

Birangana and Bir Purush (Bravery) Awards from the West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) 2018-2023

2023

Heartiest congratulations to recipients of Birangana and Bir Purush Awards bestowed upon them by the West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) at a ceremony held on 30th November 2023 at Mohor Kunja.



Dhruva Banerjee-Birpurush Awardee from Child Rights Project

Ruhina Khatun aged about 4 years old is a permanent resident of Parnaihati village of Basirhat block 1 under Sangrampur-Shibhati G.P. She suffers from Thalassemia since she was 3 years. Thus, she needs blood transfusion of B+ every month. Her parents arrange B+ blood either from Basirhat District Hospital or from Blood Bank. But B+ blood is not available all the time in the Basirhat District Hospital or in Blood Bank. So, they have also started to search for individual blood donors in their village. On July 26, 2023 they went to hospital for blood transfusion but did not get B+ blood neither from Basirhat District Hospital nor Blood Bank. They approached the strangers and passers-by, begging to donate blood and save their daughter. After requesting and begging the parents could find two generous people of the same blood group to donate. The parents had to find out kind hearted persons for the next month too. But this time the donors could not help the little 4 years old child as one had already donated blood last month and another one was sick.

They could not manage to find any new person to donate from the village as well. They were desperate and hopeless to save their little one.

The parents knocked every door, requested passers by but this time no one turned up to help them. They went back home from the hospital with broken hearted. They had lost their hope to save their daughter.

Dhruva Banerjee, the Child Club member of Parnaihati village after his return from the school learns about the incident and the serious condition of the girl. He heard crying of the parents and went inside the house and tries to dialogue with the parents. Seeing the girl on her death bed Dhruva rushes to his home knowing that his cousin brother had same blood group. Dhruva speaks with his elder cousin brother convinced him to save the girl who will die if blood is not given to her.

Dhruva convinced his elder brother to help this little girl in the time of need.

On July 26th Dhruva's elder brother saved the little Ruhina's life for the time being. But that was not enough and it was not over. Dhruva went to visit Ruhina on August 3rd and also gave some fruits for her speedy recovery. Her parents then shared that they are always worried about the well-being of Ruhina. At times the B+ blood group is very hard to get. Few years ago, Dhruva had lost his younger sister due to illness and not able to get proper treatment timely. Dhruva reassured the parents of Ruhina that Ruhina is like her sister and he will do his best he can to save Ruhina's life. To solve the problem of getting blood of the specific group, Dhruva invented the idea of 'Blood Donor Contact Box' where people of that specific blood group can put their contact number. He installed two 'Blood Donor Contact Boxes' in a very busy area on August 6, 2023, for better visibility to the public. One was in front of a party office and another was in front of a shop in the market area of Kamardanga village.

On those 'Blood Donor Contact Boxes' he wrote that '[My little sister is suffering from Thalassemia and needs B+ blood. Anyone who has B+ blood group and wants to donate willingly for his little sister, put their contact numbers in the 'Blood Donor Contact Box'. We will be grateful and in debt to the kind-hearted people for the act of kind gesture and donation forever.]'

On August 10, 2023 he got positive responses and managed to get three contact numbers from those boxes. He shared those with Ruhina's parents and the parents of Ruhina contacted the numbers and they got the blood transfusion even they have kept the name list for coming 6 months who will donate the blood every month. The parents thanked Dhruva for his extra mile work and thinking out of the box to save little Ruhina's life. The villagers appreciated the courage and good work of Dhruva Banerjee. They said that we are proud of our son in our village. . After 6 months we will approach different people and I will also go to Basirhat college to request the students who can make a chain of blood donation from the college students.

Mohewedden Sardar-Birpurush (Bravery) Awardee from Child Rights Project

Mohewedden Sardar, is a young Child Club member of Merudandi village, Basirhat Block 1. His courageous steps saved Elina Khatun, a 17-year-old girl child of the same village, from being a victim of Child Marriage.

Elina Khatun is a young girl, whose parents wanted her to get married before 18 years of age. She is a class mate of Mohim of the same school who are studying in class X. Elina was totally against of this marriage. She wants to complete her study. She tried to make her parents understand that Child marriage. He informed the headmaster of the school but the headmaster was reluctant to take any action as he will be targeted by the parents and relatives of the girl. His parents took his phone, so that he could not seek help from anyone.

Despite of all hindrances he stood beside by his action to help a fellow class mate. As he is only a young child, he felt helpless but he did not give up. He knew he had to save Elina. He and his friends then tried to seek the help from CBO members of the same area to help him to stop the marriage. He got positive answer from CBO members who is also a mother. She helped him to contact with the gram panchayat pradhan.



Marriage is wrong and it violates her rights as a child as she has learnt from her peer. But they did not pay any heed. She kept on refusing and her parents kept on forcing on 13th May 2023, Mohewedden found out about this incident. He came to know about the news that the marriage was arranged against her will. Knowing about the marriage of his friend he was determined to stop the marriage by all means. He informed the other Child Club members, who all supported him to stop this marriage. Mohiuddin' parents were not convinced with his opinion of stopping the marriage and informed the headmaster his opinion of stopping the marriage

Meanwhile Mohewedden informed the case to the Child Protection Worker of Surokhit Shaishav project. The Child rights team immediately contacted the Basirhat police station for taking legal action. With the intervention of KMWSC, the Basirhat Police of the area registered GDE and took immediate action. The police and the representative from BDO went to the village spoke with the parents of the girl. The police said that if the marriage is not stopped then they have to arrest the parents as it was against the will of the girl and the girl was still a minor. The police made the parents to sign a bond that until the legal age of girl they will not give her marriage.

