



## Abhijit Samanta

My name is Abhijit Samanta. We are a family of four; my parents and sister. My father is a marginal farmer. The crops that he grows on the small plot of agricultural land owned by him did not yield enough to meet the needs of my family. We lived in poverty.

### I have been able to beat the odds and come out a winner

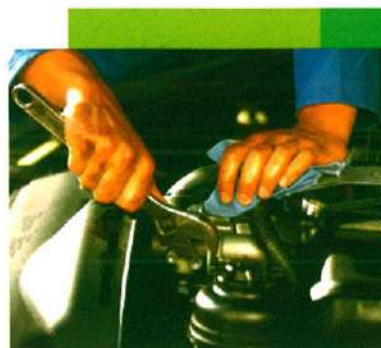
Our circumstances continued to be difficult until the time I was enrolled in the sponsorship program of Children International-SAHAY. I was studying in grade IV then and remained in the program for 10 years. I was a good student and made the most of the opportunities provided by the program. I was elected as the leader of the youth group at the organizational level in 2005. This was a major achievement for me. A lot of training and exposure helped develop my faith in my ability to change my circumstances.

In 2006, I completed my Bachelors of Arts (Part-I). The same year, I also received a HOPE scholarship from Children International-SAHAY. It gave me the opportunity to enroll in a 2 year automobile technician course from the reputed George Telegraph Training Institute. After completing the course I immediately got a job as an automobile technician in Chandra Auto center at Sarisha.

It was a great feeling to have a job and contribute to the family finances. Later I moved to T.V.S Dinesh Auto center located in Diamond Harbour and again for better

prospects I shifted to Yamaha Service center in Joka, where I work as a technician. I now earn about Rs.5000 per month!

I am grateful that with the help of the sponsorship program I have been able to beat the odds and come out a winner. I am very happy that I am in a position to support my family. Now I hope to establish myself as a highly skilled automobile technician.



## Anupam Ruidas

I am Anupam Ruidas and hail from Rajgram village in the vicinity of Bankura town on the banks of the river Dwarakeswar. The day I came into the Children International -SAHAY sponsorship program was indeed a big day in my life; I still remember the date - 20th February 1999. I was studying in primary school then and, so were my older sisters, Shrabani and Indrani.

Benefits extended from the program made it possible for my parents to see their dream of an education for me and my siblings come true

Considering the financial constraints of my family, it is quite amazing that my parents always encouraged us children to study sincerely. My father, Manik Ruidas repaired musical instruments for a living and he could only earn around Rs.40 per month with great difficulty my mother, Tulsi Ruidas, was a homemaker. It was practically impossible for my parents to meet their regular financial obligations and raise three children.

My inclusion into the sponsorship program at this juncture came as a great relief to them. The burden of raising one child was removed from their shoulders, as the sponsorship program took on the full responsibility of supporting my education. Thanks to the various other benefits that started pouring into my family consequent the to sponsorship, my family's situation gradually improved and this, in turn, has a positive impact on my sister's education.

I was always bright and intelligent, so I made the best use of the opportunity offered through this sponsorship program. I passed my Grade X and XII examinations with flying colours. A good rank in the Joint Entrance Examination for Engineering gave me the chance to join the Mechanical Engineering Course in Jadavpur University, the best institution in West Bengal offering courses in engineering studies.

I must mention that the HOPE Scholarship extended through this program helped me and my family meet the huge expenses incurred on preparatory classes for my engineering studies. Today I am in the second year of the four-year long course. My sisters Shrabani, has passed her Grade X examination while other sister, Indrani, graduate with English Honours and is now a teacher on deputation vacancy in a high school. My family's economic condition has also improved considerably.

I consider my achievements quite commendable and as you can see, the sponsorship program has played a major role in my successes. Without the benefits extended from this program it would be near impossible for my economically weak parents to see their dream of a sound education for my siblings and me come true. My family and my community are eagerly awaiting the completion of my studies and hope that I secure a job with a renowned organization and thus improve our living standards.



## Anath Bandhu Debnath

**"I beat my circumstances; no one in my family had a chance to study as far as I did because of the help extended to me by the sponsorship program"**



Anath Bandhu Debnath had a dream - to help young boys and girls like him living in poverty overcome their hardship and live a life of dignity and pride.

"I never saw my father as he died just before I came into this world", said Anath Bandhu. "My mother was a domestic help and my elder brother was a street vendor. Between them, they would struggle to make ends meet. From a very young age, I realized that only education could uplift our standard of living.

The Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program helped me realize my dream. I passed my secondary and higher secondary examinations from a school in my village. My mother and brother always encouraged me to continue my studies.

I beat my circumstances; No one in my family has had a chance to study as far as I did because of the help extended to me

by the sponsorship program. I went on to complete my graduation in History. As I developed an interest in the subject, I applied for post-graduate studies and completed my Bachelor of Education.

Today, I can proudly say that I have fulfilled my dreams. I am a teacher in the same school from where I started my education. I have the respect and love of my students and colleagues. I mentor and guide my young students and friends living in abject poverty and I always try to keep them focused on their goals. My aim is to build their self-confidence so that they also live a life of dignity.



## Sk. Jinnat Ali

I am Sk. Jinnat Ali working as Field Officer with Children International - SAHAY's Hazra center, which is a humanitarian organization where deprived children receive benefits to enable them to continue their education. The sponsorship program is like a magic wand that works towards the betterment of the poor children through medical, educational and community benefits to bring them up to the threshold of a better world, to make them self-independent and good human beings.



As a part of this organization I have experienced a better world myself. Here we work as a team, and yet are independent decision makers. It is a very positive work ambience. I understand this even better because prior to joining here I use to work in an environment that was not conducive to growth and development. Therefore we were forced to confine ourselves to set patterns and rules and pray for a better job offer.

My prayers were answered when I got through an interview at Disha Foundation in January 2010. It was a dream come true situation for me. I tasted the first fruits of success as my dreams met reality. My family too was very happy.

If I tell you my past then you will understand why today I feel successful and happy...

At the time when I was not sponsored, we were poor, without any help extended from anywhere. It was tough to continue education. None were there to encourage but many were around to make fun of us. Children of my age group rarely called to play because we wore torn clothes and could not run as fast as we did not have much to eat. People were always ready to insult us.

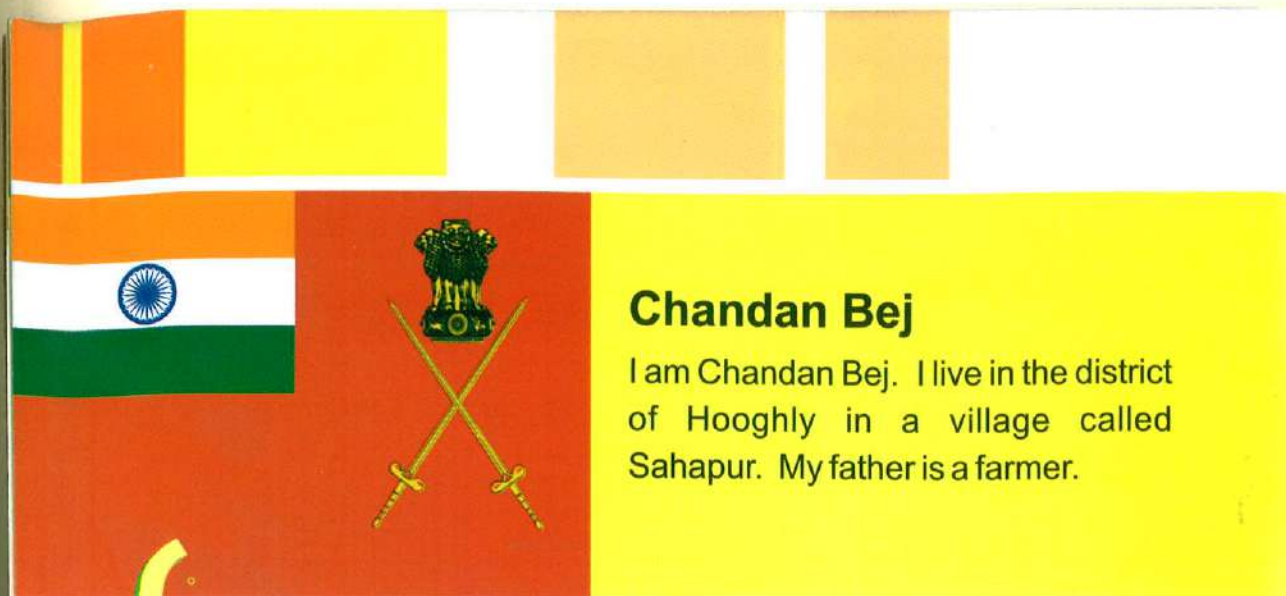
But the situation changed after I joined the sponsorship program. As we did not have much money to spend, our neighbours

would advice my parents to send us work instead of school; so that we could earn to help the family, but my parents turned a deaf ear. The program helped us feel secure even amidst hardships. Now my neighbours take pride that we are educated and feel bad when their children do not study properly. They send their children to me so that I can help them in life and share my learning's of the sponsorship program with them

Now I feel that I have reached the first steps of success. I am in a respectful job now, where I can hold the hands of other people in need. And it is through our sponsorship program that this dream met reality. I am thankful to all those people who stood beside me. My regards to you all!

**Sponsorship program is like a magic wand that works towards the betterment of poor children through medical, educational and community benefits**





## Chandan Bej

I am Chandan Bej. I live in the district of Hooghly in a village called Sahapur. My father is a farmer.

### Even then, the difficulties did not end.

I am Chandan Bej. I live in the district of Hooghly in a village called Sahapur. My father is a farmer. I spent my childhood amidst a lot of financial hardship as my father tried his best to make ends meet with his meagre earnings and take care of me, my brother and my mother. To contribute to the family income, my mother took up sewing to help us live our lives a shade better. Even then, the difficulties did not end.

