

hope

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02 Director's Message



Dear friends,

What joy it gives me to have the opportunity to once again bring you my warm greetings for a Happy New Year! And to welcome you to the first edition of our brand new quarterly correspondence.

2017 will be for us at Asha a year filled with exciting possibilities. The Asha Ambassadors in the slum communities whose lives have been transformed through their educational opportunities, are now ready to reach out to young people from slums all over the city! They have already begun visiting so many slums with the good news that the lives of the young people they are going to change forever.

The word that I am going to lay hold of as we enter 2017 is 'Inspiration'. It comes from the Latin 'inspirare' meaning 'to breathe into'. What a wonderful word! My desire for 2017 is that my team and I are a source of inspiration for these young people. May they believe that the beauty and goodness within them can awaken them to greater and nobler possibilities. May a power greater than them burst forth deep in their unconscious, bringing about a new way of seeing and believing.

My older daughter was named 'Perna' which in Hindi means 'Inspiration', and it is to her that I dedicate this reflection.

My team and I will need your support more than ever as we launch out into the deep in the New Year. It is with gratitude and good wishes that I end my letter.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kiran Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

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



Ajit, a young boy with dreams in his eyes

Ajit, from Kanak Durga slum community, appears very young for his age. A small boy with a frail smile, he is actually a 16-year-old, studying in class 12.

Six months ago, when Ajit started having disturbing visions and a swollen eye, his family thought that he was making excuses to avoid school. Gradually his condition worsened and Ajit began experiencing seizures. Soon after the doctors revealed that he has a tumor on his temporal bone.

Ajit has already undergone surgery twice, one on his spinal cord and another near his navel area to squeeze the water out of his temporal bone. The third operation is due soon.

Talking about Ajit, Asha supervisor Rani said, "Despite his health problems, Ajit comes to our centre everyday to read books. His smile is contagious and makes us believe that things will be better soon."

Ajit and the other 6 members of his family live in a rented house. His father works as a mason and with his little income they have shelled out Rs. 50,000/- (\$738/£586) for Ajit's operations, so far. All they want is for Ajit to be cured.

Ajit, the timid boy with a positive attitude and dreams in his eyes, hopes for a better future and a second chance at life.

04 News at a glance



Graduates meet the British Prime Minister

It was a great honour for Dr Kiran and three of the Asha graduates to meet The Right Honourable Theresa May, the Prime Minister of UK. They were invited to the hon'ble British High Commissioner to India, Sir Dominic Asquith KCMG's residence where a special reception was held. Shalu (from Tigri slum colony), Rajeev (from Kusumpur Pahari) and Phozia (from Ekta Vihar) shared their journey with Asha. The hon'ble PM was pleased to listen to the transforming stories of the students. It was a soul stirring experience for the Asha graduates. **1**

Joy as students showcase their talents

It was a day of excitement and joy for Asha's Children Association as they represented Asha Society in the Oz Haat Charity Mela, organised by the Australian High Commission on December 03, 2016. Over 20 NGOs from around New Delhi were invited to put up their stalls. The Asha team showcased their talents by selling handmade paper bags and envelopes, apart from selling colourful diyas. Some of the girls from Asha also displayed beautiful henna art.

Bowled over by Team Macquarie

In October 2016, Macquarie Group partnered with Asha in many wonderful ways. While some of the team members joined the Mentorship Programme, others orchestrated an advance excel workshop to help our students with computer literacy. Also, a tree plantation drive was organised at Asha's Kanak Durga slum colony. The most interesting activity was the friendly cricket match between Asha students and the Macquarie team, where the latter won!

Irish Ambassador hosts volunteers

It was an absolute delight to meet the Hon. Irish Ambassador, His Excellency Brian McElduff. Dr Kiran, volunteer teams from Northern Ireland as well as Asha students were invited for a dinner at the Hon. Ambassador's residence on November 03, 2016. The Hon. Ambassador greeted the audience with a brief speech where he talked about how impressed he is with Asha's

work. He was extremely happy to hear about the various activities of Friends of Asha (Ireland), particularly Asha's relationship with the various Irish schools and colleges. The evening ended with some musical performances by the volunteer teams, followed by a sumptuous dinner.