Mohewedden was so happy that he was able to act on the time to save his class mate marriage, his friend's dreams could have been shattered and the cry of the girl could have been unheard. Elina thanks Mohewedden for saving her life and aspiration. She is continuing her study happily. His story of courage and bravery will always be remembered and cherished. A big salute to Mohewedden, who did not stop even though there were many barriers and fear of elders from his own parents. Mohewedden says no girl below the legal age will get married in my village

Saruk Sardar -Birpurush (Bravery) Awardee from Child Rights Project

Saruk Sardar, is a 16-year-old boy from a farmer's community of Merudandi village in Basirhat Block-1. His excellent leadership skills lead to his area getting drinking water again.

The story is from a farmer's community of Uttarpara of Merudandi village. The people of the area are much marginalized. They do not get food, if they do not work for one day. They think education is a luxury for them.

Saruk is a member of the child club of Merudandi village. He became somewhat like a community leader after having gone through the workshop and capacity building training, though he is still a 16-year-old boy.



He is very active to monitor the social issues of his village. He also represents the child club in the club meeting. By the virtue of his leadership qualities, he has never failed to help anyone in the village. He is vigilant for child marriages along with his peers. As Merudandi is a very backward area, people living there, often suffer with water problems. Recently, the only hand pump of the community broke down on May 6th, 2023. The village people did not have drinking water for many days. The villagers started to drink the pond water but nobody took initiative of the broken hand pump to be repaired. The pond water cannot be used for drinking but they were forced to drink and as a result many of them got sick and diarrhoea. Even though a complaint was made to the village Sangsad member on May 8th, but he did not take any action.

has never failed to help anyone in the village. He is vigilant for child marriages along with his peers. Even though a complaint was made to the village Sangsad member on May 8th, but he did not take any action. Shahrukh could not stand seeing people suffering. He tried convincing the people to come along with him to the Panchayat office but everyone gave excuses. Even after the refusals he did not sit back. He went door to door spreading awareness about the

situation and how unhealthy it is to use pond water. He wrote an application and took signature from everyone. He convinced fellow child club members to go with him by the time of submission of letter. Then he submitted the application to the village Sangsad member on May 23rd. Shahrukh kept a regular follow up of the letter and the matter. He made sure that this time village Sangsad took the required actions. Due to the continuous follow up by him, the village Sangsad reverted back after a month.

They took this issue seriously this time and a new hand pump was installed in that on July 3, 2023. It was only due to Shahrukh's leadership and initiatives; freshwater was restored in the village again. It is flabbergasting to see how a small boy can take such big initiatives, when even the adults backed out. The village community appreciated the good work of Shahrukh. Many of our children suffered from the stomach ache and diarrhoea and could not attend the schools. Thanks Saruk and his children team for restoring the hand pump, now we all will have drinking water again in the village.

Shayoni Karmakar -Birpurush (Bravery) Awardee from Child Rights Project

A 13 year old Payel Mondal became an indirect victim to such domestic violence and community discrimination. She used to be a lively and happy girl in her childhood and eager to learn everything. Her mother was a house wife and father was a daily wage earner who came home everyday drunk and fought for silly reasons. One day Payel's father came home drunk and beat her mother brutally. He eventually stabbed her one evening when he was drunk heavily. Payel's mother died on the way to hospital. Payel's father was arrested and was kept in Alipore Correctional Home. Little Payel now went to stay with her paternal grandmother. Her entire life has changed without her parents. She lost her mother at the age of 3 only. 3 years old Payel did not even understand that her mother was no more. She used to cry day and night for her mother's returning. Slowly little Payel learned to understand that her mother will never come back and only reason is her father who is at the correctional home to help anyone in the village. He is vigilant for child marriages along with his peers. She became a victim of bullying by her relatives, neighbors, other children of the community. Even Payel was mistreated by other children and their mothers from the ICDS centre. Other children were not allowed to play with Payel and even the mothers of other children did not want Payel to go to School because of social stigma that her father was a murderer.



Everyone isolated her for her father's crime. Her aged grandmother loved her, but that was not enough for a 3 years old child. The 3 years old Payel grew up with bitter experience of the community. She gradually realizes that her father is the only reason for her poor condition and the only reason for her mother's death. Gradually she became arrogant, apathetic towards her own life, became a kleptomaniac and wanted to skip School. Sometimes Payel ran away from the village to another place and her grandmother was worried for her future. She has already developed fear and isolation for her life. Just then Sayani Karmakar the child club member extended her helping hand to Payel and they became friends. Eventually Sayani became her elder sister.

14 years old Sayani Karmakar, a Child Club member of Panitor village under Basirhat Block-1 is a student of Panitor High School. Sayani joined the Child Club in the last April and she made Payel to join the child club too. Sayani has been helping Payel for the past few years despite various social barriers. Everyone including Sayani's family told her not to mingle with Payel But she continues to help her being a child leader. She used to go to ICDS centre with Payel and took her for admission at Panitor High School, so that Sayani can support Payel inside the School as well. Sayani always shares her food, old dresses and old books with her as Payel is one year younger of Sayani. Though Sayani is a student, but she helps Payel to study. The Child Protection Workers contacted their School Teacher and Health Workers for counselling support. On April 18, 2023 Sayani seeks help from their school teacher for counseling. The teacher suggested that Payel needs professional counselling and to contact with a child counsellor from a local ICDS centre. Sayani took Payel to a ICDS centre and talked to an ICDS worker on May 23. Then the ICDS worker advised Sayani to take her to the Anwesha Clinic at the District Hospital for Adolescents, aged between 10 to 19 years. She regularly visits either Anwesha Clinic or local Health Centre regarding Payel's counselling. On 12th June Sayani again took her to the Asha Worker for counselling. Asha Worker counselled Payel and transferred her to the nearest Health Centre for next counselling session by ANM.