While studying in grade III, I was enrolled into the Children International-SAHAY child sponsorship program and since then, my life changed. This program, took care not only of my education but also my overall development. Moreover, it also took care of the well-being of my family. Through support from this program, I was able to

complete my education till the second year of college i.e. Bachelor of Arts. After completing the second year, I joined the Indian Army.

I have been working for the last two years and am proud that I am able to serve my country and its people. I owe this success to the Children International-SAHAY child sponsorship program. Without the support of this program and my sponsors, my life could not have changed so much. My family and I will be forever grateful.



## RINIKA DAS

I am Rinika Das, a student of grade VIII and resident of Sahapur, a village in the Tarakeswar Municipal Area in Hooghly District, West Bengal.

My father is a daily labourer and his earnings average a meagre Rs.1200 a month. As there is no other earning member, my family faces a lot of financial constraints. However, the help and support that is extended to me from this program provides a silver lining in our life and we are hopeful for a better future.

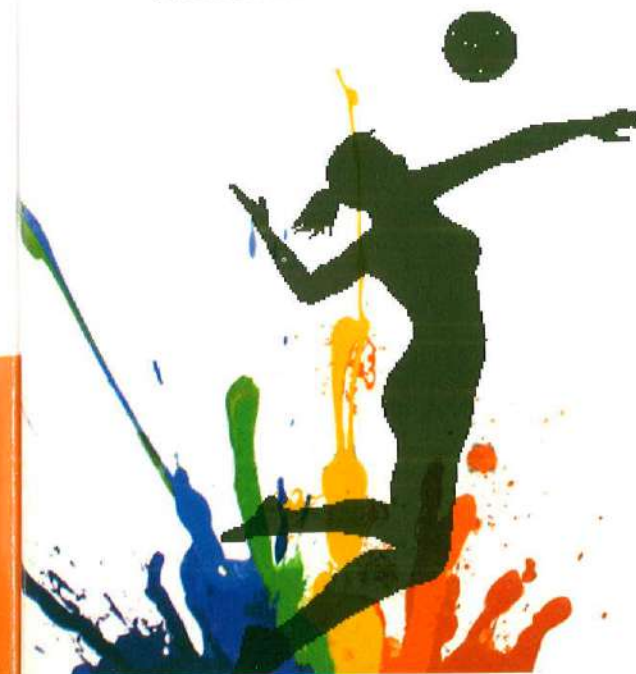
At present I am learning the skill of playing volleyball. I have had the opportunity to play volleyball at the national level in Karnataka! I have participated in volleyball meets in Santragachi and Belegata at the district level. I have also participated in sports meets in places like Bhadreswar, Baidyabati, Kolkata, Singur, Bandel, Serampore, Mogra etc at the local club level leavues.



REACHING FOR THE SKY

I wish to add here that the unflinching support that I have received from this sponsorship program has given me the much-desired opportunity to overcome my economic constraints and groom myself as a volleyball player, just the way I wished to. I am a student and I am pursuing my education sincerely, I make sure to go for regular practice sessions in volleyball twice every day, come what may.

Yes, I am eager to make it big in life by playing volleyball at the national level. I believe very strongly that the support I receive from this program has helped me achieve so much in so short a time and will lead me to higher goals. Friends, wish me luck to become the best volleyball player in the country and achieve my desired goal!





## Guruprasad Maity

I lost my father when I was 8 years old and was studying in grade IV and the responsibility of our family rested solely on my mother's shoulders. In the year 2002, my mother was diagnosed with ovarian prolapse and cyst, and she needed to undergo surgery immediately. As she was



the only bread-earner in the family and could no longer work as a daily worker, we faced a major financial crisis. At this critical juncture Children International's sponsorship program came to our rescue. All my mother's medical expenses were met by the sponsorship program. This helped me stay focused and complete my education without additional pressures and financial worries. I was also involved in various youth activities like the leadership training, adolescent health awareness, which later helped me in my life. I passed the secondary examination with 1st division marks. Though I graduated from the sponsorship program in 2002, I received special educational grant to complete my higher secondary education and then completed graduation in history.

I worked for one year with a local NGO, as the Coordinator of the IWWI project. Presently, I am working as a data-entry operator in a private firm in Kolkata. The sponsorship has given me the opportunity to fulfill my dream, stand on my own feet and face the challenges that life occasionally throws at us.

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## Suparna Biswas

Hello! I am Suparna Biswas, an upcoming singer by profession, giving my best effort to grow in name and fame. But how did I come to this point of my life brushing aside the wants and despair of poverty-stricken childhood that blocks the path to success? Okay, let me share with you my story...

Yes, I come from a very mediocre and lower middle class family. For a living my father toiled hard in a privately owned small firm but then the money that he brought home in return for all the hard work always fell short of our basic needs. As I grew up music and dancing appealed to me, so much so that I wished to see myself as a performing artiste one day. But then the harsh reality of my life circumstances was a major obstacle in my path.

Then came the turning point in my life ...Yes, I remember quite clearly that in October 1998 the Children International – SAHAY's sponsorship program field notified me to be beneficiary of its program. From then on Children Internal – SAHAY took up the responsibility of my education and overall general development. I wish to specifically mention here that Children International – SAHAY extended special support to me so that I complete my graduation with honours in English. Moreover, seeing my keenness to train in music, the sponsorship program extended a special scholarship that helped me complete a certificate course in music from the reputed Bangiya Sangeet Parishad.

Thanks to this special support my music skills were suitably enhanced and I have gained recognition in music circles which often results in travelling to perform in musical programs. This has undoubtedly

paved the way for me to earn money and be economically independent along with the social recognition.

I must asset here that the continued support extended from Children International – SAHAY has cleared the obstacles that lay strewn along my road to success and helped me recognize and develop my qualities. Thanks a ton, Children International – SAHAY!







## Aparna Dam

I am Aparna Dam. My mother and I make up our small family. As a child, I saw my mother work as a maid to take care of our needs. We lived a life of scarcity. Since the time I was in grade II, the Children International-SAHAY child sponsorship program has taken care of me and lightened some of our burdens.

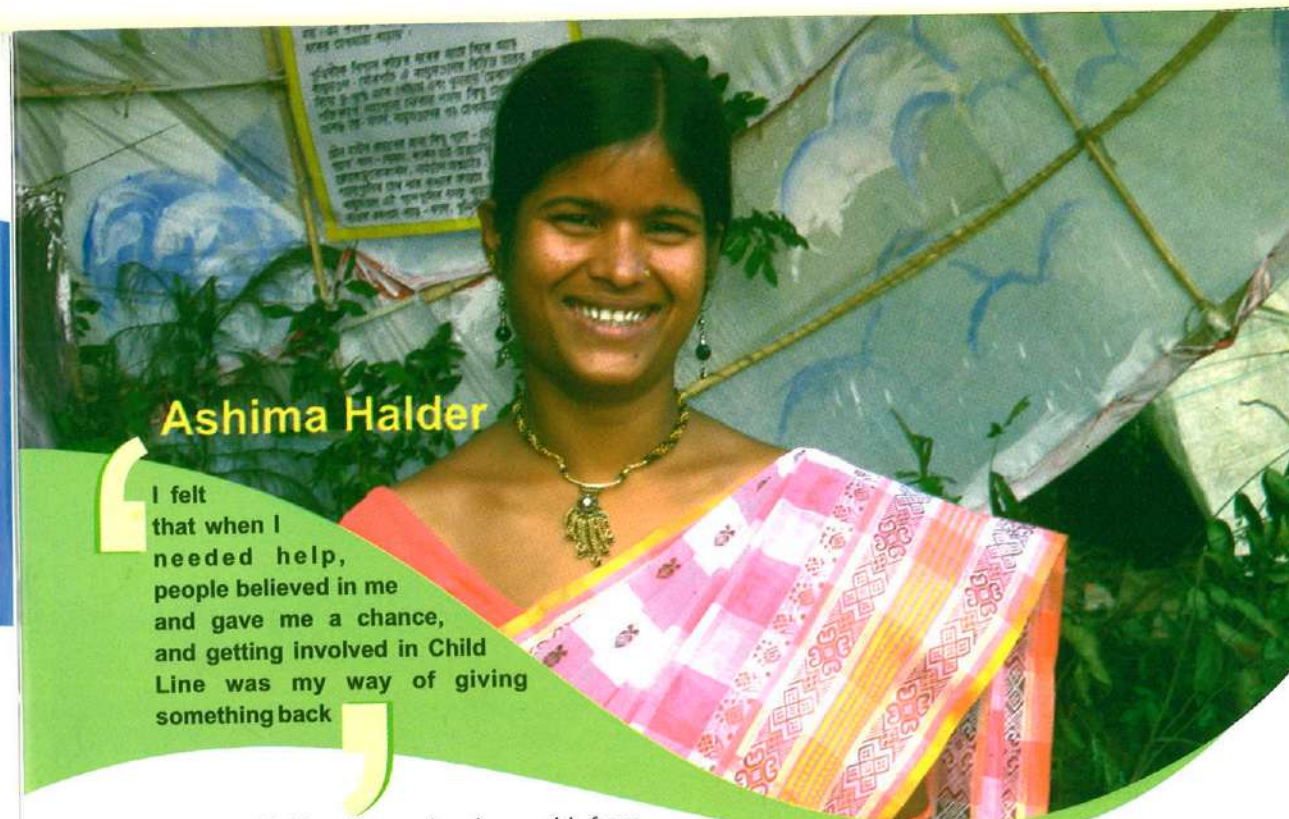
**At present I am working as a Physical Education Instructor at In-focus India Public School**

I received support for my education, health and also for sports, which I was very fond of. With support from the program, I was able to participate in the District Athletic Training Camp. We were trained by Trainers from Sports Authority of India (SAI). It is due to the support and training that today I have been able to attain a Brown and Gold Belt in Karate. I have taken the Black Belt examination and am awaiting the decision of the authorities. The sponsorship program has given me the scope to nurture my interest in sports. I continue to participate in 100 meters sprint and long jump, and I usually perform very well.

