



CALCUTTA KIDS

SEPTEMBER 2005

ABOUT CALCUTTA KIDS

Calcutta Kids is a not-for-profit organization; a recognized 501c3 under the United States Internal Revenue Service, committed to the healthcare needs of the poorest children in and around Kolkata India. This healthcare is comprehensive and includes monthly checkups, free medicines, follow-up treatment, referrals, and hospitalization when necessary. Calcutta Kids is devoted to the complete rehabilitation of each and every child we encounter and acts as a resource to help these children find vocational training, education, proper nutrition and lodging when necessary. Additionally, Calcutta Kids is now providing health services to the neediest pregnant women and infants in two slum areas of the city.

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Kolkata.

Returning to India in June after some months away, I was struck by the changes which have been taking place in the country—changes which have left me with mixed emotions. On the one hand it is exciting to see India taking advantage of liberalized markets and trade and to see the growing and increasingly flourishing Indian middle class that has been much in the news. At the same time, I am concerned that this image of growing middle class prosperity not convey the message that problems of poverty in India are disappearing. While infant and child mortality rates have been dropping, India still accounts for fully 40% of all the malnourished children in the world – as well as the highest concentration in the world. Fully 30% of Indian infants are born with low birthweight, and that figure hasn't changed in 25 years.



So, while economic growth among the middle class is rapid, and while “call centers” and other types of outsourcing are providing better opportunities for the educated underemployed, the poor are still desperately poor. Even though Kentucky Fried Chicken has made its way to Kolkata, and even though Thomas Friedman has said that if India were a stock he would buy it, the poor are far too poor to afford either that chicken or that stock—and sick children are still desperately in need of health services which continue to be unavailable to them.

This newsletter is filled with an abundance of information about ways in which Calcutta Kids is helping these families and these children. It contains some exciting news about new directions including:

- 1 a new project we are undertaking to address the health of pregnant women and of children under the age of two in two particularly needy slum areas;
- 1 a relationship with Kids With Cameras, the organization formed by Zana Briski who directed the 2004 Academy Award-winning documentary Born Into Brothels about the children of prostitutes in Kolkata;
- 1 a formal partnership with Udit Nursing Home, a renowned private medical clinic; and
- 1 introduction of a new way for you to contribute to Calcutta Kids by selling items on e-bay and requesting that the profit from the sale of your items be sent to Calcutta Kids.

Needless to say, these new initiatives are increasing our budget. We believe, however, that the help we're providing to these additional needy persons more than justifies these extra expenses – and we think you'll agree. If yes, please help us out as best you can - we need your support more than ever. It's now possible to contribute on line if you'd care to do so at: www.calcuttakids.org or send a check (payable to Calcutta Kids, Inc.) to our Cambridge mailing address.

Thanks again for your continued support in this endeavor for the kids.

With kindest regards and blessings,

Noah Levinson

STILL RECEIVING UNWANTED SOLICITATION LETTERS FROM THE SALESIAN MISSION?

If you are still receiving solicitation letters from the Salesian Mission and wish to be removed from their mailing list, you can either

- 1 visit www.salesianmissions.org, click on "Contact us" then click on "Removal From Mailing List" and follow the provided instructions; or
- 1 send an e-mail to info@calcuttakids.org or call us at (617) 441 3647 and we will have you taken off the mailing list immediately.

OUR NEW HOME

After three wonderful years working under the auspices of Don Bosco Ashalayam, Calcutta Kids has moved its office to a new location closer to the slum areas in which our work is concentrated. This move symbolizes a philosophical shift of focus in the organization from a charity project with a health component to a health project with a charity component. Our new office is a set of rooms within a highly respected medical clinic in Salkia Howrah. Udit Nursing Home (in India, private medical clinics are known as 'nursing homes') and Calcutta Kids have been working together informally since 2002 and, together, have been able to save the lives of many poor children having no access to proper medical treatment. You may remember the story of Irshad Ali, the young boy who was so badly burned, and who had been left to die at a public hospital. It was to this clinic, the Udit Nursing Home, that we brought Irshad for medical treatment. Within three months the child was dancing to Hindi film songs, and today, because of that experience, Irshad aspires to become a doctor.



Udit Nursing Home Staff: (from left) Radheyshyam Prasad, Kalyan Kumar Roy & Dr. U. K. Roy with Noah



Office inauguration ceremony conducted by Sri Sukanta Bhattacharya and attended by Louise Cochran (Noah's Mom)

The medical expertise, solid infrastructure, and trustworthy reputation of Udit Nursing Home makes it an ideal partner in our efforts to provide high-quality medical services to poor children. And this nursing home, which already provides highly discounted rates for poor patients, is enthusiastic about the opportunity to reach larger numbers of slum dwelling mothers and children in need of facility-based treatment.