On July 27th they went to the Health Centre for counselling. On August 12th, 2023 our Child Protection Worker inquired that both Sayani and Payel are doing well. Sayani has helped her peer to become a normal child and she says that she will help Payel as long as she can. Sayani says happily that being a child leader

Sayani says happily that being a child leader I have helped my friend to continue her study without fear. I will stand by her side till she finishes her matriculation. I am vocal today because I have learnt to protest. voice against injustice and help the needy through our child club meetings, training and workshop through Surokhit Shaishav project of KMWSC.

Today, because I have learnt to raise voice against injustice and help the needy through our child club meetings, training and workshop through Surokhit Shaishav project of KMWSC. I would have been a help to Payel if I had not join the child club of my village. We will say no to discrimination to anyone in my village , says Sayani the brave girl.

Annaya Biswas-Birangana (Bravery) Awardee from Anti-Human Trafficking Project

Annaya Biswas and Munna Das are childhood friends both of them belong to the different village but are studying in the same standard in same school. They are each other's best friend and confidant coming from similar economically backward families and from small villages at the indo Bangladesh boarder both of them are each other support system as they can understand each other's struggles and aspiration.

From a young age they knew in their community girls are not treated with the same respect as their male counterparts so a girl's education was not valued much but they felt lucky as their families are going out of their way to support their studies and not focusing on marring them off like many of their class mates. Both of them were happy and contain in their small world and with their small dreams. For Munna everything came crashing down when she notice a boy (Atanu Mondal- Name Changed) and few of his friends stalking her and gradually it become a daily occurance. During her way to school and back the boy use to disturb her by catcalling and eve teasing she was scared if her family came to know about the boy her family will stop her school and she have to leave her dreams to be a school teacher. Annaya saw the sudden change of Munna behavior she seems scared and nervous all the time even her grades got affected Ananya pleaded to her to take some action or tell some elders and ask for help but Munna ignored her advice Munna tried her best to ignore the boy and all his advances and the boy's behaviors started getting aggressive day by day till the point he stopped Munna and proposed to her Munna who didnt



want to attract any trouble politely declined his proposal and begged to leave her alone but the boy was not ready to accept her 'NO' he started threatening her, for him – She was playing hard to get. He gave Munna two options to Munna choose from if she refuse to marry him 1. he will throw acid on her beautiful face so no one will want her 2. He would kidnap her and rape her so her family will beg him to marry her. He said he loves him like crazy and would do everything to get her as she belongs to him only and no one else. Munna was terrified and finally told everything to Annaya he again told her to tell the elders but she begged her not to so Annaya decided to act as her body guard and accompany her thus seeing both of them together

will break the boys confidence to approach Munna. For few days the boy stopped his advances thus both the girls though their planed worked but one day they saw the boy was waiting for Manna with a car he suddenly started pulling Munna in the car and Annaya release what was happening and unable to run away with Munna she started shouting and asking for help which made the crowd gather and scared the boy who had to flee to save himself. Annaya took the decision to inform the KMWSC team an she was a child parliament member of the Anti Human trafficking project in her village and shared everything to them they console Munna and all of them went to Munna Parents and made them understand the situation and Annaya convince Munna parents that it was not her fault in any way and they should be taking some action to stop the boy. All of them went to the local panchyat where the boy and their family was called and he had to apologies to the girls. He proposed to stay away from them and never disturb them from hence forth Munna lost all her confidence and felt judge as she heard many of her friends thought her behavior must have encourage the boy but Annaya took it upon herself to create awareness among her friends that how victim blaming is wrong and how they should encourage Munna to get back to her normal self. Thus she has started encouraging the girls from her school and the child parliament to stand up for themselves and have formed a group which help other girls from eve teasing and no boy in their village have the guts to pass any comments to them.

Annaya bravery has not just help her friend Munna but has help many more girls from her village.

Bhoulmika Biswas -Birangana (Bravery) Awardee from Anti-Human Trafficking Project

Bhoulmika has lives in a village which is near the Indo- Bangladesh boarder. All her life she has seen the brab wires dividing the two countries. While growing up she had noticed movements near the border at night when she tried to ask about it to her family they told her not to pay much attention on that, ignore and keep her mouth shut. Though she was queries she kept mum. When Bhoulmika started going to school she notice many of her seniors from school suddenly disappearing when she enquire about them some said they have went to work in big city and some said they got married but the strangest thing which caught Bhoulmika attention and made her think was none of the boys and girls contacted back with their family it was like they never existed on the first place.

Bhoulmika that so many questions while growing up but no answers she felt confused and when asked everyone asked her to keep quiet and as this type of questions shouldn't be ask by good girls. Bhoulmika joined the Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre – Anti Human Trafficking project Child Parliament where she was made aware of cross boarder trafficking, how WB is used as a transit point for trafficking and how with the pretext of good job opportunity at city and good marriage prospect traffickers are setting their traps in such small villages and trafficking young girls and boys. Bhoulmika was shocked now she can put the pieces of the puzzle at their right places which she was struggling for so many years. Bhoulmika asked all the questioned she had any on one told her to stop on the contrary they were been welcomed and answered. During one of such workshop the Boarder Security Officers also came to create awareness



on how the traffickers are using the wide range of boarder for trafficking as it is not possible for the BFS to monitor all the points all the time. So if any of them have any information to let the KMWSC know so they can inform the BFS and their identity will be kept secret.