In 2005, I came first in the karate event at the Karate State Meet. In the South Eastern Railway Men's Congress annual sports meet in 2006, I participated in long jumps and attained a second position. I also got the first position in the 100 meters sprint organized by the Inter-Government College and District Sports. In 2009, I took part in the Annual Training Camp organized by the NCC and through this I was able to attain the position of Junior Under Officer.

I am now working as a Physical Education Instructor at In-focus India Public School, in Chandmari, Danga, in Bankura district. I am also an Instructor for karate at the Bankura State Welfare Home (Government).

Today, I can see a bright future awaits me and it is the Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program that has been instrumental in making me dream big and helping those dreams come true.



## Ashima Halder

I felt that when I needed help, people believed in me and gave me a chance, and getting involved in Child Line was my way of giving something back

Ashima Halder is a vivacious girl from Duttapulia village of Nadia district. She is in her late twenties and has benefited immensely from the Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program.

She gives credit to the sponsorship program for making her what she is today – a person sensitive to other people's needs. After graduating from the program, Ashima did not succumb to family pressures to get married. Instead, she started working with Child Line 1098, which is a national 24 hours toll free emergency phone and outreach service for children in need of care and protection.

When asked why she joined Child Line she replied "I felt that when I needed help, people believed in me and gave me a chance, and getting involved in Child Line was my way of giving something back". Presently, she is working with the Community Based Disaster Preparedness project in her area, which helps people in

distress in the wake of natural calamities, political unrest and other such occurrences. Although it is difficult for Ashima to meet her own and her family's needs, it has not stopped her from thinking about others. She owes this development of social conscience to the sponsorship program from where she received support during her formative years.

It was only after much coaxing that Ashima finally got married in 2009. She is now expecting her first child but she still holds steadfast in her mission of helping others find their course in life, just as she herself has been helped to find her calling.





## Ashique Khan

Hello... I am Ashique Khan. My father Jamil Khan is a daily labourer. However hard he tried, he found it was difficult to make both ends meet. Often he went without work for days and weeks and so, naturally, he earned very little, poverty became an integral part of our lives.

Every day, each of us in the family would have to face our share of ordeals. In my case, for instance, one day when I was a Grade V student, I was shocked to know that my family's economic situation would not allow me to continue in school anymore. It was too harsh a reality to accept easily. That particular day is etched in my memory as the darkest day in my life.

The situation was so bad that my elder brother was required to take up some work immediately to supplement the family income. He set up a small makeshift tailoring shop. As I too was out of school, I had to help my brother with his tailoring job, but unlike him I had not received any tailoring training which could help me in this task.

I was emotionally shattered. I felt I was not good. I believed I was a failure. I was moving towards depression because I wasn't able to study; I couldn't excel in the work I was asked to do and most of all, nothing I did helped my family's economic situation.

It was at this juncture that Children International-SAHAY intervened and pulled me out of the dungeon I was pushed into. I was extended an opportunity to undergo a 4 month vocational training at Children International-SAHAY's Into-Employment program, close to my residence.

I am happy to tell you that I have completed the training successfully in 2010 since then, I have been working with great pride in my brother's tailoring unit, which has expanded

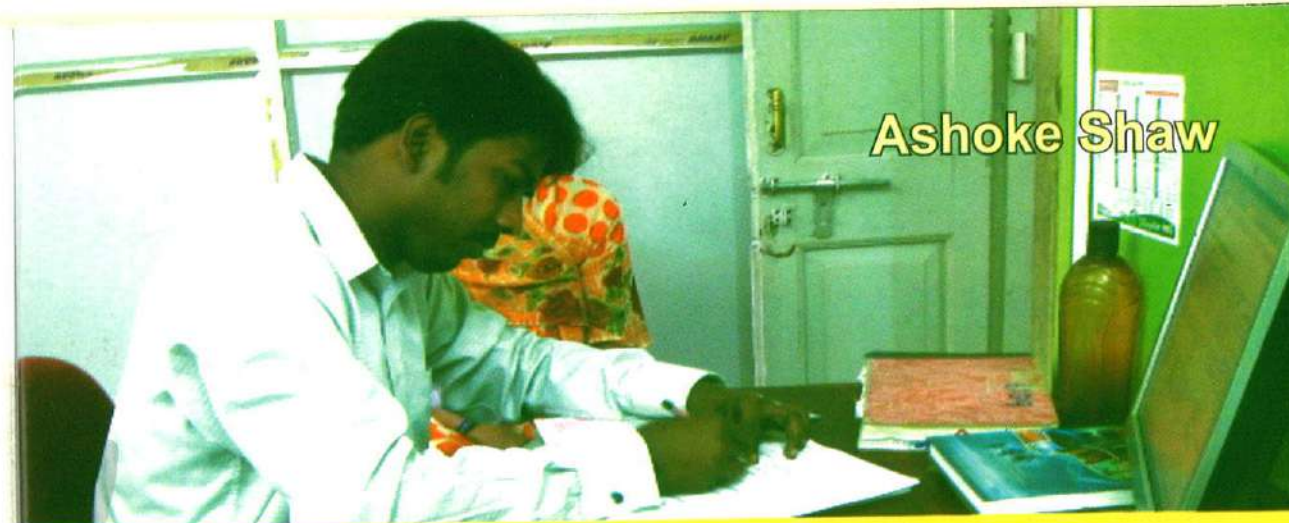


**Children International -SAHAY has helped build my confidence and shape my future**

in size today and has earned a good name and much praise in the locality for the quality of its workmanship.

What is most important to my family is that I have been a skilled worker, employed and earning Rs.3000 at an average every month. I know have the potential and prospect to earn more. Children International-SAHAY has helped build my confidence and shape my future productively.

Just as I could come out of despair and hopelessness, to establish myself with support from Children International-SAHAY; I am hopeful that a lot of other young people will also be able to benefit from this program.



**Ashoke Shaw**

"If anyone had said that one day I would be part of the Children International-SAHAY team -worrying, helping and caring about the sponsored children in my care, I would have said it was a pipe dream, but today it is a reality", said a beaming Ashoke.

For Ashoke this journey was never easy. He and his brothers grew amidst financial hardships. His family depended on the four cows it owned. Ashoke's father sold milk to meet the needs of his family, but there was never enough food.

Ashoke, who is now armed with a Bachelors degree in Commerce, would have been a school drop out had it not been for the sponsorship. Since Ashoke's sponsorship in 1995, his health and education needs were met by the program and Ashoke used this opportunity by whole heartedly pursuing academics.



He also honed his people management, leadership and communication skills through the various training opportunities that the program offered and became a youth leader from his area.

Ashoke is now working as the Clinic Assistant at Children International-SAHAY's Service Area Center at Jorasanko. While this work has eased his family's financial worries, for him it has been more of a passion, to continue to be contributing to the sponsorship program, and help others like him.



So deep is his enthusiasm in helping others, that he and some other sponsored youth who have graduated from the program, have formed a Sponsored Alumni Association with the aim giving

assistance to those who have not been as fortunate as they have been.

When his mother heard that there was a chance of Ashoke's story being told to all, she quickly wrote a thank you note in Bengali expressing her gratitude. A translation of her letter follows:

*My son Ashoke Shaw completed his Bachelors degree in Commerce and is presently working in one of Children International-SAHAY's offices. My husband has a very modest dairy business which generates just about enough income for us to get by. Since Ashoke was a sponsored child, he could study this far and get a job. For this, my heartfelt thanks to Children International-Sahay. A very special thanks to Ashoke's sponsor because of whom all these have been possible.*

**In gratitude - Menoka Shaw.**





## Azmat Malik

I am Azmat Malik, an employee of Children International -SAHAY's center at Hazra, but even before that I am a graduated sponsored youth. I became a sponsored child of Children International - SAHAY, when I was only 3 or 4 years old. Thus started the upward journey of my life - whereby I received all the benefits of the sponsorship program.

I participated in the drawing competition each year. I received 1st prize once and 2nd prize another time. I used to write letters to my sponsor each year. Sometimes she also used to write back to me. In this way a bonding grew between me and my sponsor though she was many many

When I grew up to be a Youth Group member, I gradually got into the position of Youth Group Leader of our Project. I received various types of trainings like Youth Leadership Training. The happiest day of my life during the computer training was when we went to Raj Bhavan to meet the then Governor Shri Viren J. Shah and I received a certificate signed by him.

Once, all of us who were in the Youth Group organized a program on Pollution awareness on a make-shift stage on the road-side. We did a play and a couple of dances there. This was something which we had organized totally on our own and I thoroughly enjoyed it and felt a sense of achievement.

On another occasion, we went to visit Pelling (in Sikkim) for 7 days along with the entire youth team members of SAHAY. We had great fun during that trip. I always fondly remember my days as a Youth Group member.

I graduated from the sponsorship program and from the youth group in 2005. Thereafter, I completed a 6 month training course in nursing and worked in a private nursing home for 2 years. While in this job, I got an offer to work as a Health Assistant in SAHAY's Narkeldanga center. I felt so happy. I had now started taking up the same responsibilities as I have seen the staff in the sponsorship program doing when I was a child. I had crossed sides; from receiving benefits, I started providing benefits. The mothers of the sponsored children, though elder to me, showed me respect and gave me the first taste of sweet success. Today I feel I have really grown up - I am a responsible woman!

After working for 2½ years with the Children International- SAHAY Narkeldanga center, I got another opportunity to work with Children International-Disha Foundation in 2009. Though I joined as a Health Assistant, here I am learning to take up various other responsibilities too. Disha Foundation is now known as the Children International-SAHAY, Hazra center.

I feel proud to have been a sponsored child; if I hadn't been sponsored, otherwise it would not have been possible for me to stand here today to be able to share my story with you. I thank Children International-SAHAY for having paved the way for me to be able to do this. Life has turned a full circle for me. I started my life as a sponsored child of Children International -SAHAY, now I am an employee of the same organization!

