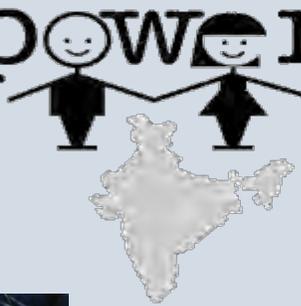


# Empower the Children



Fall 2016

*Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child and one teacher can change the world.*

Malala Yousafzai



Dear Friends,

India....the subcontinent that occupies most of Southern Asia, is considered the world's largest democracy and one of the most successful in Asia. However, in spite of opening its doors to outside economic trade and influences, India continues to struggle with high rates of poverty, illiteracy, poor infrastructure and infant mortality. Without proper education, millions of its people will forever be in the shadow of this developing country.

During the past 15 years, Empower the Children has been a presence in the slums of Kolkata, bringing hope to underserved children. Each year an updated curriculum makes learning an exciting experience for ETC students, and the daily lunches provide nourishment for growing children. ETC now boasts that many of our graduates have gone on to higher education or work in the service sector within the community. Whatever path our students choose, ETC sends them off with all the love and support they deserve.

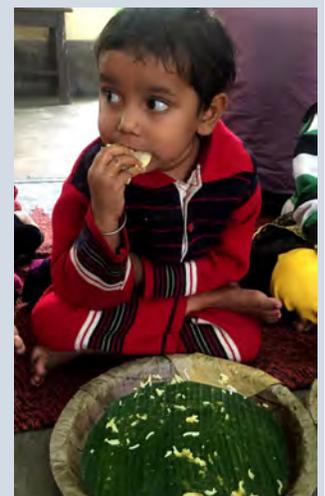
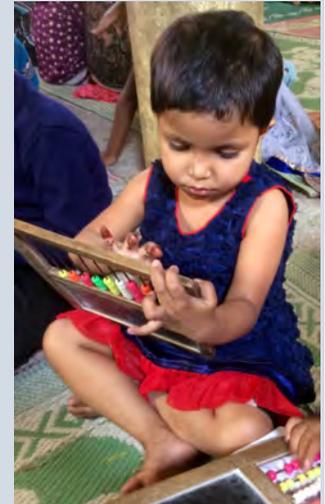
We are proud of our history and commitment to ETC students. We are also proud of YOU, our supporters, who each year rise to the occasion to keep ETC afloat so that our students can reach their maximum potential.

We are especially proud that 95% of all your contributions are used to maintain our nine schools, after-school tutorial center and vocational training programs for young adults.

All of us at ETC salute you and we hope that you will *See Us Through* for another year.

Love,

*Rosalie*



# Puppets for Peace



Puppetry, an ancient form of expressive storytelling, never loses its appeal.

Rosalie and Nan Metasvili first used puppetry in Mongolian schools and discovered that it was the perfect vehicle for delivering a message despite the language barrier. This experience inspired them to create “Puppets for Peace.”

Performances in Laos and Vietnam soon followed. When the puppet show reached ETC schools in Kolkata, Fiona Clark, long-term Scottish volunteer, served as a



puppeteer, and Director Reena Das translated the story. Nan delighted the children with her whimsical tunes that enlivened the puppets' actions.

The puppet show depicted a peaceful kingdom which was upset when twin brothers from distant shores arrived unexpectedly and brought discord. In the end, the brothers and our students came to understand that, through open communication and the expression of feelings, problems can be resolved.

At the end of the performance, Reena sang “*We Shall Live in Peace*,” a song that has been translated into Hindi and Bengali and is well-known by students.



## Duttapukur

Good News  
travels fast....  
Happy News  
travels faster!



Twenty-four miles from Kolkata lies Duttapukur, a quiet and peaceful town, but it was far from idyllic for the 18 disabled children who were without special need services. When the parents of these children learned of ETC’s successful program for the deaf and mentally-challenged students at Preyrna 3 School, they rushed to Kolkata and implored ETC to open a similar program. That wish was realized a few months later.

*All things work together for the good* —to fulfill his dream of opening a school, Londoner **Mr. Kanchan Gupta** provided classroom space. **Mr. Ash Mukherjee**, sponsor of the special needs program at Preyrna 3 School, decided to fund the new program. The backbone of the program is Special Educator **Mr. Meheub Hasan** who took every student under his wing— his commitment and dedication has earned the parents’ cooperation and active participation.

The school is located on a lovely property with a playground, fish pond, vegetable garden and fruit trees which add to the students’ overall learning experience. Today Duttapukur is quiet, peaceful and truly idyllic for those students whose special needs are now being met.

**Ashish** hasn't changed a bit—he has always looked out for others.

As a 7 year old at Preyrona 1 School, Ashish stood out from other students because he took it upon himself to gather his classmates before school and encouraged them to attend. **ETC** teachers fostered these leadership qualities which strengthened his desire to be of service to his community.