Bhoulmika and few of the villagers saw a girl was crying a lot and a man was trying to stop her for making noise they were not from the village when she and few of the villages went to them and started asking questions the man said that his daughter but the girl refuse. Bhoulmika found the entire matter suspicious and contacted KMWSC staff

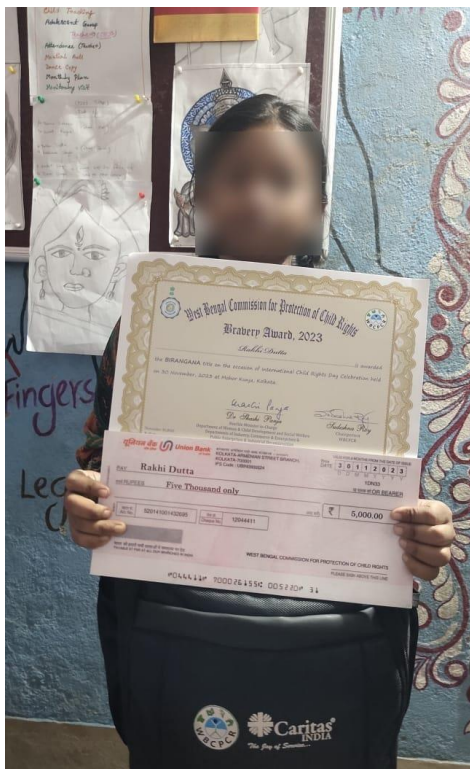
Sahanara Khatun 14 years and Tahezin Islam age 13 years was trafficked from Bangladesh and were put up in a house near Bhoulmika village. The plan was to take the kids out of the area at late in night to avoid the eyes of the BSF but as Bhoulmika was living their she got the information and quickly contacted the KMWSC staff who informed the BSF and they rescued the kids from the traffickers hand Mahim Sardar 14 years lives in Kolkata but his maternal grandmother lived in Bangladesh so to meet with her he crossed the border illegally and paid for it when coming back his grandmother gave another man money to help his grandson reach Kolkata safely. Bhoulmika saw a unknown face loitering around his village for few days and she informed the same to KMWSC staff who informed the BSF who came and found out the boy was Mahim who was never taken back to Kolkata but was kept with a trafficker and was planning to sell him.

Bhoulmika has taken the pledge to make her village safe from the traffickers and is also creating awareness among the other child parliament leaders with the KMWSC team to voice up their concerns and not to stay quite to prevent trafficking. Bhoulmika is in real term a hero without a cape and she wishes to continue her good work and stop many more trafficking cases from her area. that got in touch with the BSF. The girl disclose she lives in Mumbai and was going to her maternal house her mother handed her over to this man in Kolkata and said she is coming but never came this man was taking her to Bangladesh to sell her there. Due to the quick thinking of Bhoulmika the girl was rescued on time

Anisha Das (name changed)- Birangana (Bravery) Awardee from Red Light Project

Anisha Das is not an everyday teenager she is a daughter of a sex worker. Thus she never had the luxury to have a safe childhood in the unsafe lanes of sonagachi. From a very young age she had to grow up due to the harsh reality surrounding her, the catcalls, and unwanted lustful glance of people, the greedy eyes of the pimps. She knew she is not safe in her own lane.

Anisha is also a very active child parliament member of the project inside sonagachi led by Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre (KMWSC) which had made her aware of her rights and laws in place to protect herself and her friends. She has mastered the skill of differentiate between a friend and foe which has helped her so far. Whereas not everyone is as lucky as her. Mariyam who was an unwanted child. She was given to a relative to be raised outside sonagachi by her mother as she considered her nothing but a mistake. Whereas Mariyam befriended Rakhi when she was sent back to her mother at sonagachi by her aunty when Mariyam's mother failed to send money as promised for her upbringing. For Mariyam everything was new and Rakhi took it upon herself to guide her. Though Mariyam missed her life in the village with her Aunt and her cousins but sadly she had to accept her scary reality and started adjusting with her new life where she was a burden to her mother and added to her problems and hinders her independent life style. She felt very uncomfortable with the glances she received from male friends of her mother though when she shared her concern with her mother she refused to acknowledge them.



Mariyam thus in turn started confiding with Rakhi who very well knew what she was going through and help her navigate her new life inside the lanes of sonagachi. One day Mariyam informed Rakhi that she will no longer be living in sonagachi and her mother is sending her somewhere. She also share that her mother's attitude towards her has changed drastically, she is now buying her cloths and serving her good food. She was happy to finally receive her mother love. Rakhi was not that sure of the sudden change of Mariyam mother's behavior she knew something was fishy. Though Mariyam's mother restricted her movements Rakhi kept close eyes on both of them. She tried to ask Mariyam many times where she is going but Mariyam had no idea.

Anisha heard some gossip in the lanes of sonagachi in hush hush voice that Mariyam's mother is negotiating with the highest bidder to sell her 12 year old daughter. Anisha didn't had any sold evidence until one day she overheard Mariyam's mother finalizing the sale of her daughter with a madam (pimp) in sonagachi against a lot of money and they will be taking her outside sonagachi where she will be groomed to entertain clients.