Calcutta Kids has received the warmest welcome from our friends at Udit Nursing Home, and we are looking forward to working together both on Calcutta Kids' ongoing projects and on our new endeavors which you will read about below.



During the monthly mobile health clinic run to Shyam Nagar, it was discovered that an eight-year-old boy, Nazrul Molla, was suffering from typhoid. The mobile health clinic staff immediately had him admitted to Udit Nursing Home where his mother stayed with him for one week until he was fully recovered.

MOVING IN A NEW DIRECTION

One of the requirements of Marlboro College, the school from which I graduated in June, is the preparation of an undergraduate thesis, which is then evaluated by an outside examiner, usually a professor from another college or university. The writing of my thesis, India's Public Health Challenges: Historical Evolution and a Kolkata Case Study, was a challenging one indeed, but one that proved to be a catalyst in moving Calcutta Kids in an important new direction.

First a bit of background: What I did in this study was to conduct an informal survey of twenty-six Indian and international health professionals asking them what they consider the most pressing public health issues facing India today. From that survey, I came up with a list of nine major issues and then examined the progress made on each of these since India's independence in 1947. The nine issues examined were: caste and class, inequity, sanitation and safe water supply, maternal mortality and gender inequality, child malnutrition, communicable diseases, the curative vs. preventive approach to healthcare, the lack of government commitment, and the unregulated private health sector.

While I was certainly aware of many of the health problems India faces today, I hadn't fully appreciated the enormity of the problems facing mothers and young children in rural areas and in urban slums. Writing the sections on maternal mortality and child malnutrition was both eye opening and upsetting. I was struck particularly by (1) the staggering number of unnecessary deaths of both mothers and children resulting from lack of adequate prenatal care, (maternal mortality in India is 100 times higher than that of most

industrialized nations, and 63 out of every 1000 children born in India die before one year of age - 47% of these in the first week of life); and (2) the fact that this lack of prenatal care and proper health and nutrition care of children under the age of two is, in good part, responsible for the health problems Calcutta Kids has been seeking to address in older children for the past three years. If the mothers of the children we see every day had been given proper prenatal care, and these same children had been kept healthy as young children, much



While Monika Mishra, an epileptic seven-year-old girl from Jagaddal, will never fully recover from her ailment, she is finally able to walk comfortably. After 6 months of treatment at the B.C. Roy Polio Hospital and Research Center for Crippled Children, supported in part by Calcutta Kids, Monika is now walking rather than being carried. Monika also is doing daily physical therapy and continues to gain strength.

of our healthcare work with older children would be unnecessary. Roughly 80% of a child's brain development takes place in the first two years of life, and this also is the most important time for the development of the immune system.

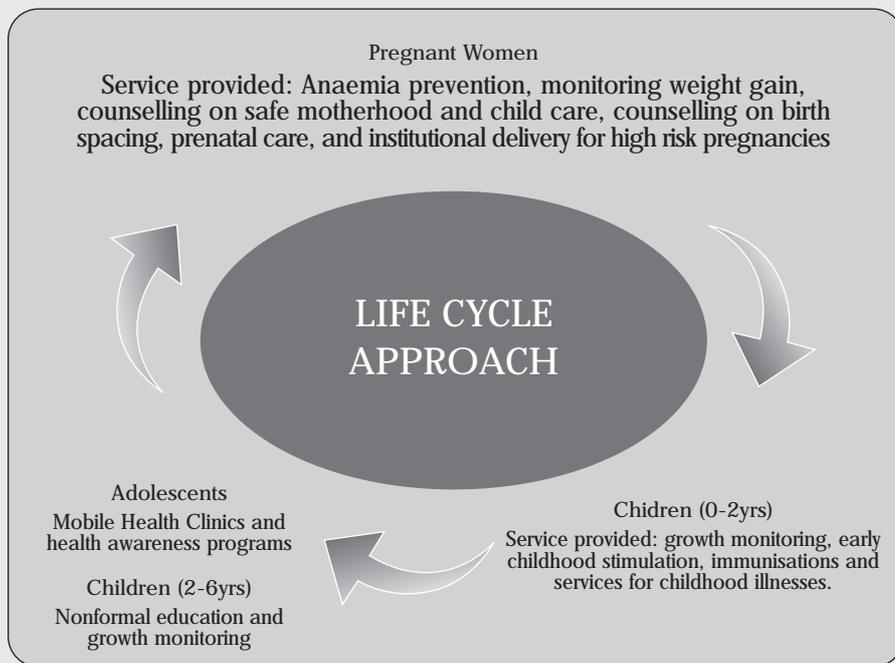
According to UNICEF, only 15% of mothers in India receive adequate prenatal care. It only makes sense for Calcutta Kids to begin tackling the problem of children's ill health from its root causes.