Ashish relocated to another district for several years but always remembered his close ties with **ETC** staff. When he was ready for college, he contacted Ashit Sur, co-ordinator of Preyrona Schools, who then facilitated a sponsorship through **ETC's** college fund. Ashish attended Bangabasi College where he majored in Commerce, completing a three-year course in Business Management.

Ashish is still determined to help others and works as a civil policeman for a local police station. His college degree now makes him eligible to apply to the Indian Police Service to fulfill his goal of serving his community. Congratulations to 20-year old Ashish who had his start with **ETC** and continues to make us proud.



## ASHISH PRASAD RAM

*"We who enforce the law must not merely obey it. We have an obligation to set a moral example, which those whom we protect can follow."*

Louis Freeh

**Rojina** is filled with gratitude.

Rojina was 9 years old when she enrolled in **ETC's** Dankuni Tutorial Centre in 2006. Today she attends Raja Prehemoan College as a liberal arts student with a major in history.

Rojina's father is a day laborer who supplements his income as a cook for weddings and ceremonies. Her mother is a housewife who cares for Rojina's two younger siblings. Her parents never had the good fortune of an education, but they had a dream for their daughter. They sought out Shelley Chatterjee, **ETC's** Director of Dankuni Tutorial Centre, who helped them to realize that dream.

The centre provides books, school supplies, homework support, and exam preparation. At the time, Rojina's teachers



## ROJINA YESMIN

visited her home and invited her parents to observe their daughter studying at the tutorial centre every day after school.

Rojina realizes that without college she would have been forced to marry at an early age, and she appreciates her parents even more as they turn away prospective suitors as her education is their priority.

*"I am so happy that **ETC** is helping me. It would not be possible for me to go for higher studies without that support."*

Rojina's goal after graduation is to obtain an advanced degree in fashion design. **ETC**, through its college fund, is determined to support her—every step of the way!

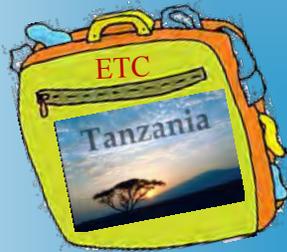




Charlotte van Londen delivered a collaborative learning-based lesson project on countries of the world. Students at the Preyrna schools *packed their bags* and traveled to Tanzania, China, Russia and The Netherlands. Come along, as you read below, to see what they discovered.

# THE WORLD OF CHILDREN

Every trip requires preparation, and this trip was no exception. To learn about their assigned countries, students had to research the clothing, food, animals and flags. Costumes for paper dolls were fashioned by selecting just the right fabrics appropriate for each climate and local customs.



No trip is complete without experiencing the food. Eating with chopsticks, like children in China, was the most fun for ETC students.



# CHILDREN OF THE WORLD



You can't return from a trip without sharing it with friends. After completing their charts, each pair of students, dressed in international clothing, made a presentation to their classmates which included props such as ceramic Dutch houses, African statues, Russian dolls, and Chinese ornaments, animating their travels to those exotic places.



After experiencing how children live in faraway lands, ETC students assembled a *Children of the World* puzzle, realizing how much they had learned on their journey of discovery.

# Afghanistan



## Kolkata



Rehabilitation Centres for Children (RCFC) has come to the aid of 18 Afghani children suffering from congenital birth defects. This was made possible by the Cultural and Empowerment Organization for Afghans (CEOA), a non-profit organization that cares for 200 orphans in the city of Kabul, offers two vocational training programs and assists families in need of medical treatment. According to co-founder, Nargis Rahmat, “The lack of stability in this war-torn country has made it impossible for these children to receive proper medical attention. Children who are born with birth defects and require surgery are particularly vulnerable.”

After searching the internet for medical assistance, Nargis discovered that RCFC provides surgery and post-surgery physical therapy at no cost. Delighted with RCFC’s positive response to her inquiries, she soon made arrangements for 18 mothers to accompany their children to Kolkata, sadly leaving behind many other disabled children still on a waiting list.

Two surprises gave the families additional courage to take this long journey — Afghan Airlines offered CEOA a 15% discount, and the children’s fathers gave



their blessings, entrusting Nargis with their wives and children.

Nargis added, “The children of Afghanistan have suffered greatly due to ongoing security problems, inadequate funds and poor infrastructure. Our stay at RCFC has been exceptional. When we see good results, such as a boy with macrocephaly sitting up for the first time, I feel that my wish to help resolve the problems of these Afghani children is coming true. *I try for their happiness.*”

Thanks to foreign support, mostly from the USA, and the generosity of RCFC, Nargis feels that these fortunate children can look forward to a brighter future.



RCFC is an orthopedic hospital where Rosalie teaches an interactive program to long-term surgical patients who now enjoy computers, a new library, a music program and a newly renovated playground, thanks to the invaluable help of ETC partners.

*“No joy can equal the joy of serving others.”*  
Sai Baba

**Empower The Children** has worldwide volunteers, some of whom make one visit and others who return every year. Those who are unable to travel to Kolkata support our students by donating annually to ETC's school, lunch and vocational programs. The Better Business Bureau Wise-Giving Alliance and Charity Navigator recommend that non-profits allocate a minimum percentage of their donations directly for programs. ETC has consistently exceeded recommended percentages.