Anisha knew she didn't have much time as once such deal is been finalize the girls disappear from the lanes of sonagachi without any trace. Anisha called KMWSC staff and shared the information. As per the direction from the KMWSC staff Anisha informed all the mothers' group members of the project and other child parliament members to help her save a girl. All of them stood guard for Mariyam and didn't let the pimp take her outside sonagachi till KMWSC staff arrived. KMWSC staff started inquiring with the pimp what her intention is and seeing the situation getting out of their hand she left the premises. Though her mother tried to peruse others with pressure from local goons but they all stood strong and with the support from CWC Mariyam was rescued and shifted to a safe place. It was Anisha who felt it was her responsibility to help Mariyam and her small approach turn out to be a life altering action for Mariyam. Anisha is a prominent child parliament leaders and guides many more girls in her child parliament to stand strong against any form of abuse.

Krishna Mondal- Birangana (Bravery) Awardee from Anti-Human Trafficking Project

Kalyani Mondal and Krishna Mondal are sisters they belongs to a family where all their wants and needs were taken care of by her parents. Krishna was happy and contain with her life but Kalyani felt her aspiration and dreams can only come true if she moves to a big city and her village life is hindering her development. Though Kalyani is elder sister of Krishna, but from very young age Krishna is bit mature than her elder sister, she uses to love and guide her very much. Kalyani has been a very loving person since childhood,

Kalyani requested her father for a latest mobile which she saw in a TV advertisement and her father gifted her the same. With her new phone she opened her very first social media account. Without knowing about the evils of social media she gradually got addicted to it and befriended a boy and eventually fell in love. Within few days they boy proposed and she agreed. Kalyani was in love and she believed they will be living happily ever after the boy promised her starts and moon he even shared his plan to take her to a big city and help her fulfill all her dreams. Kalyani started distancing herself from her sister and her family she even had constant fights at home and she left only her boyfriend loves her and understands her.

During one of such fights her boyfriend approached with the proposition to meet and without thinking of the consciences of meeting up with a stranger she agreed with the plan though she found it strange that her boyfriend asked her to keep their relationship a secret and told her not to tell anyone when she comes to meet him.

Kalyani was very excited she will be meeting with her boyfriend for the first time she got ready and before leave she told her mother she is going for tution. Kalyani meet her boyfriend in the station, she was over joy but before she would realize anything her boyfriend took her and boarded the local train to sealdah.



When asked the reason for his action the boy told her they are going to Kolkata Kalyani was dumbstruck as they never had any plans to leave her village she was scared how she will explain this to her parents when she will be late to reach home. Kalyani was questions her decision to trust the boy but he was trying to convince her otherwise when reached Kolkata Kalyani got suspicious of him as she remembers one of her friend who was a child parliament member of KMWSC project told her how trafficking is been done through social media- can she be trafficked? No that cannot be happening! Kalyani started flowing all the small actions and gestures of the boy she overheard the boy talking to someone over phone negotiating her price.

It to her few seconds to realize she will be sold off and unimaginable thinks can happen to her like she has seen in the movies but never thought this can happen to her. The boy keep asking for her phone but she told him it in her bag switched off and when the boy left her to bring food she called her mother and asked for help told her the entire story and when the boy came back she behave nothing had happening and she still trust him. She knew if she tried to escape her condition may be worsen.

Kalyani mother shared the details to her husband and Krishna his father refuse to go to the police as they were concern if people come to know Kalyani had run away with a boy no one will even marry her sister the community will ostracize them it's better for them to think they have lost Kalyani but Krishna protested begged and convince her parents to help save her sister when they were confuse she asked for help from KMWSC staff as she was one of the child parliament members of its Anti Human Trafficking project and she knew they can help them. With Krishna and KMWSC staff the parents understood and everyone went to the Local police station where they refuse to file a complaint then Krishna & KMWSC staffs approach to welfare officer at the BDO office, then the welfare officer informed to CWC , CWC and BDO office jointly helped them to file and FIR with the local police to take necessary step. The police rescued the girl from Kolkata Shympur in two to three days and produced the girl to CWC and there the girl stayed for 10 days. When Kalyani get released from CWC home it seems like Krishna get released from a suffocated situation. She also gets a new life like her Didi Kalyani.

Kalyani felt judged and lost her will to live but Krisha took it on her to help her sister get out of the depression and brought her to the KMWSC child parliament where she encourage her sister to share her story and help other girls on cyber trafficking by creating awareness.

Arifa Khatun Telegraph School Awards 2023: Awardee for Courage from Human Right & Disability Project

Arifa is not like the girl next door! She fights every day for her survival. In just 14 years of her life span, she had to deal with the lifelong trauma of abuse and day-to-day struggle to survive and keep her dreams alive. Being born into an economically backward family was not her only problem in life, she witnessed her mother being abused daily at the hands of her drunken abusive father, who hated Arifa just because she was a girl. Arifa has never known what a father's love feels like because after throwing them out of the house, he remarried and started a new family. Contemplating suicide, her mother, as a last resort, sought shelter in her maternal house where they were reluctantly accepted and treated as an unwanted additional burden. Arifa's grandmother shared "My daughter's dream was to give her children a healthy life and a bright future but gradually, she started to fall ill. This was a result of the prolonged torture at the hands of my son-in-law and it led to her sudden death. Now the children are our responsibility". Arifa was only two and a half years old when her mother died. Arifa's life became even harder and as she grew older, the discrimination began. Her brother was sent to a madrasah. At home, she assisted her aunt in carrying out the domestic chores, since she was a 'girl'. Sadly, the family of 6-her grandfather, grandmother, uncle, aunt, two cousins, regarded this as "normal". Yes, she was sent to school but only because her uncle convinced her grandfather that with basic education, her 'value' would increase and less dowry would be demanded for her marriage. For everyone, she was an added mouth to feed, an added responsibility in an economically backward family. She was constantly reminded that she should always be thankful to them.



and not complain as she was being provided with meals and a roof over her head. The family earnings are limited to her uncle who works in a small tailoring shop, the grandfather works in a pan and bidi shop. Together they earn about Rs 3000/- per month. School was Arifa's only saving grace but then a bombshell struck! Arifa's grandfather was determined to get her married! He states, "At that moment I felt before I die, I need to secure her future. It's best for Arifa to get married and have her own home, with an assured meal and her kids will be taken care of". Her uncle also agreed to share the marriage cost as he didn't want to take the responsibility for a teenage young girl.