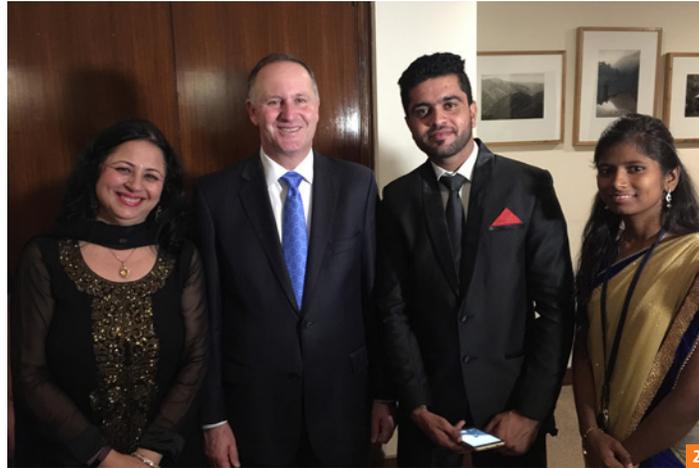
A trip of a lifetime for young Ambassador Shiv

Recently, Asha Graduate Shiv travelled to the UK with Freddy Martin and met many old and new Asha supporters. They travelled across various parts of the country and spoke at various Asha events about his transforming journey. "Travelling to UK was a dream come true! It was wonderful to be so warmly welcomed by each and every person during the trip," shared Shiv on his return. Shiv is such an unusually gifted person and is one of the finest Asha Ambassadors. Coming from an extremely humble background, Shiv has been an inspiration to many Asha youngsters. We extend our gratitude to the UK community for their wonderful hospitality!

05 News at a glance

Dr. Kiran meets the New Zealand Prime Minister

On October 27, 2016, Dr Kiran was invited for a dinner at the New Zealand High Commission, New Delhi where the guest of honour was the then Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Right Honourable John Key. The New Zealand High Commission has been hosting Asha interns since 2012 and many of them have gone on to land good jobs. Dr Kiran was delighted to meet the Prime Minister along with Asha graduates Jeetu, who is currently working at the New Zealand High Commission as an Immigration Support Officer, and Priya who also works part-time at the High Commission. **2**



Australian FoA host graduate Mahinder

Australian Friends of Asha invited Asha graduate Mahinder to share his experiences at their board meeting in the offices of Corrs Chambers Westgarth in Melbourne. Mahinder is now doing a Masters in Computer Science at the University of Melbourne, and was invited to share his experiences while in Australia. It was so good to hear that he is settling in well. All thanks to Australian Friends of Asha for making this happen, and what an inspiration to the slum students of India. **3**

Working towards a brighter future

With the Asha students stepping ahead towards a brighter future, it gives us immense pleasure to share that many of them have found a place for themselves in leading corporates and high commissions. In the last one year we have been able to place 12 students, and aim to provide similar opportunities for even more in the times to come.



Gandhi Jayanti celebrations

On October 02, 2016, the Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Asha team members along with Youth and Children's Association initiated a Cleanliness Drive at the New Seelampur area in accordance with PM Narendra Modi's 'Swachh Bharat' Mission. The team invited the MLA Mr. Mohammad Ishraque as the chief guest. Mr. Ishraque addressed the gathering and applauded them for their wonderful efforts. The children voiced slogans along with placards and posters, while also enacting street plays.

06 Spotlight



“I want to help people as long as I live”

Despite facing extreme poverty, Beena, a Community Health Volunteer (CHV) at Kalkaji still stands tall. She and her family had to struggle for basic amenities like electricity or water and other problems of living in a slum. After losing her husband in 2007, Beena juggled between being a mother and the sole bread-earner of the family.

It’s been over 15 years that Beena has joined Asha, first as a part of the Women’s Association and then after thorough medical training, she was promoted as a CHV at Asha’s Kalkaji centre. Beena, who never in her life stepped out of her house, let alone talking to individuals, was now spreading awareness in the slums about health and sanitation.