### PERCENTAGES ALLOCATED FOR PROGRAMS

**Empower The Children**

**95%**

**Charity Navigator**

**66.7%**

**The Better Business Bureau Wise-Giving Alliance**

**65%**

# MANY THANKS.....



**Sushanta Kumar Das'** reaction on his first day of teaching in the Ultadanga slum was, "What am I doing here?" It was in 2007 when Director Reena Das hired him to teach at Preyrone 1 School. She greeted him warmly and offered him a chair.

Today he will tell you.... "The first day I taught my little flowers, I was sitting on the chair, but the next time the students pulled me down onto the mat. Since then, I sit with them on the mat and that makes me happy."



## Art Lessons at Preyrone



**Sandipta Bonic** has been teaching at Nehru Colony Pre-School for the past five years, but her connection with the school started when she was three years old. At that time she was a student there.

*"It was a great feeling going to the pre-school. At first I cried but after some days I started enjoying it. Now when I am teaching at Nehru Colony, it brings me back to those warm childhood memories. I used to sit on the floor, but now I am the teacher... standing in front of my students."*

Nehru Colony Pre-School serves children ages three to five years who reside in the Dakshindari slum. ETC provides teachers' salaries, school supplies, lunches, holiday clothes, as well as a special outing—the highlight of the year!

**Charlotte van Londen**, a native of Holland, now lives in Severna Park, MD. Her career has brought her to Turkey, Senegal and Indonesia. A serendipitous meeting between Charlotte and Rosalie on a Russian cruise ultimately led to Charlotte becoming an ETC volunteer in Kolkata.



Drawing from her own travel experiences, Charlotte's multi-faceted lesson plans introduced ETC's slum-dwelling children to exotic places as illustrated in our centerfold.

Upon her return to Maryland, Charlotte shared her enthusiasm with family and friends by hosting a fundraising event in her community. The money will be used to continue ETC's 2017 programs. Charlotte also encourages others to volunteer their time to experience firsthand the joy of bringing hope to children who are not only the most vulnerable but the most appreciative.



*A BIG HEARTFELT THANKS TO CHARLOTTE*

“Like” us on Facebook—Empower The Children



P. O. Box 1412  
Jackson, NJ 08527  
USA

Empower the Children

Empower the Children

#### MEET THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rosalie Giffoniello, Co-Founder  
Janet Grosshandler, Co-Founder  
Rupa DasGupta  
Lois Kiely  
Karen Patrick Mackolin  
Rosalind Ressner  
Margaret Wallace

#### Newsletter

Editor: Rosalind Ressner

#### Address:

Empower The Children  
P.O. Box 1412  
Jackson, NJ 08527 USA

**E-mail:** Rosalie: [giffoniello@gmail.com](mailto:giffoniello@gmail.com)  
Janet: [janetgrosshandler@gmail.com](mailto:janetgrosshandler@gmail.com)

**Website:** [www.empower-children.org](http://www.empower-children.org)

**E = encourage**

**M = motivate**

**P = protect**

**O = opportunity**

**W = wisdom**

**E = educate**

**R = rejoice**

**THE CHILDREN**





For those of you who don't know me personally, I'll let you in on a little secret .... I CAN'T COOK! In fact, for the past 15 years, I have never owned a stove in Kolkata. Yet, through Empower The Children, I serve up the perfect recipe!

ETC *whips up* 644 nutritious meals six days a week, providing parents an added incentive for sending their children to school. *Blend into* the curriculum, vocational training for women....their stepping stone to financial independence. *Sprinkle on* lots of creativity through ETC's annual Celebration of Diversity performance and weekly art classes. Then I make sure *to turn up the heat* on educational programs so that ETC's 762 students, many of whom have reached college level, will continue to have the resources that nourish their minds and bodies.

The *topping on the cake*, however, is my most potent ingredient of all—with each and every meal, I serve up *heaping teaspoonfuls of love and happiness*. I guess I am a *pretty good cook* after all!



## Empower The Children's



# Lunch Program

Education + Nourishment + Happiness = SUCCESS

Feed one child for one month	_____ \$ 8.50	_____ € 6.50	_____ £ 5.50
Feed one child for six months	_____ \$ 50.00	_____ € 38	_____ £ 32
Feed one child for one year	_____ \$100.00	_____ € 76	_____ £ 64

Help us make a difference. Thank you for your generous support.

Donate online at [www.empower-children.org](http://www.empower-children.org)

Please print:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my donation in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Please make check payable to:

**Empower The Children**

Mail to:

P.O. Box 1412  
Jackson, NJ 08527 USA

We invite you to visit our website at:

[www.empower-children.org](http://www.empower-children.org)

Empower The Children is a USA 501(c)3 non-profit.  
All donations are tax-deductible.