When Arifa came to know about the arrangement she was devastated. She knew eventually she would have to get married but not when she had just turned 14! Arifa was sad and felt helpless but after an awareness workshop by KMWSC on the evils of child marriage, Arifa got the courage to finally fight for her rights. It took her some time but after a lot of convincing she managed to stop her marriage and resumed her studies. Her grandparents too have agreed to support her with her studies and will only think about her marriage when she is of legal age. Certainly, not an easy victory for a child of fourteen! Arifa is aware that while she has just won a battle, she also has to get ready for a war soon as she will be forced to choose between her education, dreams, and marriage when she turns 18. Her education will again be stopped and she will be forced to get married. She doesn't have the financial backing to revolt and continue with her education. However, that is a fight for some other day. She is now trying to focus on her studies and fulfill her mother's dream. Arifa is studying in Class 8 and is also an active member of Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre Child Parliament group. She has learned about child marriages and their threats, the law in place to prevent them, and she has also learned about child rights, prevention of trafficking and the importance of education. She has big dreams which do not end with marriage. Being an active child parliament leader Arifa does not want to lose her newfound voice and confidence. She wants to share her stories and convince other families from her village to support her against child marriage. She is helping other girls to realize that if she can fight for herself even, they can.

2022

Heartiest congratulations to Ritama (name changed) and Nityananda Biswas for being the recipients of Birangana and Bir Purush Awards bestowed upon them by the West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) at a ceremony held on 20th November 2022.



Ritama (name changed) Birangana (Bravery) Awardee from Red Light Project

Being an active member of the child parliament group at sonagachi under the Providing Education and Protection to Vulnerable Children project, like the other members of the group Ritama is responsible for keeping a close eye on her friends outside the group without their knowledge. She has been trained under the project to report to the project staff in case she identifies any problem or threat.

Ritama's mother is a sex worker and her friend whom she was tracking Purnima Bali (Name Changed), is also a daughter of a sex worker as well but Purnima no longer lives in sonagachi hence whenever She visited sonagachi with her mother the friends made sure to meet in person and be in contact over the phone or through social media platforms

Ritama was made aware by Purnima that she has developed a romantic relationship with her stepfather who is also the pimp of her mother. Being from the same community Ritama could understand and relate to the emotional vulnerability of her friend and the threats she will fall into thus she tried to reason with her but in vain after few days Purnima informed Ritama that she has eloped with Rajesh (named changed) and is planning to get married.

With quick thinking, Ritama was able to pursue her to share the images of the wedding as she knew it will be of evidence as her friend is underage and it will be child marriage which is a criminal offence. Ritama then quickly informed our project staff and Purnima mother about her daughters' actions as everyone thought she was in school. KMWSC team quickly connected with CHILDLINE, WBCPCR, CWC, Local police in both the district (girl's location, boy's location).

Ritama then helped Purnima's mother in collecting age proof, call recording conversation to strengthen the case as an FIR was filled.

Ritama still was in contact with Purnima and was sharing relevant information with the KMWSC team to track her whereabouts during such conversation Purnima told that Rajesh (name changed) is planning to take her to Mumbai with cross-checking information with her mother it came to light that Rajesh along with being a pimp is also involved in trafficking chain and he sells girls in Kamartipura- Redlight area in Mumbai. Thus the threat level on Purnima had increased with this information.

Purnima was later rescued with support from the Local Police and Local Administration and is currently living in a government home though Rajesh is untraceable.

Nityananda Biswas-Birpurush (Bravery) Awardee from Child Rights Project

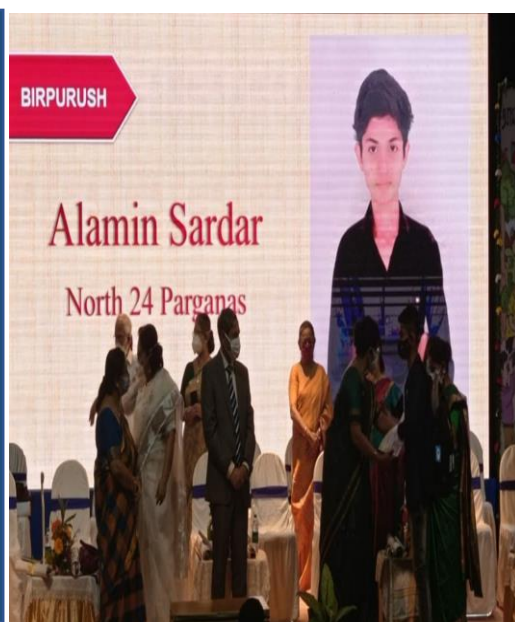
Nityananda Biswas is a 14 years old child of Kolapata village who is always ready to come forward in helping people in community. On 13th August he received an information regarding a 6 years old child namely Meghna Sarkar who was suffering from Alimentary Canal disease. After intervention Nityananda came to know the doctors have suggested for operation looking into the difficult condition of the child. Before that the doctor had prescribed some medicines and tests for her recovery without any operation. Father of the child is a farmer and the only earning member too. Family members of Meghna were going through their hard times as their earning is less at present due to rainy season. This was going difficult for the father to continue Meghna's treatment.