“During my initial days, I didn’t even know how to talk to people. I struggled a lot on the way and failed miserably. But, joining Asha helped me to gain some kind of closure. Asha taught me to move forward in life, it gave me a purpose,” says a humbled Beena.

When asked what she wants from life, with a smile on her face she said, “I want to buy a house and help both my sons get married. But, I want to help people as long as I live.”

07 Volunteer diaries

Six teams make a real impact this autumn

It is always wonderful to have teams from varied backgrounds and cultures, join us in our endeavour to transform lives. This autumn, we were delighted to have six volunteer teams, spreading joy and love in the slum communities. The teams, including Monash University (Australia), Rainey Endowed; Wallace High School and Methodist College (Northern Ireland); St. Stephens Church (UK) and a host of schools led by Asha supporter David Briggs, taught English to the Asha students, painted beautiful murals, brushed up students' problem solving skills, organised art & craft sessions and even established a library among others.



Teams from the UK at the residence of the British High Commissioner

An Indian Adventure...

Lisa and David Bernard

Clifton-upon-Dunsmore C of E Primary School

David and I had an absolutely amazing experience in New Delhi and what struck us most, from the moment we stepped off the plane, was the complete contrast between the fantastic high rise structures and beautiful temples and the abject poverty of the people living literally on the pavement and under bridges with little more than a mattress and the clothes they were wearing.

We were able to witness first hand, the impact of the work of the ASHA charity group we had gone to support and which has been close to our hearts as a school for the last 4 years.

We were privileged to work with the children who attend the ASHA centre. They all live in the slums, many one room houses (I use the term loosely) with often 7, 8 or more people living together and sharing one bed. Yet, the children are very grateful for everything they do have. Their families are close knit communities who enjoy being together and they strive to live their lives according to the ASHA values which are very similar to our values.

10 days of warmth and kindness in Mayapuri

Victoria Thampi

The Wallace High School, Northern Ireland

I spent 10 days volunteering at the Asha centre in Mayapuri in 2014 and 2016 with a group of pupils from The Wallace High School, Northern Ireland. The warmth of welcome and kindness shown was truly touching. I love the people of Mayapuri and the experience of working with the kids was exhilarating and inspirational. They have truly left an imprint on my heart.

A humbling and awe inspiring experience in Kusumpur

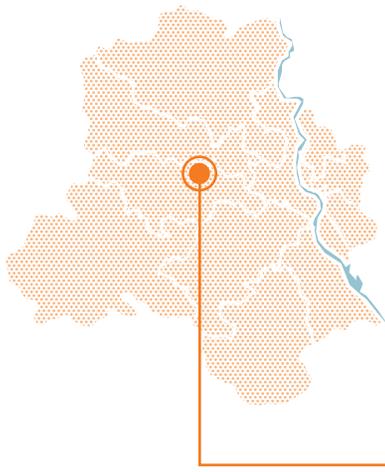
Sharon McCracken

Rainey Endowed School, Northern Ireland

In the Kusumpur community, our time spent working with the children, university students and Asha representatives to witness the work that Asha is doing in supporting and empowering the lives of its residents, is truly inspirational. I can speak for every one of the 12 students and 3 staff from Rainey Endowed School, when I say that our time spent there was humbling, awe inspiring and joyous.

If you would like to volunteer at Asha, please contact info@asha-india.org
Newsletter credits- Joe Duhig, Volunteer from UK

08 Transforming lives



Case Story: Afsana

Afsana from Zakhira slum community didn't give up on her education, despite her family trying hard to marry her off and even fixing the wedding date. Afsana tried to reason with her family, but in vain.

While the Asha team counselled the family, it took months to get a positive result. Now, the same people are rooting for Afsana's success.

Presently, she is pursuing a Nursing course. The confident girl claimed, "My life would have been over if Asha did not step in. They even paid my college admission fees. All I can do now is pay it back. You all have made my life".

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

Make your cheque payable to
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