entire wedding cost of one of my sisters. I have also saved a sufficient amount to buy a small plot of land and a build a small house for my parents.

My little saloon in the village is a hub of activity with youth lining up to have their hair cut, styled and colored, modeled on their favorite Bollywood heroes. So if you are passing by do stop and check out my little shop whose foundations were laid because of one of the goals of the sponsorship program had touched a chord in me.



**Sadhan Das**  
Dance Teacher

A few words of introduction first...I am Sadhan Das. I do not remember my father. My mother and I constituted my family and we live in a village called Thinagar near Malda.

My mother had to struggle very hard to provide for my clothes, food and education. Despite all the hardship she wanted me to study and enrolled me in a primary school. This was way back in the year 1992. In the same year sponsorship entered my life as a surrogate parent to take care of all my needs. This became possible with the help of the members of Economic Rural Development Society who have remained as my mentors. Starting from something as basic as tooth powder, to clothes, to education and health support, every need was borne by the program. This eased my mother's financial burdens to a great extent.

The next seven years flew by and at the age of twelve I entered the youth group. This was an entire new vista. Keeping in tune with the changing needs of a growing mind and body, I was given a lot of trainings to prepare myself for the coming years. One of the things that I was exposed to at this time was singing and dancing classes offered by the program. As I was always attracted to classical dancing, this opportunity was Godsend. The sponsorship program even paid for Bharatnatyam lessons for me. In 2003, at the age of sixteen I

completed my schooling and currently I am a BA third year student of Pakuahat Degree College. While I have graduated from the program, my relationship with Economic Rural Development Society continues as I now teach in one of the schools run by them. Besides this I also give private tuitions and teach dancing to those who are interested. I now earn more than Rs.3000 per month and this has gone a long way in helping my mother. Today, she does not have to worry about where our next meal is coming from.

I have recently married and dream of opening my own dancing school so that my children do not have to face the grueling poverty that was my constant companion when I was growing up.



## Raja Malakar

Tractor Driver



Like many of you who are reading this book, I too was a sponsored child. I was sponsored from Economic Rural Development Society, Malda. I too had dreamt that with the help of sponsorship program I would achieve great things. But due to the miserable state of my family I have not been able to achieve all my dreams, but I have not stopped dreaming either. Read on to find out...

My name is Raja Malakar. Due to the wretched condition of finances, my parents, elder sister and younger brother would go off to work in the brick kilns and I would go off to school. My sister has never seen the inside of a school and as things went from bad to worse my brother too dropped out of school in class two. As I was sponsored, I could still continue my education, but after school had to help my family in the brick kilns. I would load and unload bricks from the huge trucks. Thanks to the sponsorship program I could complete schooling till class eight. By then I had to work very hard at the brick kilns and because of physical exertion could not study at all. I had to make a choice. I chose to stand by my family, just as sponsorship has always stood by me.



As I started hanging out for longer duration at the brick kiln, I became friendly with the truck drivers whose trucks I would load of bricks or unload of raw materials. These drivers taught me how to drive and I knew I had found my way of becoming a self reliant youth.

Armed with a driving license, which the members of Economic Rural Development Society helped me get, I started driving different heavy vehicles. Now I have also become pretty good at handling vehicles used for farming like tractors. Infact I am presently driving a tractor that belongs to someone else. He hires out the tractor to those who need the service of it and I drive the tractor while it is ploughing or tilling the land or just pulling a trolley of produce to the market.

Even though I have only passed class eight, I make around Rs.3500 every month and my family is in a better financial condition now.

I also save money every month because my next big dream is to buy my own tractor and hire out the services of the tractor with me as its driver. See, didn't I tell at the beginning that I have not stopped dreaming despite the many pitfalls, because if you dream, you will achieve if not all, atleast a part of it.