On 14th of August after knowing the whole matter Nityananda took a lead in helping the treatment of the neighboring sister. He shared this issue to his family members, friends and other community people and asked for everyone's help. Motivated by his social responsibility at this young age other members of their village, members of local club come forward and gave some money to Nityananda as per their capability. He collected 1600/- and gave all the money to Meghna's father. With this money all the medicines were bought and tests was done. But Nityananda and Meghna's family was worried for the child's operation cost which was nearly 20000/- rupees.



2021

Our heartiest congratulations to Monisha, Aritra and Alamin won being the recipients of Birangana and Bir Purush Awards bestowed upon them by the West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) at a ceremony held on 20th November 2021.



Alamin Sardar-Birpurush (Bravery) Awardee from Child Rights Project

Alamin Sardar, is a 15 years old child residing at Merudandi village. He is a very supportive and helping member of his village and vibrant child club members. The child belongs to a family where the main profession is farming. The child has very much interest in studies and at present he is studying in Class X and next year he will give his Madhyamik examination. He is a member of our Child Club namely Adarsh Shishu Organization and the child club is the motivation behind his service to the needy children.

One of his remembered service is helping a 5 years aged child namely Sreeja Sardar, a resident of Merudandi village. On 10.11.20 Alamin got information that the child is staying at a relative's house in a very poor condition. The child was suffering from malnutrition and food support. On 17.11.20 Alamin helped us to visit the child's place and we found that the mother of the child is incapable of earning due to her poor physical condition. They are facing these problems since the death of the child's father. They have to live their house as the half- siblings and step mother of the child has grabbed the properties. On 21th of November Child Line had been informed and they visited the place on 23rd. After that the child along with her mother received 12 kg ration from the B.D.O of Basirhat block and the B.D.O assured the mother for arranging monthly widow pension and PMAY Another incident where Alamin had shown very active approach, to stop a child marriage. On 16th of March'2021 Alamin came to know about a child who is getting married forcefully by her parents. Alamin immediately informed the matter to our CPW and then we found that her marriage is

fixed on 17.03.21. As per our direction he informed the matter to Child Line and then Basirhat Police was informed. On the day of marriage Child line reached at the spot along with Basirhat Police and the marriage had been stopped. They made the parents understand about negative impact of child marriage and parents of the child agreed to not giving marriage before 18 years. They submitted a consent letter to the local P.S assuring not to give marriage. Finally the life of the child was saved with the help of the young Alamin. Alamin is appreciated by every one for his courage and willingness to help other children and his peers in the village. He is role model for his peers to raise voice against the child rights and child protection issues. Alamin is taking lead role in to take the children to participate in the decision making process in the panchayat with their charter demand. In the village Alamin and his child club members have started taking tuition for the younger children during the this lock down of schools in pandemic. Alamin is leading his group to make a survey of children who are in lower classes.



Monisha Sarkar -Birangana (Bravery) Awardee from Child Rights Project

Monisha Sarkar, is a 13 years old girl of Mokundo Kati Village who is also the leader of our Child Club at Mukundokati, has done a courageous work and that has changed another child's life. One day she noticed a child working at a sweet shop near Dhopar More under Itinda Panitor Gram Panchayat. After communicating with local people for few days, she came to know that the boy is only 13 years of age and his name is Koushik Sarkar. She collected much information regarding the child and came

to know that So, she informed the matter immediately to the child protection workers of child rights project on 05.11.20 and they visited the spot on 13th Nov and 19.11.20 with her. They found that the child was working at the sweet shop and reconfirmed it through the visit on 19th. On 21st they informed about the child to Child line by calling on 1098, Child Help Line and a member from CHILDLINE visited the shop on 23.11.20. On this process She helped the team and her provided information helped us to find the child very quickly. When the member of CHILDLINE saw the child working at the shop, he talked to the child and came to know that the child is working there due to his poor economic condition. After that the child's parents were contacted and CHILDLINE member conducted the home visit of the child. He made the parents aware of Child Rights and Child Labour Prohibition Act and made them understand the importance of education for a child. His parents agreed with the representative and gave assurance for not involving the child to any kind of work that violates his Rights. She kept the child, Koushik under her regular follow ups and she informed us that the child is not working anymore

Aritra Sarkar-Birpurush (Bravery) Awardee from AHT Project



During Survey at Sayestanagar village our KMWSC field staff was find out that one of our child parliament leader Aritra Sarkar, age 17 years, read in class XII. He is going to Shibnath High School in Basirhat. Aritra was rescued a man who faced an accident. On the day when Aritra return from his tuition he was saw two men faced a road accident at Baburasta area in Sayestanagar village, Basirhat. From 2 of them one man was very injured, he need to emergency treatment. The injured person name was Tota Gaji, He lived in Sahidpith village in Basirhat. So, in this situation Aritra rented a car and took injured man to Basirhat Government Hospital. Doctor was admittted the man, Tota Gaji. After that Aritra informed to Tota Gaji,s family about his accident. In midnight, Tota Gaji,s family member has come at hospital. There after Aritra go his home.

2020

Parvez Sawan Hossain Birangana and Parvez Sawan Hossain were bestowed with Birpurush and Birangama award by the West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) on 20th of November 2020 at Rabindra Sadan, Kolkata.