## Babulal Singha

The support has changed our lives; Bubalal is a bright youth now. His success has brought about an economic improvement in my family, it has also raised my prestige in the community. We are ever grateful to our sponsor and the sponsorship program



I am Babulal Singha. I came into the sponsorship program in 1995. I am from Nonakuri village, in Purba Medinipur district. My father is an agricultural labourer and our family of five was supported on his paltry income. There were days that the family spent without food or just had one meal. It was not possible for my father to meet the educational needs of all the 3 children. It was the support from the sponsorship program that enabled me to complete my secondary education in 2003. I was also supported for sports and gymnastic training during 2002 to 2003 as well as a driving course.

I applied and succeeded in the police recruitment examination. Currently, I am posted at Nandigram Police Station. 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 due to the support that I received I was able to complete my Board examinations, get the sports and gymnastic training and these helped me secure my job as a policeman.

My father considers the sponsorship program as a great opportunity that supported the entire family in terms of health, nutrition and financial assistance besides paying for my education. According to him, "the support has changed our lives; Bubalal is a bright youth now, his success has brought about not only an economic improvement in my family. It has also raised my prestige in the community. We are ever grateful to our sponsor and the sponsorship program".





## Bapi Mondal

I am Bapi Mondal, the youngest member in my family comprising of my parents and three siblings. My father worked as a daily labourer. Being the youngest at home, I used to seek a lot of attention and affection from my family. Unfortunately, owing to my father's addiction to liquor, the financial condition of my family worsened. Most of the little that my father earned got wasted on alcohol. In fact the family's worsening economic condition forced my mother to start selling vegetables for earning a livelihood and meeting regular expenses. It was during this phase of life, that I was fortunate to get enrolled in the Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program.

Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program has helped many youth and children like me to shed their misfortune and find a sure footing in life

My inclusion in the sponsorship program made possible to get enough support for my all-round development for the next 12 years, through proper formal education, health and nutrition and improvement in overall living condition.

As the years passed by and I attained the age of 12 years, I became a member of the youth group. Thus I reached the most interesting stage of my life in the Children International-SAHAY program. My involvement in various youth group activities gave a new direction to my life and prepared me to face the challenges of life with courage and determination.

Apart from this, in order to arm me with proper training that could help me earn a livelihood, I was extended the needed support for learning music as well as undergoing a short-term training course in motor vehicle driving. Moreover, at the behest of the program, my mother understood the benefits of savings and became a member of the local self-help group (SHG). Thus our family gradually started coming out from darkness and despair to financial stability and towards

hope for a better future.

I am happy to tell you that today I drive a company car. Moreover, I am pleased to tell you that with my savings I have been able to construct a small house for my family. This achievement in particular gives me immense joy as I have been able to provide a safe shelter for my parents thus giving them a better life.

Certainly, the credit for all the successes goes to the Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program. It has benefited many more youth and children like me and they have been able to shed their misfortune and find a sure footing in life. Though mere words of thanks are not enough to acknowledge the benefits that have come to me and significantly changed my life towards hope and self-reliance, I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Children International-SAHAY for everything it has given me.



## Bittu Mondal

My name is Bittu Mondal and I am still in the sponsorship program. We are a five member family. While my mother stays at home my father and both brothers work in factories located within the Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

As we had no land to farm, my father was a daily laborer and would often have to work under contractors who would hire his services for the day to some factory. In return, my father would have to pay the contractor a part of his daily wage.



Thus, it would be difficult for my mother to run the household on what my father would make. Once my brothers also joined my father at the SEZ, things became a little easier at home. However, as my brothers also had no professional training, they too had to be a part of the contractor's team and would be hired out as per requirement. They would also give the contractor a part of their earnings in return for the work.

While I was growing up, my mother would often cry in despair that I had dropped out of school. She would berate me for not taking complete advantage of the sponsorship program and studying hard to get a well paying job. Since I never enjoyed academics, I wanted to work with my hands so as soon as I was fourteen, I joined my father and brothers at the SEZ.

Since I was only fourteen, I worked as a general errand boy till I turned sixteen, when I was allowed into the shop floor to work on simple machines. As I had no skills or training I became an errand boy for all those who were working in the factory workshop. I would get a free meal and some money at the end of the day. Then I heard of this opportunity being offered by Children International-SAHAY. Having been in the sponsorship program, I knew a course run by Children International-SAHAY would address the needs faced by the

sponsored youth. So, I came to this center and took an aptitude test. I was lucky to be selected into the welding course.

Once I joined the course, I had to give up doing odd jobs in factories and concentrate wholly on the training that I was receiving. We had both theory and practical classes but I enjoyed the practical classes more than the theory classes as they honed my skills as a welder.

This training enabled me to get a job at Sigma Search Light Limited. With my income being added to the family kitty, we are now able to spend money on little extras that had not been possible so far. Even though I work long hours, there is job security, and the satisfaction of knowing that if I perform well I can grow within the organization. My thanks to Children International-SAHAY for making this happen.





## Chandan Thakur

**Today, his little salon in the village is a hub of activity**

I am Chandan Thakur from Pakuahat, which is about 350 kms from Kolkata. I have two brothers and a sister. I received assistance from HOPE scholarship to do a beautician/hair stylist course. I did the course with Progressive Creative Institute in Kolkata. I stayed in Boral and commuted to Kolkata daily. Then I did an internship for two years in Malda town.

Thereafter, during one of the Children International-SAHAY symposiums, we were told to think of a project to start that would benefit our community. I love decoration and anything that makes people beautiful so I decided to start a beauty and hair dressing salon where I could employ the youth in my area. I received a grant of Rupees 6,500 as working capital and started my venture.

My teachers had always said that I exhibited leadership qualities and had entrepreneurial aptitude. My leadership skills were honed through the training I received via the Children International-SAHAY's sponsorship program and my entrepreneurship skills were put to use

after I finished the training on beautician/hair stylist course with the support of the from HOPE Scholarship.

Today, my little beauty and hair dressing salon 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. I earn about Rupees 10,000 per month in my own village doing what I love! I am a lucky man! Even though I have 2 brothers, I am the one who cares for and supports my parents.



For a boy from a rural area that is far away from Kolkata, to set up his own beauty salon was astounding and unheard of venture – I have done that and very successfully! I am also planning to employ some former sponsored youth so that they in turn become self-reliant. I am hopeful that I will be as good an employer as an entrepreneur.

## Broja Acharya

I am Broja Acharya, a young man who wears many hats. I am a former Children International-SAHAY's sponsored youth from a village in West Bengal and I also dream of owning a café someday, while currently being the Manager of a Café Coffee Day outlet. I have initiated a Sponsored Alumni Association of former sponsored youth who are now employed. I am also someone who is not afraid of challenges and a proud father too!

I live with my parents and extended family in my village. I commute three hours by train each way to reach my outlet of Café Coffee Day every day, for six days a week. My journey to Kolkata starts at 8 am and by 11 am sharp you can spot me in front of the café gate, helping three other colleagues set up shop, of which I am the Manager. From then on, I cater to the needs of a steady stream of customers who walk into the Café. I am on my feet and always smiling. The customers like me. I feel very happy. I reach home at 1'o clock in the night. I have over the years, managed to build my parents a new home with my humble efforts.

I joined the Café in 2005 and had to face snide remarks from my slick city counterparts, because of my country ways and speech. They would also jeer at my lack of knowledge of coffee latté, or cappuccino. I stood out like a sore thumb, but I did not let these obstacles get in the way, and today after six years, through sheer grit and determination, I have become popular here. I am a self-assured young man, who handles his jobs with élan. My greatest regret is that this job leaves me with very little time to continue organizing training camps in the villages following the leadership training guidelines that I had received as a youth.

My favorite pastime is meetings with the Sponsored Alumni Association – members, all former sponsored children like



me—once a month. In these meetings, we plan how to help those who need help the most in their respective communities. We have set up a fund towards this cause and hope to reach out to many more like us. All this has been possible due to the inputs that we received from Children International-SAHAY.







## Debashis Acharya

The smile of satisfaction that my parents don today is the most precious reward in my life, I have been able to receive this reward solely with the help of the supportive hands of Children International-SAHAY

Hi! This is Debashis Acharya. I will tell you about myself. I am an only child in a family of six. My grandparents and an aunt are economically dependent on my parents' earnings. My father is a daily wage earner and my mother is a maid. They pool their resources to make ends meet. Quite expectedly, this six-member family has seen a lot of economic hardships and difficulties in their everyday lives.

However, despite their poverty my parents held on to their one and only dream of raising me well so that I would move towards greener pastures in life. How they wished to see me free from the worries and troubles of a life amidst poverty through economic self-sufficiency! To fulfill this dream, my parents made a lot of sacrifices. For obvious reasons, their little savings would always fall short of the requirement towards raising me; yet they continued working hard and zealously and spent every rupee they could to ensure that I had a the chance to create a successful future.

At one point of time when life was really difficult for me and my family, a sudden turn came in my life. My family breathed a sigh of relief and it seemed that my parents' toils and sufferings would yield good result now as the means to achieve their dream was near at hand. Yes, the Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program enrolled my name as a sponsored child in its register. I was only 9 years old then.

My family believed very strongly that my sponsorship had actually flung open the door to my success in life and urged me to make the best use of this opportunity 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 throughout the year. 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 training and the valuable experiences I picked up while in the youth group also went hand in hand with opening a new horizon of opportunities before me.

The program extended the HOPE Scholarship to me for continuing my higher secondary education after my Grade X board examination. In 2010, after completing my university graduation, I got an interview call to work in a well-known shopping mall in Kolkata and was full of excitement when I actually got the job. Children International-SAHAY always stood beside me all along providing the needed will-power and motivation. It is one year since I am into this job. Today I am a self-sufficient and economically independent just as my dear parents had dreamt and it fills my heart to see their happiness contentment.

Truly, the smile of satisfaction that my parents don today is the most precious reward in my life. I wish to make a it big in life so today I am studying for an MBA degree.

## SATYAJIT HALDER



I am Satyajit Halder from Digeshwar village, 24 Parganas (South). My family has four members and my father is the only earning member in the family. When I was young, my father worked as a daily labourer to support our family. The meagre income that my father earned was not sufficient to take care of our daily needs and he struggled very hard just to provide us with two square meals a day.