ADDRESSING MATERNAL AND YOUNG CHILD HEALTH

The Child In Need Institute (CINI) is one of the most respected organizations of its kind in India. Founded by Dr. Samir Chaudhuri, CINI has been committed to the health rights of deprived women and children for the past 30 years. When Calcutta Kids decided to take on the issue of maternal and young child health, there was no doubt about whom to call upon for advice.

To our delight, CINI had already established a program, which could be replicated, addressing these very issues, part of what they call the Life Cycle Approach (LCA), and graciously agreed to share with us this approach.

The way LCA works is as follows:



CINI LCA chart. Ammendments made by Calcutta Kids 2005

As we examined the CINI LCA, we realized that Calcutta Kids already has a strong foundation with which to implement it. We already are providing healthcare to children ages 2-6, carrying out growth monitoring, and working within the infrastructure of nonformal school education. We also are already involved in increasing health awareness among adolescents and families more generally. The missing pieces have been the provision of services for pregnant women and children aged 0-2.

Calcutta Kids plans to implement these two crucial elements of the LCA by employing local women to serve as community health workers. These women, already established as trustworthy individuals in the slums, will be trained to provide counseling to pregnant women and newly married couples. In addition to counseling these women and couples on the need for adequate prenatal care checkups and iron tablets, and on pregnancy danger signs, these community health workers will also be trained in behavioral change communication (BCC) designed to address common problematic practices during pregnancy. This BCC will be addressed not only to the woman but also to her husband and mother in law, who need to support her fully in improved practices including adequate food and rest during the pregnancy.

The community health workers will monitor the progress of each of the pregnant women in her "catchment" area of the slum, and assure that those underserved by prenatal care receive it at the Udit Nursing Home, contracted by Calcutta Kids for this purpose. For any of these woman identified as having a particularly high-risk pregnancy, Calcutta Kids will subsidize the cost of a facility-based delivery at the nursing home.

Calcutta Kids also will assure that each of the women receive iron-folate tablets and the counseling necessary to facilitate compliance, and, subsequently assure that each child receive necessary immunizations and micronutrient supplementation.

We at Calcutta Kids are very excited about this new venture into early health intervention and are grateful to our friends at CINI who are providing us with such valuable assistance.

Puja Sil, a seven-year-old girl from Das Nagar was left at home one evening unsupervised. She began playing with an oil lamp that had been left burning in her family's dwelling - and which eventually tipped over burning both the dwelling and Puja. The mobile health clinic coordinator was immediately called and arrangements were made for Puja to be taken to the nursing home. Although her throat, chest, and abdomen were badly burned, Puja was able to be sent home in stable condition within eighteen days. For the next few weeks, a mobile health clinic nurse went every day to Puja's home to dress her burns and monitor her progress. Puja still has pain - and some of the scars appear to be permanent - but she is beginning to smile again and she's making excellent progress.



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FRIENDS AT KIDS WITH CAMERAS

Many of you have seen Born into Brothels, the film by Ross Kauffman and Zana Briski, which was the winner of the 77th annual Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. "A tribute to the resiliency of childhood and the restorative power of art,"



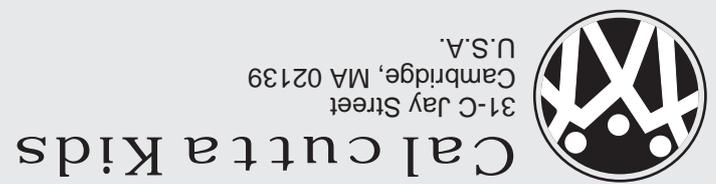
Photo taken by one of Ms. Briski's students copied from www.kids-with-cameras.org

Born into Brothels portrays a number of memorable children who subsist in Sonargachi, the red light district of Kolkata, where their mothers work as prostitutes. Zana Briski, a New York-based photographer and Director of Kids with Cameras, gives each of the children a camera and teaches them to look at the world with new eyes.

Noah met with Ms. Briski earlier this year and was deeply moved by her commitment and genuine concern for these children whom she portrayed so eloquently—and indeed for all the children of prostitutes in Sonargachi. Calcutta Kids, accordingly, is offering its health services to these children and looks forward to a rich relationship with them and with Ms. Briski's remarkable organization. (For more information about the film as well as the work of Kids with Cameras, please visit: www.kids-with-cameras.org)

HELP RAISE MONEY FOR CALCUTTA KIDS BY SELLING ON eBay

Tucked away in our basements, attics and garages, we all have things of value which we can't bear to throw away—or don't want to sell for our own profit. Here is the perfect opportunity to clear out that space and feel good about the process. Just go to <http://givingworks.ebay.com/sell/> to get directions on how to sell your items for charity, and then select CALCUTTA KIDS INC as your charity of choice.



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