Parvez Sawan Hossain -Birpurush (Bravery) Awardee from Child Rights Project



Parvez Sawan Hossain is son of Afzal Hossain age 16 years old, the resident of Merudandi village in Sangrampur GP near the bank of Icchamati river of North 24 pgs Basirhat- 1 studying in Basirhat high school and is a leader of Merudandi child club. Parvez Sawan who is a child parliament/club leader out of the box and reached out to people in need during this lock down and pandemic crisis.

Under Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre Surokhito Shaisav project led his entire group of 15 members to think. He receives workshop and training on child rights in November 2019 organized by Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre with the help of a trainer and consultant of child Rights. He is one of the active and dedicated child club leaders towards leading and motivating his child club members in case of child protection issues, child marriage and child labour. At the initial stage of pandemic covid- 19 he with his club members made awareness and sensitization in their own locality, about social distancing, wearing mask and keeping the surrounding clean. They also gave demo how to wash hands very often. How to wear mask while going out for marketing. After attending the workshop he has changed in his thinking and approach towards the children who get less opportunity to go to schools. With the help of facilitators he organized rally in his locality and near market to protest against the child labour. He has approached the shopkeepers in his locality to inform the shopkeepers not to employ the children for work in their shops. He often thinks beyond that how he can help the poor children who cannot afford to buy books, pencils and stationary items and whatever is required in the schools.

Parvez and his team also keep vigilance regarding child marriage in their locality During the awareness campaign with his child club members Parvez has identified many poor children who are either never enrolled to schools or drop out due to the poor financial. He explains to his team members regarding the poor children and planned to help them with their fees and books. He proposed his idea of piggy banks saving money from their pocket's money. Everyone welcomed the idea of piggy bank and they started to collect the money from month of June 2020. Everyone is happy to contribute rupees 5 or rupees 10 every week in the piggy bank. The child club themselves have identified some of the children who they will support with fees, books and stationeries when the school reopens after the pandemic covid-19. Parvez says every child of my village will to school. Pervez is determined to help every poor child in the village. The child club team tells the shopkeepers not to employ the children for work.

This initiative was appreciated by PRI members and the Pradhan of Sangrampur GP. He has assured them to help the children in need and look into their charter of demand for each village.

Laxmi Biswas-Birangana (Bravery) Awardee from AHT Project

Laxmi Biswas one of the Adolescent Girls Group member of Sensitization on Anti-Human Trafficking Project of Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre Loreto.

One day Laxmi was approach by a boy name Rajesh from a different village at canning who she knows as his aunty and she is neighbor. Rajesh while visiting her auntie's house came to know how the AGG members from that village are working for child rights and anti-trafficking. Hence on 02/07/2020 Rajesh seek help from Laxmi to stop a child marriage of one of his friend Rokkhamoi Naskar which was going to take place that very day in his village Dabu. Rajesh left helpless as he did not know how can she help his friend where as Rokkhamoi who is just 16 years old did not wanted to get married and did tried to protested against it but her family had locked her up in house and her studies were also stopped. After getting all the information Laxmi quickly did her own research on the in the community to validate the information Rakesh shared with her.



Laxmi got determined in saving the girl she quickly connected with the CHILD Line and KMWSC staff and share all the information with them. She also understands the need to establish the girls age as minor hence she mentioned all the relevant information she has collected which will help in the case. After receiving all the information from Laxmi the Child Line along with Canning local Police went to the wedding venue and stopped the marriage. The parents gave a formal declaration to the canning

police that they will not force her daughter to get married before she turns 18. Rokkhamoi has again started going to school and she is very thankful to Laxmi for helping her and stopping the wedding. Laxmi strong zil and determination motivated her to take all the rights steps with such small timeline with outing panicking and helped Child Line local police and KMWSC to stop the wedding. With one small wrong step today Rokkhamoi would have been in huge trouble.

2018

Tuktuki Mali was felicitated at the Birangana Awards by WBCPCR on 20th November 2018.



Tuktuki Mali -Birpurush (Bravery) Awardee from Anti-Human Trafficking Project

Tuktuki Mali a member of the Adolescent Girls Group of Daria. She is single Muslim girl from minority community in the AGG. In October '15, She has saved her friend named Rehana Mali (name changed from her neighbourhood. Her bravery saved her friend. Since last two days her friend was missing, she observed the same & asked her parents regarding her whatsoever, her parents informed that she has gone to Bardhaman to for a job with a local man from their locality. They also informed that the man is known to their family. Tuktuki collected that person's number from the family and phoned him. She requested him that she wanted to talk to her friend, there her friend responded & informed her that she had taken Rs. 3000 from this man to support her father. As she was unable to

repay the money the man offered her a job in Bardhaman & after getting the money the man offered her a job in Bardhaman & after getting the payment she can repay the money. Tuktuki was aware of the impact of the condition of her friend as she was trafficked by the man. Tuktuki decided to play a trick and she again called that man requested that she also wants a job as her family is also in need. She immediately contacted Childline and gave every contact details of that man and requested them to rescue her friend. Tuktuki also informed the local leaders regarding the incident & she got immense support from them. The community stakeholders pressured the trafficker's family to return her as soon as possible. Whole Tuktuki followed up the case with Childline. Due to strong pressure from the community, Childline, the man came back to Canning & dropped her Betberia ghola Station. The girl restored to her family by the effort of Tuktuki & community leaders.

Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre is devoted to helping young leaders, both boys and girls. We're committed to training, supporting, and empowering them to do their best and be caring members of their homes, neighborhoods, communities, and villages.

We're grateful to everyone who stood by us and supported these 17 young girls and boys. Your support has helped them grow and strengthen their values and lives.

May this Christmas season bring you closer to all those that you treasure in your heart.



Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre wishes you a

**MERRY CHRISTMAS
&
HAPPY NEW YEAR**