The future seemed obscure and uncertain. Children from better-off families would ignore or ridicule us. It was during this dark phase of my growing up years, that I received the opportunity to be part of the sponsorship program of Children International-SAHAY.

I was only in grade II, when I was sponsored. Hence I could make the most of the program. I started taking more interest in my studies and the encouragement and guidance that I received helped me progress particularly in my studies. I fared very well in all my school examinations and this gave me an added sense of confidence and satisfaction. I passed my secondary and higher secondary examinations with exceptionally good grades. In addition, the experience that I gained through my participation in various youth group programs helped me become a responsible and a confident individual. The support that I have received in the areas of health education and family assistance has brought about a sea-change in my life.

In 2007, I left the small town coziness of home to travel to the megacity of Kolkata and enrolled in a Mechanical Engineering Course in Acharya Prafulla Chandra College from where I completed my technical studies

with high grade. I was selected through a campus interview to start a career with Tractors India Limited. I happily joined them after finishing my studies.

I am proud of myself to have become self-reliant so early in my life. I can now improve the financial condition of my family. Today, the very people who

ridiculed us when we were young want to befriend us because of our improved financial condition!

The program has helped me distinguish between true and fair-weather friends. I have also learnt the true value of life. The sponsorship program has not only benefitted me but has also played a key role in giving a new direction to many children and youth who have had the opportunity to be a part of it. I am successful and happy. I see a bright future ahead of me and hope the

same for others too.





## Tapashi Das

Once an ordinary girl from Slum# 4 who has been a beneficiary of Children International – SAHAY's sponsorship program... yes, that's me, Tapashi Das! I am my parent's first-born child and though their means were limited, they tried in every way to give me all they could afford. My mother admitted me to a nearby school called Calcutta Social Project (better known as Auntie's school) and thus I entered the world of learning. Later on I got admitted into Beltala Girls' School, one of the best

### I have been able to beat the odds and come out a winner

schools in the area, from where I completed my secondary level studies.

While all this was happening in my life, and I was transitioning from a small school to a big school, without my realizing it I had also become a part of an international family – I had become a sponsored child. This moving on from Auntie's School to a big school and becoming a sponsored child all happened very quietly in my life but what a major impact it has had.

Slowly, but surely I started feeling the presence of sponsorship in my life as I started benefitting from the various programs aimed to engage and empower young people so that they could be effective agents of change both within their households and throughout their local communities. I was a member of the Child Core Group till the age of 11, after which on my twelfth birthday I became a member of the Youth Group. Like all other members of this group henceforth I was able to communicate my feelings and take decisions and enjoyed being recognized as an agent of change for the youth community. By then I had understood that the Sponsorship Program was not just about receiving gifts, it was about changing lives of thousands of needy children living in various parts of rural and urban West Bengal. As time passed, I received a Leadership Training which paved the way to my future by helping me identify my potentials and recognize my leadership

qualities. Apart from studies I also enjoyed art and bagged a prize at one of Children International's art contests.

While in Grade XI, I was offered the Hope Scholarship that ensured a better standard of education for me through private tuitions. It needs mention here that with this valuable support I scored honour marks in my grade XII public examinations. Next, during my Graduation Course, I became a part of the tutoring and mentoring program run by the Agency where I taught sponsored children between Grades II-IV. I was even paid a small honorarium for my efforts. This helped provide some economic support to my father, as it was now almost time for me to graduate from the program. But because of the chance that I was given to mentor and tutor students, my reputation as a teacher grew and after I graduated from the program I continued to tutor children and became a private tutor of repute in my immediate community.

I was delighted when in the year 2009 I was offered a job as an Encoder in the erstwhile Disha Foundation – now merged with Children International-Sahay. And today I am a Field Officer with Children International-Sahay, the organization that gave me all the help and support that I needed right through my childhood till date, to get out of my very ordinary life situation, face the challenges thrown my way boldly and reach my present position.

## Nabakumar Chakraborty

I am Nabakumar Chakraborty, residing in a small village, named Teghori, in Tarakeshwar, of Hooghly District. I am a graduated sponsored youth of the Children International- SAHAY's child sponsorship program.

My association with the program goes back to the time when I was studying in Grade-III in 'Teghori' Free Primary School. I was enrolled under the child sponsorship program and received support in the areas of health and education till the age of 18 years. Though on completion of Grade-XII, I graduated from the sponsorship program but I still continued to receive support from the program to purchase books and stationeries needed for my studies in college, for pursuing a Bachelors degree course. On completion of graduation, I was also granted a scholarship to pursue a Masters Degree course.

I lived in a small house with my parents and my younger sister. My father was a priest in a temple, who earned very little to support our living. Our financial condition did not improve and we struggled each day to make our ends meet. When I registered as a sponsored child, I received enormous support and guidance. Today, I consider the sponsorship program as my mentor and guide. Without the generous support of my sponsors, I would not have been what I am today.

After completing my education, I became a member of the youth group of our village committee and received the opportunity of engaging myself in various social and developmental works like, organizing health camps, blood donation camps, tree plantation drive along with organizing educational summer camps for other sponsored children, who were particularly weak in studies.



At present, I am part-time teacher. I undertake various contractual assignments to work as a teacher in different secondary, higher secondary schools and colleges. I started my career as a part time teacher in the year 2005, teaching "Sanskrit" in Talpur Village School. Thereafter, I was engaged as a part time teacher, in A.B High School in Narayanpur, Kaikala Sanskrit College and Bhanjipur Deshbandhu Niketan. Currently, I am teaching Sanskrit in Tarakeshwar College.

Following my success in my studies and later in my career, I have offered financial security to my parents. With my income I have constructed a small house with 3 rooms and a bathroom for a more comfortable living of my family. I have also met all the major expenses of my younger sister's wedding. It is my belief that the support received through the sponsorship program has helped me to blossom and has opened a new chapter in my life.





## Namita Roy

I am Namita Roy. I was born in Umapota, a village in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. I grew up in a family which always had to struggle for existence. My father is still a vegetable vendor in the bi-weekly village market.

For our mere sustenance, my mother had to work as a maid and also as a daily labor. In spite of my parents' efforts to make ends meet, education for my brother and I was an unattainable dream. My parents were illiterate and not aware of the need for education. They only admitted us to a school when they saw other children of the locality going to school. Fortunately, both of us were eager to

study.

When I was 3 ½ years old Children International-SAHAY came to my life as our 'saviour' – I was included in the sponsorship program. I started receiving educational, health and material benefits. 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" to us.

Till 1st year of college, while studying for Bachelor of Arts degree, I received all sorts of benefits which have been like a life line for our family. Our social workers have always been by my side and have encouraged me to continue my studies in the face of all odds. Since, 1st year of college I started giving private tuitions to small children. This helped me meet the cost of my education and extend a helping hand to my family. I was always a good student and my private tutors were also kind enough to teach me against a meager remuneration. Thus, I could continue my education and fulfill my dreams. I have today successfully completed a post graduation degree. From Children International-SAHAY I received many kinds of trainings, which has ultimately helped me attain self sufficiency and increase my self confidence. It has also made me realize that illiteracy has to be overcome at all costs for us to progress further.

For the last one year I am a social worker at

the Children International-SAHAY's sponsorship program. I contribute my earnings for the improvement of my family's financial condition. I have also been able to help my brother cross all hurdles and carry on with his studies towards completing his graduation. Till date I have been successful in meeting and overcoming the financial and social barriers to achieve my goals. Now I lead a happy and content life with my family – thanks to Children International and SAHAY.



## Pinaki Halder

I am Pinaki Halder, a resident of Bhadura village where I live with my parents and sister. In the year 1995 I came under the umbrella of the Children International-SAHAY's sponsorship program routed through the local NGO. My inclusion in this program was a big leap for me as it enabled me to develop my abilities. The continuous financial and material support from the program along with the unconditional moral support from my parents has made me a successful person.

### Sponsorship program has brought a ray of hope in my life

As a child, I would occasionally doubt whether this sponsorship program could shape my future the way I wanted it to be, but now I am convinced that this program has impacted very positively in my life and has paved the way for my comfortable existence. The primary aim of this sponsorship program is to develop the physical and educational capabilities of our society's underprivileged children and shape their lives towards self-sufficiency by extending relevant support and fulfilling basic needs.

The economic support extended to me by the program along with the medical and other program-based support, has helped me to develop myself as a healthy and self sufficient individual. I wish to add here that from the time I have been in this program; my family and I were extended various kinds of support for addressing the basic needs of our family. In addition, I was also given the opportunity to participate in various kinds of meaningful training camps for improving my talents and abilities. At this time I understood that Children International-SAHAY would be happy to see me grow into a socially and economically established individual putting

all my learning to proper use.

The sponsorship program made available the much needed support for undergoing a 4-month long training program at its 'Into Employment' centre to specialize as a Fitter-n-Turner. This training proved to be another turning point in my life! Today, I am working in a private company named Patton International Limited located in the nearby Falta Special Economic Zone. I am self-sufficient! The sponsorship program has brought a ray of hope in my life and I sincerely wish that many more children who are in this sponsorship program today make the best use of this program and build their lives towards self-sufficiency.





## Puja Adak

I strongly believe that the support that I am being extended from this sponsorship program will show me the right direction to a successful life ahead



"I strongly believe that the support that I am being extended from this sponsorship program will show me the right direction to a successful life ahead"

I am Puja Adak. I live in a village named Sahapur in Tarakeswar Municipal Area in the Hooghly district of West Bengal. I am a sponsored child and receive regular benefits from Children International-SAHAY's sponsorship program.

My father is a daily worker. His income being quite low, he could not meet all the family expenses. And then he fell ill and was unable to work. An abdominal surgery became an immediate necessity for his survival. Following this surgery our economic condition became worse. In the face of it however, the help and support extended to me by Children International-SAHAY showed me a ray of hope towards a brighter future which, hopefully, will support me and my family in a big way in the days to come.

