

hope

News for friends of Asha

Issue 74 April 2017



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02 Director's Message



Dear Friends,

The word I am reflecting on these days is 'Joy', specially as we draw close to the wonderful festival of Easter that symbolises Fullness of Joy and Abundant Life. The word 'Abundant' in Greek is 'perisson', meaning exceeding, very highly, beyond measure, a quantity so abundant as to be considerably more than what one would expect or anticipate. What a wonderful picture of life in its fullness, and what a contrast to a life filled with emptiness and dissatisfaction!

But how do I experience Joy when a slum lord forces his way into an Asha centre, has a party on the rooftop, and gets drunk? How do I experience Joy when a student whom I love and give my all to, betrays me? What happens to Joy when trusted and loyal partners of many years let me down?

In my experience, Joy is not a temporary feeling of pleasure or happiness. Rather, Joy is a sense of constant wellbeing, a continuous journey of flourishing. I experience Joy when I live in harmony with my spiritual laws. When my thoughts, feelings, and actions are honourable. When I have a quiet and peaceful conscience. When I consistently live my life in accordance with my highest sense of right.

True joy has made me more resilient, and helped me to transcend the hardest of situations with an inner serenity.

May we all engage with our lives in ways that inspire us and give us true Joy. With my very best wishes for a Happy Easter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kiran Martin".

Dr Kiran Martin

Asha is a community health and development society dedicated to improving the lives of slum dwellers in Delhi.

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03 Spotlight



Sumit's quest for a transformed life

Growing up in appalling conditions in Peeragarhi slum community, Sumit's life was beset by dreadful financial anguishes and health issues. His father's meagre income by ironing clothes for a living was not enough for the five-member family to survive.

Sumit recalls how once some people tried to shut down the shop where his father owned two tables to iron clothes, but he stood strong to support him. His grief became worse when his mother suffered from a major heart disease while he was preparing for his school leaving exams. Such incidents triggered him to take control of the situation, but he lacked direction.

At this challenging time, the Asha team came to his rescue. "Right from paying my college fees to helping me become independent, I owe everything to Asha," claims Sumit. He is also one of the finest Asha Ambassadors who works hard to 'pay-it-forward' to his community.

Through Asha's Job Placement Programme, Sumit got the opportunity to work with VFS – a visa processing company for over a year, before securing a job with Accenture – a global professional services company, as an Associate.

With dreams in his eyes, Sumit is determined to move out of the slums and make it big in the professional world.

04 News at a glance



The Flying Start: An Asha-High Commission of Canada Collaboration

On March 23, 2017, Asha Society in collaboration with the High Commission of Canada kick-started 'The Flying Start' initiative to create new internship and mentorship opportunities for Asha's University students. The event, hosted at the Canadian High Commissioners' residence, brought together embassies, high commissions, corporates and Asha supporters under one roof. High Commissioner, HE Nadir

Patel expressed, "You [students] are leaders in your own right." Dr Kiran extended her gratitude to the guests and urged them to be a part of Asha saying, "a month's internship can change the lives of our students." Also, Asha graduates Chandan (from Jeewan Nagar) and Shalu (from Tigri) shared their transforming journeys with Asha. **1**

Australian Senator's visit to Asha

On March 08, 2017, we had the pleasure of hosting Minister for Resources and Northern

Australia, Senator the Hon. Matthew Canavan, to visit Asha's Kanak Durga slum community. Mr Canavan was fascinated after meeting the Women's Association, who despite all odds, are extraordinary women in their own rights. He also extended his support towards the health rights of women and girls in Asha communities.

Young Ambassador Dilip accompanies Dr Kiran to Northern Ireland

Recently, Asha Graduate Dilip accompanied Dr Kiran to Northern Ireland and met many old and new Asha supporters. They travelled across various parts in the country and spoke at numerous Asha events about his transforming journey. Talking about his trip, Dilip exclaimed, "travelling to Northern Ireland was a cherished dream and I am amazed by the hospitality of the people there." Coming from an extremely humble background, Dilip has been an inspiration to many youngsters at Asha. We extend our gratitude to the Northern Ireland community for their support!

New Zealand High Commissioner visits Asha

It was delightful to meet the New Zealand High Commissioner-designate to India, Her Excellency Joanna Kempkers and her husband Timothy Markwell at Kanak Durga slum community. She was overwhelmed to witness the developments taking place in the community and shared, "the students are a proof of how amazing Asha's work has been."

Asha supporters 'Shared the Warmth' last winter

While the temperature in Delhi dropped to as low as 1°C during last winter, keeping the slum dwellers warm and safe was a major concern. A Blanket Donation Campaign - Share the Warmth - was launched. Thanks to the generous donors - Mr. Sumit Jain from the Canadian High Commission, CanAssist, S&P Global Market Intelligence and Mazars India amongst many others, the campaign delivered impressive results. Their generous support helped us reach out to several slum dwellers and 'share the warmth' with them.

05 News at a glance

Santosh wins Excellence in Education Award from Delhi Govt.

Santosh from Zakhira, who scored an astounding 88% in school leaving exams in 2016, has recently been bestowed with the Excellence in Education Award from the Directorate of Education, Govt. of Delhi. His severe hearing impairment and humble background did not hold him back. Presently, taking Engineering entrance exams, Santosh has big dreams in his eyes and a passion to try and achieve them. **2**



AFOA hosts 'Lion' fundraising event

The fundraising event for the screening of the movie 'Lion' in Australia was a successful one for Asha. It was significant for Asha graduate Mahinder, currently pursuing his post-graduation at The University of Melbourne. He had the honour of meeting the Director of the movie, Garth Davis, at the screening. It was a soul stirring experience for Mahinder as the movie reminded him of his journey to Australia and his life in that country.