## Gautam Mahanto

Development Sector Worker

Believe me when I say that you do not have to be rich to have your dreams come true. I, Gautam Mahanto was born to a poverty stricken family in Thinagar Village near Malda. Like many of you, I too am a sponsorship graduate and with the help of the program learnt to dream of a bright future. I have had some success till date in turning my dreams into reality and some dreams still remain to be attained. This is my story and if it motivates you even a little bit, another of my dreams would be achieved.

My father was a van rickshaw driver and our big family of eight members that is my three elder sisters, one elder brother, myself, my grandmother and my parents all depended on his meager earnings. My sisters have never been to school and my brother dropped out after class four due to financial reasons. I would probably have followed the same path but fate determined otherwise.

I came under the purview of the sponsorship program through Economic Rural Development Society and for the next twelve years I did not want for anything in the sphere of education, health and nutrition. Now I have

completed my BA degree and studying MA in rural development from Indira Gandhi National Open University.

While studying BA, I was also employed by Bulbulchandi and Barind Rural Development Society, a non government organization in the capacity of project coordinator. My responsibility was to look after six gram panchayets in Habibpur block in Malda. While working with the panchayet members I realized that they were not all that aware of the development plans. As the sponsorship program has taught us to be changemakers I went back to my village and started working in my area with the gram panchayets. We have now taken up development programs like making roads, digging ponds, making the process of getting ration cards easy for those children who do not have it, making loans available to the farmers through banks, getting the adults to start the process of getting their voter cards, getting the differently abled people their certificates and subsidies etc. While this does not pay much, I make enough for my needs that is around Rs.3000 every month. But what is more important is that I am living my dream of helping those who need it the most – a valuable lesson learnt from the sponsorship program.





## Mahadev Mondal

### Marketing Personnel

Growing up, our family of eight struggled for survival in a small hamlet near Thinagar, Malda. I am Mahadev Mondal and this is my life story.

My father was a daily laborer and the entire family depended on his earnings for survival. So you can well imagine that the going was tough. It is difficult to think about education on an empty stomach but it was always my desire to go to school like the other boys in my community. Infact it was a dream for me because till date due to financial problems no one in my family had attended school, and I had three brothers and two sisters. So even if my father desired it, he just could not afford to send his children to school.

Then in 1993 came the big opportunity – I became sponsored with the help of Economic Rural Development Society. The program took good care of my education by providing support in the form of books and copies, school fees, school uniform and stationery, health care and other material benefits. For me, this was the chance I had been waiting for. I sincerely believed that with a lot of hard work I could make the most of this opportunity and make life easier for myself and my family. So I studied hard and worked hard in the youth program. So much so, that I became the youth leader from this project in the year 2002. All the trainings that I received during this period shaped me as a strong person, willing face all the challenges but not let go of dreams of earning a decent living.

In due course of time, I finished my schooling and it was time for me to enter the university. At the same time in 2007, I graduated from the program. This was a trying time for me as from now on I had to meet all my education needs on my own.

Then started my struggles of finding a job that would pay enough for me to attend my BA classes. The job market was low and there was no demand for a youth with no professional training. But sponsorship program had taught me not give up hope and after a lot of searching I was employed by Parnasha Enterprise to issue aeroplane, train and bus tickets, do the data entry work and any other work that needed to be done with the help of computers. Prior to joining I had no knowledge of computers but I was a fast learner. My starting salary was Rs.1200 and when I left this job I was already earning more than Rs.3000. Presently, because of my enhanced communication skill learnt through the trainings attended when I was a sponsored youth I work for the marketing department of Xeena Technologies and my salary is Rs.7000. Alongside my job I am at the threshold of completing my BA degree in Political Science.

With the money that I make I can help my family and can also look forward to completing my MA and then a B.Ed degree and become a teacher. This is my ultimate goal and I will fulfill it too as I sincerely believe that by being a teacher I will influence young minds to make this world a better place.