I am a volleyball player. I have been pursuing this sport for over four years now. I participated in a national level volleyball

championship held in New Delhi and a district level meet in East Midnapore. Besides, I also went to play volleyball in towns and cities of West Bengal. Given the support from this sponsorship program, I am able to overcome my family's constraints and groom myself as a sportsperson. I hope that I will be successful in all my sports ventures in the years ahead.

Presently, I am a student of grade X and I am doing quite well in my studies. I also take time out to practice and play volleyball as I seek to make maximum utilization of my education and sports to shape up my career. I strongly believe that the support that I am being extended from this sponsorship program will show me the right direction to a successful life ahead. I hope to be in the National Volleyball team for years and years. Wish me the very best in my endeavour.



## Dolon Biswas

I am Dolon Biswas. I was raised in Bhakatpara, a slum in Bankura town. My father passed away when I was very young. I used to live in my uncle's home with my mother and younger brother. "Struggle for survival was the daily routine in our life". It was extremely difficult for my mother to make the ends meet. I still remember how my mother



use to be bent over a sewing machine all day long just to earn some money through tailoring. Even though we were struggling for our livelihood, she enrolled me in the school, though uncertainty loomed about my continuation in school.

20th January, 1998 holds a special place in my life as I was fortunate to get enrolled in Children International-SAHAY's sponsorship program. I received school supplies from the program. I even got tuition fees, school uniform and special tutoring assistance when I was promoted to high school. Accessing proper education became possible.

I secured second division in the secondary examination and got admitted in Grade XI. I received further support from HOPE Scholarship assistance which helped me in availing private tuitions to excel in my studies.

I was really happy the day I stepped into the college. It was like dream come true. I pursued my Bachelors Degree with history honours. Educational assistance was always available to me till the day I completed college education.

We were not wealthy, but I was introduced to a wealth of program inputs which helped bring out my leadership qualities, make me responsible to the society and to look at my

life in a whole new way. It was an enriching experience to work as a Youth Health Corps co-facilitator. The program motivated me to actively participate in several developmental work in my community. Today, I really feel happy and satisfied for every contribution that I have made to my community.

Being brought up in a family that had major financial constraints, I was determined to study sincerely and establish myself so that I could support my family and to do so I started taking private tuitions in my locality. In 2010, I applied for a position of an ICDS worker in Bankura Municipality. I qualified in the written examination and did well in the interview too. I was hopeful of being offered the job and my instincts proved me right.

Today, I am a successful ICDS worker in my community. Wise people say "no learning goes waste" and I see that in my case by bagging this job when I needed it most. The various skill building and training programs of the sponsorship program has helped me in this achievement. Now I have started the new innings of my life and am enjoying every moment.



## Yeasin Khan

Hello everybody! I will start with a brief introduction about myself... I am Yeasin Khan. I reside in Danga village in Boral. My family comprises of my parents and four siblings. My father worked as a vegetable seller to support our family but his earnings would always fall short of our minimum requirement. Though I was quite young at that time, yet I clearly remember the trying circumstances we all went through as my father struggled hard to try and meet our family needs.

Fortune smiled on me when I was 5 years old. I was lucky enough to be enrolled in the sponsorship program of Children International- SAHAY. Later, my sister was also brought within the purview of the sponsorship program. Our initiation into the program was a boon to our family because the continuous support received by us brought about a gradual but perceptible progress in our living conditions.

To be very frank, somehow my interest in studies was never kindled, even though I received a lot of educational support from the program. Luckily for me, when I became a member of the youth group in Year 2006, I was given an opportunity to learn driving – an activity that I always wanted to train myself in for pursuing a living.

Whenever I speak of Children International- SAHAY and its contributions towards the welfare and growth of children from the underprivileged categories, I cannot but help mention the following lifetime opportunity. During my tenure as a leader of the youth group, I was given a chance to represent the

Indian youth in the International Youth Conference held in Kansas City of U.S.A. This particular experience has been very enriching for me and eventually helped me to be more confident and responsible in life.

Back in India from Kansas City and brimming with new-found confidence and an inner urge to become self-sufficient, I took up driving as my main occupation, thanks to the certificate I was awarded after the successful completion of the course in driving. Initially I drove my uncle's van to ferry people from one place to another for a fare. I used the money that I earned to pay for my brother's computer training program in Burdwan. I am very happy to be economically independent today and to be contributing towards the well-being of my family. I am not sure if this is worth mentioning but will do so all the same. I used the small amount that I could save to start a business of selling spices, unfortunately I did not do well in business and then I had to give it up soon after.

At present, I am working as a staff in a NGO – ERDS. Today, I am proud to contribute towards my family expenses. Moreover, this realization of self-worth has given me a sense of immense satisfaction and happiness. Thanks Children International-SAHAY!

## Samir Mondal

A few words of introduction first... I am Samir Mondal, a member of a poverty stricken family from Block Patakkhuri in Bankura district. My father was a small time farmer and you may well imagine how difficult it must have been for him to maintain a family of five members with the meager amount of Rs.450. This was in 1995-96. My mother was a simple homemaker and we were three siblings at home, all dependent on my father for livelihood. I now wonder how my father managed to bear the cost of our meals, minimum education and healthcare with the small amount that he earned.

I remember quite clearly... I was a student of grade I when my name was included in the Children International-SAHAY's sponsorship program and, I must admit this inclusion was primarily instrumental in clearing away the obstacles that were darkening our lives. With the program extending all kinds of support towards my education, healthcare and other basic needs, my father could then concentrate on the betterment of other members of the family. Consequent to all this valuable support my 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.

The days and years flew by and soon I was able to pass my Xth and XIIth board examinations. With further education assistance extended by the program, I started my three year graduate level studies. When I was in the second year, I started preparing and taking the competitive examinations. Thus, I happened to take the competitive exams for Central Industrial Security Force recruitments.

My joy knew no bounds on being informed by the Central Industrial Security Force office that I had been selected for a job. I was pursuing my Bachelor of Arts degree with English, when this job offer came my

way. I gave up my studies mid way to take up the job, as this government job meant security for a poor family like ours. This job has opened a very new chapter in my life that speaks of contentment and achievement and has brought smiles on my parents and siblings' faces. True, the struggle from darkness to light has been a long and difficult one, but then today my family is well settled and I bring home as much as Rs.15000 every month! I am happy to share with you that in spite of having to give up my studies; I feel satisfied for being able to bear the responsibilities of my parents and siblings.





Satyen Paik

I am Satyen Paik. I would like to narrate the truth of my life's achievements and dreams that was possible with the continuous support that I received from the sponsorship program of Children International-SAHAY.

As a child, all I can recall are memories of poverty and struggle. Then came a time, when I was included in the sponsorship program 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 were always there to guide me whenever needed. This provided me with the platform for expression of my skills and inner potential. The encouragement that I received from my sponsorship staff, in all spheres of education and other extra curricular activities like recitation, dance, singing, drama and the likes has given me a feeling of fulfillment, completeness and holistic outlook towards life.

In the process of growing up from a child to a youth, I had received an opportunity to become an active member of the youth group. 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 have realized that this has been the foundation of the success that I have achieved in the field of my work and career.

The educational support that I have received through the program has helped me grow as an educated, independent individual and also be prepared to face the challenges that life throws my way. I graduated from the program in 1998. I worked with Power Development Corporation Limited on contractual basis for three and half years. These initial years of working in the power sector were a great learning experience for me. It paved the path for my next job. For the last three years I have been working with West Bengal State Electricity Board as a Junior Operating Assistant. I earn about Rupees 17000 per month. Today, I am happy to be where I am, working in West Bengal State Electricity Board.

## Selima Khatun

"Sponsorship program built my self-confidence which helped me brush aside my conservative mindset and rigidity towards change and consider life in its new modern set-up"

Hello... I am Selima Khatun, daughter of Saidul Islam Mollah who is by occupation a mason. Our six member family consists of my two elder brothers and an elder sister, my father, mother and me. My father's occupation didn't make enough and as a result of this and rising cost of living, our economic condition only worsened with time. The immediate impact of our family's economic crisis was borne by my elder brothers. They had to go without any basic education and instead, from their childhood had to work to supplement the deficient family income. My elder sister remained at home helping my mother with her domestic chores.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, among our siblings, I was the only one who somehow managed to go to school and received education. But that too, could not be continued for long as the family was suddenly plunged into a deeper financial crisis. I was in grade VII, when I had to drop out from school. Ever since, I whiled away my time at home.

This had almost become a way of life until the SAHAY -iLead center again ignited a ray of hope in my life. Duly motivated by the staff at the center, I enrolled my name in a 4-month long training program on Bedside Nursing in 2010. This training did not only

give me the desired input and know-how of the work involved

but at the same time instituted my self-confidence which helped me brush aside my conservative mindset and rigidity towards change and consider life in its new modern set-up.







## Shabana Yasmin

I was just a little toddler in the pre-primary school in Vikurdihi village under Bankura Block-1 when in the year 1996 I was field notified into Children International-SAHAY's sponsorship program. My father earned a meager Rupees 400 every month by working as a daily labourer in a bread-making unit. We lived in distressing conditions in a one-room straw-roof hut along with a few close relatives. In the years to come, I had four more siblings. It is understandable therefore that in the face of this heavy burden of meeting the expenses for maintaining his big family, it was impossible for my father to bear the minimum cost of a proper education for me.

My inclusion in the sponsorship program therefore came as a great blessing for the family. All kinds of family benefits, and the educational support for me, helped us enormously in tackling our economic distress. I worked my way through school and after clearing my grade X Board examinations, is now in grade XI, while my siblings are presently studying in grades IX, V, IV and I respectively.

Given my inclination towards sports and athletics, even while pursuing my education, I have been receiving proper coaching from a skilled trainer in the Bankura Athletics Coaching center. This has helped me immensely in developing my athletic abilities, so much so, that I started being noticed in the sporting circuit. Worth mentioning here is that I stood third in the district level athletics meet earlier this year in my group of running and jumping events.