Women's Day celebrations

On International Women's Day, we had the pleasure of hosting New Zealand High Commissioner – designate HE Joanna Kempfers and other officials from the High Commission at our slums. Asha's corporate partners Barclays and Macquarie also celebrated the spirit of womanhood with the community members and praised them for being champions of women's rights, despite all odds. **3**

Care for the elderly programme

Extending hospitality is an important value at Asha. A beautiful example of this gesture is seen across the Asha communities. Thinking about how lonely the lives of the elderly can be in the slums, Asha students and team members accompanied them to nearby parks, and enjoyed food and games together. The elderly were overwhelmed with the love and attention they received, and were left with beautiful memories.

06 Spotlight



Farzana champions women's rights, despite her challenges.

When Farzana moved to Delhi with her husband over two decades ago, little did she realise the kind of struggles she was going to face. The duo settled in Chanderpuri slum, where Farzana's husband began to sell decorative fruit baskets.

Over the years Farzana was blessed with six children, but her husband's income could not arrange adequate resources to even construct a concrete rooftop for their one room house.

Farzana learned about Asha and joined the Women's Association in the year 2000. Although her husband did not support her in stepping out of the house, Farzana kept herself engaged in some Asha activity or the other. Soon, she learnt to voice her opinions.

However, losing her husband in 2015 worsened the situation. Her in-laws stepped back and she was left to survive on a mere Rs 2,500/- per month (\$38/ £30). "I became socially excluded, but Asha gave me hope. Now, I work as a tailor while my elder son works where his father did," shares Farzana.

Today, Farzana is a champion of women's rights in her community and works hard to educate the slum residents. A proud mother whose children are studying at the University of Delhi through Asha, Farzana claims, "I am content that my children won't have the life that I had."

07 Volunteer diaries

Five teams make a real impact

It is always wonderful to have teams from varied backgrounds and cultures, join us in our efforts to transform lives. Earlier this year, we were delighted to have five volunteer teams, spreading joy and love in our communities. The teams, including Trinity College (Australia), The River (USA), Ballymena Builders (Northern Ireland), City Life (UK), and River (UK), taught English to the Asha students, painted beautiful murals, brushed up students' problem solving skills, organised art & craft sessions, held some stress busting activities for women, and even constructed a home for a poor family.

Cannot wait to bring another team next year...

Sarah Furste

The River, USA

In February 2017, my husband and I took a team of 14 people from across the US to Delhi with the purpose of seeing first-hand the work that Asha is doing in slums across the city. This was our 4th trip to India and each time we visit we get a deeper understanding of the wonderful transformation taking place in these slum neighbourhoods. It was a privilege to deepen our relationship with the communities of Jeewan Nagar and Seelampur, and we cannot wait to bring another team next year!

An amalgamation of unique experiences

Gareth Williams

Ballymena Team, Northern Ireland

This year's trip was an amalgamation of unique experiences. The builders of our team renovated the Asha Polyclinic, and built a house for Rampal, Rani and Aman at Savda Ghewra, and met Rubina, a post-graduate student from the slum, who travels five hours daily by bus to Delhi University. The women members of our team held various parachute games with children from Seelampur slum, and physio-exercises for the ladies. It was a great experience at Peeragarhi as well, that included praying, eating, laughing, dancing and crying...

Bidding adieu to Friends of Asha, GB Coordinator, Phil Leighton

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, all of us at Asha would like to thank Phil Leighton for his wonderful contribution as the Coordinator of Friends of Asha GB, over a period of 19 long years. The years he has spent at Asha have been marked by unsurpassed efficiency and excellence. Phil has been such an inspiration, and his friendship will always be valued. Heartiest congratulations to Phil on a job so well done. We, at Asha, are grateful to him for all his support and guidance.

Starting April 1, 2017, long time Asha supporter and friend Dr Richard Hogben will be taking over as the Coordinator of Friends of Asha GB. We wish him all the best for this new journey.



If you would like to volunteer at Asha, please contact info@asha-india.org

08 Friends of Asha updates



Update on Friends of Asha GB

Dr. Richard Hogben, a retired General Practitioner in Yeovil, has been a long-time supporter of Asha. He first visited Asha in 2005 with his wife, Julie. During his visits to the slum communities, he has held a number of clinics in the slum centres and led workshops on medical topics for the Asha medical team. He has always enjoyed meeting the children and students, watching their progress as they grow in maturity and confidence along with their remarkable attainments!

With great appreciation for Phil's dedicated service over many years; Dr Hogben now takes on the baton as the Coordinator of Friends of Asha GB.

PS – The bank details for Friends of Asha GB remain the same, but all donations in cheque shall be directed towards Dr Richard Hogben, starting April 1, 2017.

Friends of Asha (Great Britain)

If you would like to contribute to the lives of poor slum dwellers in Delhi, then you can become a Friend of Asha. Friends of Asha are an integral part of our organisation and aid our activities through donations, fundraising events, volunteering and raising awareness of the work we do.

For more information, contact:
Dr Richard Hogben, Coordinator,
Friends of Asha GB
foasha.richardhogben@gmail.com

If you would like to make a donation to Asha, and you are a UK tax payer, you can Gift Aid your donation. Friends of Asha GB (Charity Registration No. 1085071) can collect an extra 25p for every pound you donate.

To donate online directly

Make a payment to
The Lloyds Bank account of Friends of Asha (GB);
Sort Code 30-96-31; A/c No. 019991

To donate online

Send your contribution to Asha by visiting our website at:
asha-india.org/getinvolved/donate

To donate by cheque

Make your cheque payable to
"Friends of Asha (GB)" and mail to:

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