## Sharmishtha Majhi

### Beautician

I am an accomplished dancer, I was a peer educator, I have a certificate in Yoga and I am the main breadwinner of my family. I am Sharmistha Majhi who lives with her parents and sister in one of the many slums of the city of Kolkata. My father who was a public transport driver made just about enough for the family to get by. Though we did not have a lot of money, we were happy. Then one day our world came crashing down. My father had a stroke that left his left side paralyzed and thus he was unfit for work. From a homemaker, overnight my mother became the breadwinner of the family and my younger sister was sent away to live with my grandmother. By then I had already entered school.

It was extremely difficult for my mother to make the ends meet. I remember those days how my mother used to work very hard to earn about Rs.500 to 700 through tailoring. Even though we were struggling for our livelihood, I was enrolled in the school but was uncertain of how long I would be able to continue.

At this crucial time when I was about eight years old I was fortunate enough to get enrolled in Children International –SAHAY's sponsorship program. It was a big relief for my mother too, as apart from other program services my education and health needs were taken care by the sponsorship program. With all the help that I received I did well in my class ten examinations and enrolled for class eleven. After completing my schooling I wanted to do my graduation in History but fate thought otherwise and my mother now became severely ill. As both my parents could not support us, my grandmother helped us and I

knew I had to do something fast. My uncles (mother's brothers) gave me Rs.4500 to learn pedicure, manicure, bridal make-up and such things so that I could visit people's homes and offer these services. I did this course from Monali School of Beauty that offer short courses to train those who want to learn the art of makeup and related services. At this point as I was already an active volunteer at the Service Area Center- Hazra helping with tutoring classes, benefit distribution, etc, and also a peer educator. Looking at my interest in this field, I was advised by the field officers to apply for HOPE scholarship and get a formal training as a beautician. I applied for HOPE Scholarship and then did a six months long course with a beauty salon called Highlights and today work in this salon. After about six long months of recuperating my mother also has also rejoined her work and things are looking up again.

I now make almost Rs.3000 every month apart from tips and my mother works as a seamstress in a local boutique. We were not wealthy, but I was introduced to a wealth of sponsorship programs which taught me to be responsible to society and today I volunteer my time to teach dancing to the little kids in my slum, just to bring some fun into their lives. It is my way of giving back.



## Rohit Shaw

Photographer



If anyone had said that one day I would be part of the Children's International affiliate team I would have said it is a pipe dream, but today it is reality. I Rohit Shaw am actually a consultant photographer for Service Area Center Narkeldanga, a direct implementation center of Children International-SAHAY.

For me this journey has not been easy. I come from an economically vulnerable family, and would have dropped out of school had it not been for the support I received from the sponsorship program and my own determination to complete education and do well in life. I was the youngest of six siblings and lived with my ailing father who was blind and partially deaf in a slum near Panditiya in Kolkata. All my sisters were much older to me, they were married and lived elsewhere. My mother too did not live with me.

From a very young age I would sell milk and deliver newspapers to make some money to run the household. In 2004 sponsorship came to my rescue and all my health and education needs were met by the program and I used this opportunity by whole heartedly pursuing academics. Due to my consistent good performance in school I received education assistance from the sponsorship program for extra coaching and buying reference books to do well in my higher secondary examination. My typical day would start by delivering newspaper and milk in the neighbourhood, and then cooking for my father. I would then rush off to school. After school I would come back, feed my father and then get on with my studies.

As years flew by I joined the youth group and was a very active member. I honed my people management, leadership and communication skills through the various trainings that the sponsorship program offered.

Today, in 2011 I am a sponsorship graduate and I still hasn't given up on my dream of becoming a chartered accountant. I am pursuing my bachelors degree in commerce with accountancy honours. As I was a very active youth and volunteer and to help me achieve my academic goals, I have been recruited as a consultant photographer. I have also started a small business of delivering milk house to house. As I live alone, I am slowly becoming economically stable and have bought myself a motorbike. Unfortunately, my father did not live to see me become economically stable and move steadily towards my goal of becoming a chartered account. He passed away in 2008. Since then I have lived alone and devoted my time to sponsorship activities and academics. And I would like to share with all that sponsorship is indeed the vehicle that keeps the dreams and hopes alive of us sponsored children. I am sure you all agree!