Given the limited growth opportunities available for me in the remote villages

where I live and the financial constraints of my family, it was difficult for me to develop my skills through regular trainings and give wings to my dreams of a career in athletics. I had to cross many deterrents in the form of various kinds of social restrictions. But I had confidence in my own capability and could pursue what I wanted through sheer hard work and strong will power



Thanks to the sponsorship program, I am able to pursue my education and alongside developing

my skills in athletics and my trainers feel that I will be able to improve considerably and perform very well if I continue in the same way.

## Swapan Maity

I am Swapan Maity. I was sponsored in 1994 when I was in Grade II. I am from the village Deoly, West Naichanpur, East Mednipur district. My father, Bahadur, was a betel leaf cultivator and our family of 6 was supported from his meager income. The family was forced to stop the

education of my siblings when my father developed glaucoma. As he could not see, he could no longer work. Our family was in dire straits. It was during this critical juncture that I was sponsored. Hence I am able to appreciate the value of sponsorship.

I completed my secondary education with 70.5% and then went on to complete my higher secondary course and scored 62.6%. It was during Grade XII that I received scholarship support for another 2 years and continued receiving it till the first year of graduation. After my B.A. 1st year examination, when the scholarship ended, it became very difficult to bear the education expenses. I knew I had been supported for many years by the sponsorship program, now it was my turn to take the responsibility of my future. So to manage my circumstances, I started looking for job and was able to succeed in the Indian Army clerkship examination.

Now I am a clerk with the Indian Army and our economic condition is gradually improving. We will be always grateful to the support that we had received from our sponsor and sponsorship program.

My mother says, "We wanted one person from our family to be educated and the educational support like books, school supplies, tutoring; uniforms support

enabled Swapan to fulfill our dreams." I will fulfill her dreams, I have started to build a brick house in place of the thatched house that we used to live in, so that my parents and siblings can enjoy better living conditions.





## Soumen Samanta



I am Soumen Samanta, a youth who has graduated out of the Children International-SAHAY's child sponsorship program. I live in Tarakeswar, in the village of Teghori, with my parents and sister. I have taken up the responsibility of looking after the needs of my family and it is the sponsorship program that has made me capable of shouldering this responsibility.

Since childhood, my family was faced with poverty and it is during this time that my father came to know of the sponsorship program to which I was enrolled. I was then four years old. Since then, till the age of 19, the program took care of my educational, health and other basic needs of mine and my family.

Although I graduated from the program at the age of 19, my association with the program did not end here. With my interest in photography and with the encouragement from the organization to enhance my skills, I worked hard to improve my skills in photography. The organization recognized my skills and effort and gave me an opportunity to join as a Consultant

Photographer at one of its Service Area centers.

Today, I love my job and I enjoy doing it and for all this, I will be ever grateful to Children International-SAHAY for helping me achieve my goal.



## Subhash Pakhira

I am Subhas Pakhira. My father sells cooked food on the roadside from a cart, he earns about Rupees 2,000 a month. My brother also helps the family by working in the photography studio. As a child, I desperately wanted to study, but had little chance of realizing my dream until I joined Children International-SAHAY's sponsorship program. Through sponsorship, I was enrolled in school and motivated to pursue education further.

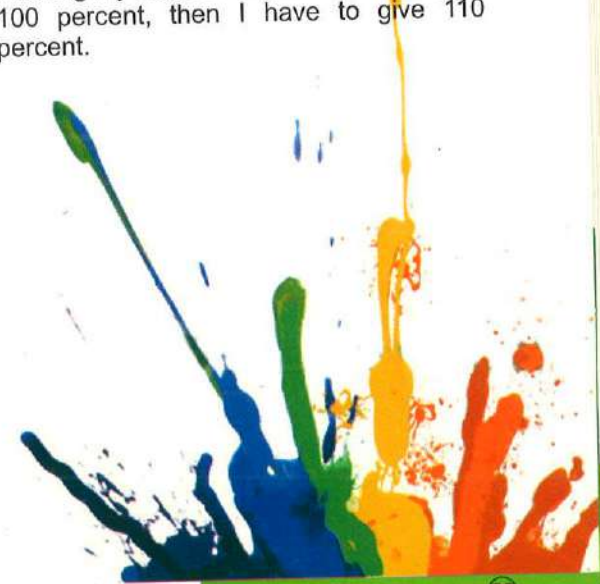
I have regularly received help from the sponsorship program, and I have continued my studies and art courtesy this program. After finishing school, I took admission tests at different art colleges for the Bachelor of Visual Arts course and gained admission to the Indian College of Art and Draftmanship, which is located near Kolkata. After completing my Bachelor's degree I also completed my master's degree. Studying art under such circumstances would have remained a dream without sponsorship. Because I received help from the sponsorship program, I could complete my education and go on to study art.

Apart from sharpening my own skills, I teach art to sponsored youth at the community center, judge art contests, and am often hired as a consultant during art exhibitions. By teaching art to children whose parents can afford to pay for lessons, I am able to buy canvas and paint for my personal use.

Today, I am receiving accolades for my oil paintings, I hold art exhibitions of my paintings, and I am a consultant to many Durga Puja Committees on the puja décor, besides being a selling artist too! The common perception is that the poor cannot be creative I have broken the mould. I think my achievement is particularly noteworthy given that I come from an extremely poor family.



At night, when I have difficulty falling asleep, I think of the painting that I have created during the day and wonder whether I have been able to express my thoughts through my art, as it is my medium of expression. I am my worst critic, and I believe that I have to keep pushing myself to excel. I am scared of failure and not meeting my target and goals. If others give 100 percent, then I have to give 110 percent.







**Sudipto Mondal**

I am Sudipto Mondol. I was in the sponsorship program from the time I was 5 years old till I was 14 years of age, when I left the program. In these 9 years of being a sponsored child, I was exposed to an entirely new and previously unexplored world. Through sponsorship I gained a lot of experiences. Through the various skill-building workshops, I learned many things. I can definitely say that I would not be where I am today had it not been for the sponsorship program.

A major benefit of being in the sponsorship program is that one is provided with the opportunity of networking with professionals who can help shape one's life. Another benefit is learning how to interact with people, and this is a big benefit for me. I was very shy as a child, and in my first stage appearance was a nervous wreck. Today, I anchor shows locally and even sing at local functions. I was also assigned his responsibility of anchoring for Children International-SAHAY's Annual Day program. From a lonely child to a confident young man with faith in his ability, this cause of the long journey has been possible because of the sponsorship program. Also, I still remain in the periphery of the youth group activities and try and give back something to community by helping the members of the youth group in whatever ways I can.

My first job too was a nutrition helper in a local NGO. I then worked with Group Development for a year as a peer educator. During this period I completed my Masters degree in Social Work and was lucky to get a job in the SRD (Strengthening Rural Decentralization) Cell of West Bengal Government as an Assistant Coordinator. My first job posting

was in Purulia. This was the first time I started living away from my family and it was a new learning experience. I am now a Financial Management and Procurement Coordinator of the IGSP Cell under Panchayat and Rural



Development Department of Government of West Bengal and I am based in Kharagpur. I am earning Rupees twenty three thousand per month and my parents can now take a break from all the hardships that they had faced in bringing me up. My next aim is to do a PhD on youth culture and I hope to achieve this too sometime in the future. In March 2011, I have married my childhood sweetheart. She too is a graduated sponsored child. Together with her I have woven many pleasant dreams for our future. We will provide our children a far better future than we had as children.



**Sujata Naiya**

"If I had not been part of sponsorship program," Sujata said, "I would have probably led a very common place existence... seen but not heard by [my] community and peers, smothered by the unfair demands of a traditional society. The sponsorship program has equipped me with the knowledge and the training to successfully manage my own life, and also spread awareness on social issues in my community." And this is how it happened...

### I have been able to beat the odds and come out a winner

I was born in a village where gender inequality and unemployment are still rampant, but I have managed to rise above those barriers primarily with help from Children International-SAHAY's sponsorship program. I was sponsored in 1998 at the age of six and enjoyed my days in the program very much. All the benefits that I received like health care, nutritional screenings, educational assistance, clothing and other material support made my life much easier than some of my neighbours. I was also a peer educator in the Youth Health Crops program, teaching others about hygiene, reproductive health and general life skills. Infact I was also the co-facilitator of the program, a position which helped me win a scholarship to study therapeutic yoga and physiotherapy. I am thankful to my peers for thinking me capable enough to lead them as a co-facilitator.

I graduated from the program in 2009 and there came a turning point in my life – I met Sandeep, a dashing young man and we decided to marry with parental consent in the same year. Though traditionally parents or brothers bear the wedding cost, I did not let my brothers nor my father bear the wedding expenses. As it was my wedding I bore all the cost myself. Unfortunately, no one had thought to discuss the issues of my working post marriage. Given my exposure, I took it for granted that I would

continue to work whereas, Sandeep thought otherwise. This became the issue of contention after our marriage and lead to a lot of mental stress and pain. I then decided to spare both of us the pain and filed for a divorce next year. As my family did not support my decision I continued to fend for myself. Even as I worked to earn a living I met lawyers and went ahead with the divorce proceedings as I wanted to lead a life of dignity free from oppressive pressures.

After completing the year long course on yoga and physiotherapy I was employed by VLCC, a fitness company. I worked with VLCC for a year and saved enough to build my parents a home. All this was happening while I was going through an emotional turmoil in my personal life, but it has made me a stronger person. Today, I am an independent yoga instructor. I am teaching others how to find balance in their lives through yoga and relief through physical therapy.

In her early twenties, Sujata is a self-employed young woman who handles herself with a surprising degree of balance and agility, thanks to her daily yoga sessions. She is also proving that woman play important roles in their communities, all the while supporting her family on her income of Rupees 10,000 per month that exceeds her parents' combined monthly income.





