

A SCHOOL GIRL BECOMES A LIGHT IN HER COMMUNITY.....

In 2015, I met Sonaly Kol for the first time at a three day training event for 'learning circle' volunteers. She was a bit shy and spoke slowly and quietly. During the sessions, facilitators tried to engage her in the group discussions but even in the role plays she was very introverted. At the time, we were concerned that she didn't meet our criteria to be a volunteer. But she was the only participant from Chickna, a Kol village, so she was the only person who could run the learning circle for women. We decided to take on the challenge and appointed Sonaly, a sixteen year-old schoolgirl, as a volunteer.

Over the last two years, SIL facilitators have guided her very closely. She received 'Generation Next Group' leadership training and multilingual education (MLE) tutor's training, which helped her to be confident. She is now very well known by local government members, including the Chairman, local leaders and government school teachers. Her parents also support her in her voluntary service.

Now, I am surprised by her confidence. She leads the women's learning circle and

a Generation Next Group (GNG) for young people and she teaches in the SIL MLE School in Chickna village. She has even received primary health care training and given free first aid treatment in her village. She is playing different roles with different generations and has developed her communication skills, which is great to see. She has several friends, Jiramony, Taramoni and Sabani, who work alongside her.



Figure 1: Volunteer Training 2015

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... SNAPSHOTS ...
WHAT'S PLANNED FOR
THIS MONTH

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LANGUAGE, EDUCATION, AND DEVELOPMENT

SIL

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Dec 03-08: Humanitarian Support for flood affected areas with Mahle and Santal communities.

Dec 11-14: ACYLT (2 trainings) with Ushoi Tripura, Mahle, Santal, Oraon communities.

Dec: 15-18: Survey with Mahle and Kurux communities.

Dec 18-21: ACYLT with Mahle, Oraon communities.

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A few months ago, she and the other GNG members submitted an application to a developmental organization to get another tube-well because they only had for the whole village. Due to a lack of water sources, the villagers were facing a drinking water crisis. As a result, they received another tube-well and set it up in the village. The villagers are very pleased and are taking care of the well. Sonaly feels it is a significant achievement for her team.

Three years ago, Sonaly did not think that she would become a leader in her village. Now, she has dreams for the future of her community. She is also an encouragement and a role model for other students, and may change parents' aspirations for their own children. The name 'Sonaly' means 'golden' and I hope that through her hard work in Chickna's development journey, she will continue to live out this meaning.



Figure 2: MLE Tutors' Training 2017 (Sonaly: first from the left)

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**SIL Bangladesh helps communities achieve their development goals while retaining their ethnolinguistic identities.
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