



**CALCUTTA
KIDS**

www.calcuttakids.org

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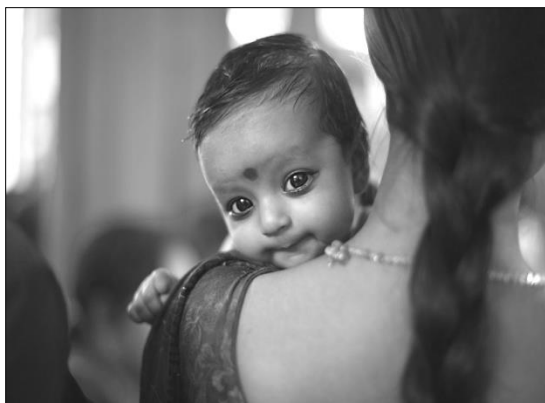
Dear Friends of Calcutta Kids,

The theme of this years' annual appeal is *opportunity* and specifically *giving mothers and children the opportunities they deserve*.

The basic tenet that guides our work is that kids who remain healthy and well-nourished during the first 1,000 days of life perform better in school, are more productive, and have better incomes later in life. We also know that when women are empowered, child health and nutrition indicators improve. Calcutta Kids is committed to assisting families in creating this strong foundation—empowered mothers with healthy children—so that both groups can grasp the opportunities that come their way.



On the reverse side of this letter are two stories about how we help to create that strong foundation: the first—*Delivering on Data Driven Development*—about a stunning, almost unbelievable statistic; the second—*Empowering Women through Community Meetings*—about an extraordinary initiative taken by our health workers. Enjoy them both.



In reference to the second story, it fills me with such joy to know that perhaps our most revolutionary program has been created and implemented by our health workers—these deeply committed women who have devoted themselves to the wellbeing of the neediest members of their communities and who have been able to take such pride in the results.

Once again...it is your generosity which makes our work possible. Please continue to be our partners in “giving mothers and children the opportunities they deserve”.

With warmest holiday wishes,

Noah Levinson
Director,

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Delivering on Data Driven Development

Since its inception, Calcutta Kids has been committed to collecting and then analyzing programmatic data to ensure that our programs are achieving their goals and that the money with which we've been entrusted is used most efficiently. Through regular data analysis we found that more than 12% of our kids were severely malnourished – a dangerous state, putting these children at high mortality risk. While the figure was lower than elsewhere in India (16%), it was too high for us.

We decided to try and use our data in a way which would help us identify children at risk early on—helping us to prevent kids from ever falling into the high risk situation. The trick, we found, was *tracking 'growth falterers'* – kids who, from one month to the next, lose weight or fail to gain enough weight. By identifying these kids and addressing their needs quickly, we found we could prevent most of them from ever getting to that dangerous state of severe malnutrition.

In just 3 years, with the assistance of this prevention-oriented analysis and response program built into our database, we have been able to *reduce the prevalence of severe malnutrition by more than 70%—down to 3.3% from 12.3%*. This means more kids getting the opportunities they deserve.

Excited about the possibilities of how proper usage of data can so drastically improve our outcomes, Calcutta Kids has partnered with Thought Works, a leader in mHealth to create a user friendly open source program management software tool which will help facilitate more of these types of drastic improvements and then be shared with the larger MCH/nutrition community worldwide.

Empowering Women through Community Meetings

Our community health workers—mostly from the very communities in which we work—regularly visit, advise, befriend, follow-up and treat the pregnant women, mothers, and children in Fakir Bagan and are a key to identifying and creating the solutions which have made Calcutta Kids so successful. Along with their regular work, our health workers have taken on a new initiative—the creation of a program to empower the women in Fakir Bagan, and particularly those of reproductive age. When asked why this was something they wanted to take on, they replied that they *have seen with their own eyes the difference in the improved ability of an empowered woman to raise a healthy child*.

Every afternoon, at our community center, the health workers host a different group of women and begin the meeting with a team building exercise. The exercises are always different and simple. One of the favorite exercises is asking each woman to share her 'hopes and dreams'. Sometimes the group even acts out these dreams as mini-dramas; sometimes the discussion moves to means by which such dreams might be realized. Once the group is comfortable with one another, the health workers guide the conversation to problem and solution identification for issues related to child-rearing and child survival.

These meetings have become a **safe space** for women in the community to share the struggles of life, but also to let loose: to enjoy themselves; share hidden talents like singing and dancing; laugh; and for these precious moments be free of their difficult lives and the responsibilities dictated to them by mother-in-laws and husbands. Some women have told our health workers that the community meeting is what they look forward to most—that it's the only place they can be *truly free*.