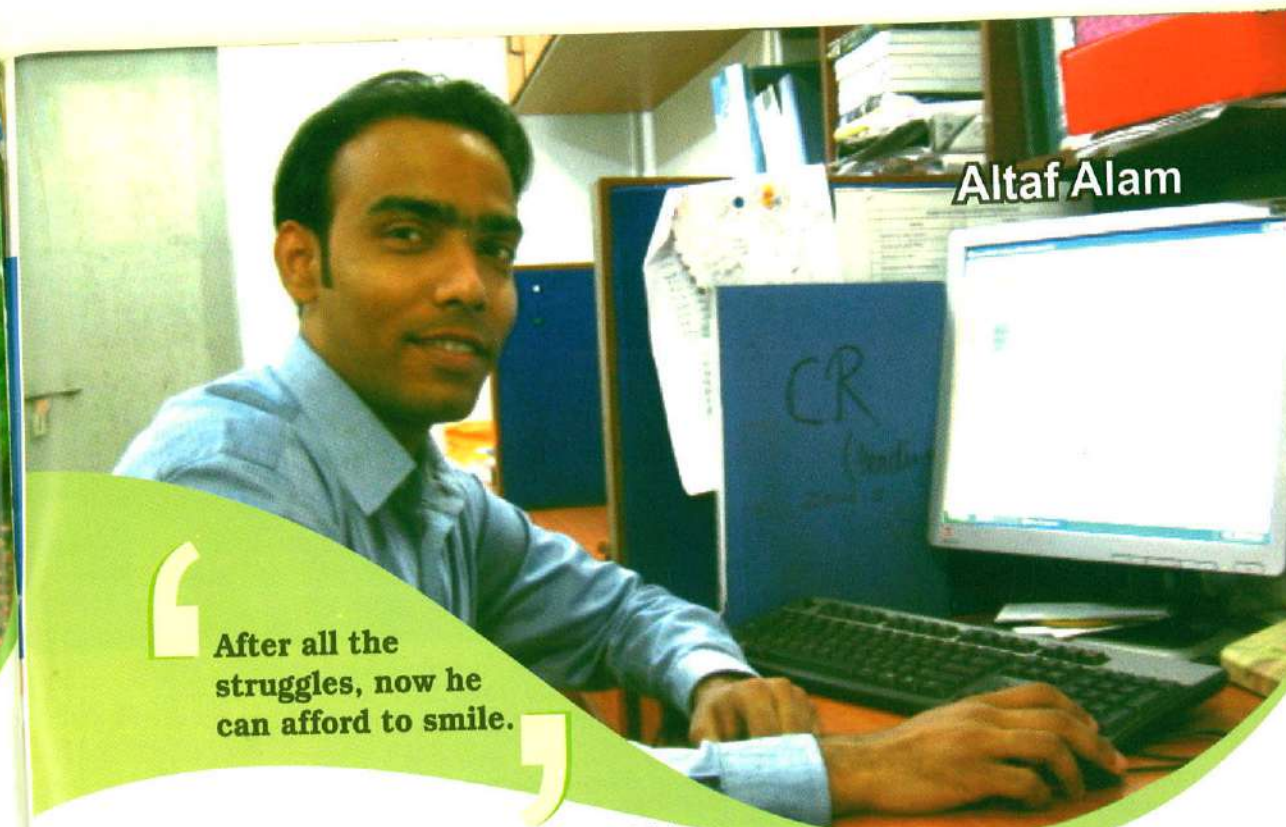
**Sultana Naskar**

A resident of Danga in Boral, I am Sultana Naskar, a physically challenged girl child from a poverty stricken family. Those were the times really! Life was so difficult! My parents, grandparents, an aunt and an elder brother made up my family and we all co-existed in a one-roomed hut with mud wall on one side and a thick growth of plants and leaves providing the cover on the other side. Here at home while my elder brother was a heart patient, my left hand was cut at the wrist and short of fingers. My father was only a vegetable vendor and his paltry income was just insufficient to meet the family expenses. Quite naturally, in the midst of so much crisis how could he have afforded to bear the cost of my brother and my medical treatment?

And then a sudden light of hope peeped into my life when my name got enrolled in the Children International- SAHAY's sponsorship program. I was only 6 years old when I became part of this sponsorship program. 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 want.

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, origami, developing leadership skills etc. These opportunities strengthened my character and built my confidence to face the challenges in my life with determination. Thus I was able to overcome my physical limitation as well as my family's poverty. I take care to dress well and always be cheerful. I am told that people like to meet me and I am the best dressed girl in the youth meetings!

Presently, I am pursuing my studies for a Bachelor's degree while at the same time working part time in a local Montessori school. Besides, in our locality, succumbing to regular requests, I train youth and children in different cultural programs. I am well-versed in Bengali, Hindi and English. I wish to share with you that I am very hopeful about completing my Master's degree course and qualifying as a full-fledged teacher.



**Altaf Alam**

**After all the struggles, now he can afford to smile.**

"I am a living example of the impact child sponsorship can make in a developing nation" says Altaf when asked to comment about how sponsorship has affected him and his community. Life had been a struggle for Altaf. But then the Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program came along and equipped him with a 'never say die' attitude.

Altaf completed Grade XII at the age of 17 years and joined Vodafone as a Marketing Executive. Alongside he also pursued his Bachelors in Commerce. After a few months he got a better offer from Shoppers Stop, a premier retail marketing chain and joined there as a Customer Care Executive.

As time went by, the work pressure and the cost of private tuitions became so unbearable that he almost decided to quit studies. His teacher urged him to go on and continued tutoring him free

of cost so that he could finish his Bachelor's degree. Altaf completed his Bachelors in Commerce and thereafter received a special grant from Ms. Sandra Biggs to complete a course in Financial Accounting from Industrial Computer Accountancy. Completing the training successfully, he joined Farheen Chemicals and FMZ Engineering as an accountant.

In 2009, Altaf applied for the position of a Field Officer at Children International - SAHAY and was selected. He accepted the job offer. Today, he is working in the Service Area Center at Jorasanko. Life has changed drastically for Altaf.

After so much struggle, Altaf can now afford to smile. Along with the sponsorship support, his family, also deserves special thanks for encouraging him throughout his strife. Today, not only Altaf but also his siblings are well educated and make a good living.







## Soumen Mondal

A success story of a sponsored youth who through self confidence and hard work is today an executive in a leading IT Solutions company

I grew up in a small village in West Bengal, India. My father worked as a store clerk, earning less than Rs.1000 a month. My mother was often sick and could not work. Providing for my sisters and me on such a paltry income was practically impossible. The family was even forced to skip meals frequently. Without assistance, I would not likely have been able to pursue education and follow my dreams. With persistence and laborious effort, I took full advantage of my opportunities and excelled in academic pursuits. I cleared both my grade X and XII examinations and then also cleared the Joint Entrance Examination which guaranteed admission to attend the College of Engineering and Management. In addition to the Rs.3500 per month scholarship I received through Children International-SAHAY to help attend college, my community was so thrilled about my accomplishments that they united to further help cover my tuition costs. After completing the 4 year course in Computer Engineering & Management, I have worked in prestigious firms like Tata Consultancy Services and travelled to places like Japan, U.K. and South Africa on various assignments. Presently, I am working as Senior Software Engineer in Zensar Technology Limited which is a software company of the RRG conglomerate. Today,

I am proud to say that I have a good monthly income and can now help my family

When Soumen had just entered college, his father had said "we were very fortunate to come under the sponsorship program that helped my son become what he is today. I will be ever grateful to Children International-SAHAY for all they have done for us." Sadly, both of Soumen's parents died within a month of each other due to unrelated health problems. However, they both lived to see Soumen within reach of attaining his college degree. Continuing the cycle of gratitude that his father expressed, today Soumen is able to assist his younger brother in earning a college degree.

## Mamoni Bag

I am Mamoni Bag. I have two sisters and we lived in Tarakeswar with our parents. At present, my sisters are married and live with their new families. I live with my parents and look after them. My father is old and ailing and is unable to work any more. Now that I am financially independent, the responsibility of looking after my family is entirely on my shoulders. The situation of our family today is however very different from what it was in the past.

When I was a child, my father worked as a driver and my mother was a housewife. The average monthly income of our family was too little to meet our daily needs of food, clothing, education and the likes. I was fortunate to be included in the sponsorship program of the Children International - SAHAY. The support received through the sponsorship program was immensely beneficial not only for me but also for my family, in the areas of health, education, sanitation facilities, family assistance and overall development.

I took full advantage of the support and studied hard. A good education can help poor children like me change our life

circumstances. On completion of my graduation degree in Bachelors of Arts, I joined the police force, in the department of General Railway Police.

I am happy to have grown up to be an independent and capable individual. My parents and community are very proud of me. My father says that with a daughter like me he does not feel the need of a son to look after them. I owe my sincere gratitude to the sponsorship program without which my success and progress would not have been possible. I am keen to help other children who regard me as their role model. Please feel free to approach me for assistance.







Hello! I am Sailen Pal. I was born into a lower middle class family in Ashurali village. My father toiled hard in the small plot of agricultural land we owned there and also sold some grocery items in the local weekly marketplace to eke out a living and support our family of four- my father, mother, a younger sister and of course me.

True we were poor and our circumstances were very trying, yet one good thing was that as a family we seemed to have resolved to fight our way out of our difficulties in life. This was perhaps the main reason why my father always dreamt to see me and my little sister receive sound education and motivated us accordingly. 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 a lot for a means to achieve the end.

The Children International-SAHAY sponsorship program was therefore like a good fairy that knocked at our door to make sure my father's dream was fulfilled. That was in the year 1991. My family was overjoyed to have my name figure in the sponsorship program and for me there was no looking back. The program took good care of my education by providing support in the form of books and copies, school fees, school uniform and stationary. Moreover, in order to improve upon our overall living condition, the program kept assisting us with other requisite material support.

The program's unflinching support along with my father's dream for 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

worked hard and it is noteworthy that I passed my school leaving examination with distinction. I then successfully completed my graduation with honours in Physics, which was followed by a Masters degree and a Bachelor-in-Education degree.

With these qualifications today I am placed as a teacher in a village high school. I am happy to have earned a social standing as a teacher, but I must say that it is owing to Children International-SAHAY's timely support during our hour of need that I could work towards my present success and my father's dream for me could come true.

