

# hope

News for friends of Asha Issue 87 October 2020



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## 02 Director's Message



Dear friends,

There is so much to tell you this time. Covid-19 has thankfully not taken hold in our slums, but the lockdown has brought many to the brink of starvation. We are adapting week by week to everyone's needs. Many incomes vanished on March 24. Families cannot stay squashed in tiny homes, so people still play in the lanes and wait in line for the toilet. The government distributes cooked food daily, but it is inaccessible to people who lack the strength to stand waiting.



We quickly launched 22 teams of 'Asha Corona Warriors'. Many are university students who lost part-time jobs but they have been tirelessly and bravely visiting slums. They share reliable information and food in slums abandoned by other agencies. To avoid riots we distribute food parcels rather than cash, with cooking gas bottles, soap and menstrual hygiene items. The Sanitation Department abandoned the slums on lockdown, so our team and Warriors successfully lobbied Municipal Councillors about the horrific conditions. Public hospitals and primary care centres were mostly closed at the beginning of the lockdown. Thankfully, our Community Health Volunteers have restarted primary care and rehydration treatment – vital in this 44°F (111°F) heat.



Sadly, many healthy pregnant women and children have become malnourished. Hope & Spice author Amanda Clegg has created a wonderful high-protein, calorific laddoo recipe and we feed them daily to registered children, with time to interact and love them. The little ones love the laddoos and are regaining lost appetites and weight. We are seeing poor mental health including in children. They miss school, the daily structure and the midday meal. University students have been grateful for our tutorials on the new practicalities of taking finals online and for the calm of our study rooms.



The 'Hope & Spice' team have published an e-book to raise emergency funds. 'An Extra Helping of Hope & Spice' is available on Amazon worldwide, with 7 recipes and a profile of student Madhu. We have received countless expressions of gratitude – including 1000 birthday cards sent to me from the Asha communities. They were filled with blessings and love. Where there is life, there is hope.

*Kalarti*

Dr Kiran Martin

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

Find us at:

[asha-india.org](http://asha-india.org)

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## 03 Spotlight



### Rahnoor: Surviving the worst nightmare during the lockdown

Rahnoor is a 30-year-old woman who lives with her 4-year-old daughter in Ekta Vihar slum community. 3 years ago, Rahnoor faced the worst circumstance in her life, when her husband suddenly died due to a heart attack. Now, she was left all alone to take care of her young daughter. Earlier, her husband used to cook and sell biryani to make a living and provide for the family. With his death, this source of income was gone forever.

Within Ekta Vihar slum, Rahnoor's family resided in 2 small rooms. She had started to rent out the other room. Through this small rent money Rahnoor was managing to feed her family the past few years. When the lockdown happened, her tenants ran into financial problems, and were unable to pay the rent. Food supplies started running out at home and Rahnoor was forced to take credit from the grocery shop nearby. Rahnoor's circumstances grew worse with every passing day. There was no relative who came forward to help and neither did the Government. Rahnoor thought of leaving her child alone and going to work but there were no work opportunities for her. She was completely alone and helpless.

Soon Eid (The Festival) arrived, Rahnoor and her child slept on empty stomachs. One night, her daughter could not sleep, she continued crying the entire night and fell sick as she had not eaten for days. Rahnoor did not even have a single penny to buy some medicines or milk for her hungry daughter. She cried along with her child and prayed to God for help continuously.

Around the same time, Asha entered Rahnoor's life as a ray of hope. The Asha team at Ekta Vihar had started to prepare a list of the poorest and neediest in the slums as per Dr. Kiran's briefing and guidelines. The team knew about Rahnoor's dire circumstances and prioritized her name on their list. The Asha warriors and Asha team visited Rahnoor at her home and provided her with a bag of groceries that contained food items to last for weeks. The team also spent time with her and provided her with unconditional love and support as she was in tears and could not stop crying.

Today when Rahnoor looks back at those difficult times of lockdown, she says with tears in her eyes 'I don't know what would have happened if Asha had not helped me. My daughter could have fallen sick and died or I could have died of hunger'. She is grateful and thankful to Dr. Kiran and the Asha team of Ekta Vihar for helping her during the most difficult time in her life.

## 04 Asha's COVID-19 Emergency response

### Asha Warriors- Undaunted Spirit

The lockdown due to coronavirus has shaken the entire world but it dramatically affected the slum dwellers as it led to an immediate deterioration of their living conditions. With no source of income, as most are daily wage earners, the slum dwellers are facing the most difficult period of their lives.

Asha as an organisation immediately shifted its focus onto the wellbeing of the families living in the 91 slums it works in, as the nation went into lockdown.

Asha immediately formed 22 Asha Corona Warrior Teams across various communities. Each team comprised of young volunteers and the Community Health Volunteers (CHVs). They were provided basic PPE kits for protection. The Asha Warriors visited all the houses, patrolled the lanes, and educated the slum residents on the importance of staying at home, maintaining social distancing, thorough hand washing and encouraged wholehearted compliance. They worked alongside the local police and local administration and assisted them in their crisis management. Many Asha Warriors faced the ire of the residents and put their health and life at risk for the sake of the wellbeing of the community.

Asha provided monetary support as well as carefully planned food parcels to the elderly, disabled, widows, families with babies and small children, malnourished children, and people with chronic diseases.



### Community Health Volunteers in Asha slums lead the fight against COVID-19

The Asha Community Health Volunteers are providing Primary Health Care in Asha adopted communities. The CHVs are well equipped with first aid and all the important medicines, such as Oral Rehydration Solution packets, Paracetamol, Chlorpheniramine, Gentian Violet Paint (1%), Iron and Folic Acid, antacids, antispasmodics, Co-trimoxazole, Iron and B Complex Syrup, and antibiotic ointment and dressing material. In emergencies, like women going into labour, the CHVs call the police and take the expectant mother to the hospital in the police vans or govt ambulances.

## 05

### Poor weight gain in women: An adverse effect of the Pandemic

Women in the slums usually fall behind men in having access to food. Female illiteracy, poverty, and lack of empowerment are the major causes of malnutrition in women and adolescent girls. They have weaker control over the household resources, tighter time constraints, heavy work burdens, lack of attention, poorer mental health, and lower self-esteem. They therefore suffer from chronic energy deficit, anaemia, and other micronutrient deficiencies..

The recipe for the Asha High Protein Powder developed by Asha GB (Great Britain) Board member, Amanda Clegg is successfully being fed to hundreds of women and girls suffering from malnutrition in various Asha slum communities. The women and adolescent girls from our communities are enjoying the drink and have already begun to gain weight.



### Changing the lives of young girls through the provision of Sanitary Napkins

Ever since the lockdown, all work has come to a standstill. There is no money to buy food and other essentials. Residents stand for hours in long lines in the scorching heat, to get a bowl of rice and lentils. Thousands of girls in slums do not have access to sanitary napkins. They have resorted to wearing unhygienic pieces of cloth as they have no privacy in the slum to wash and dry. This is leading to them developing urinary tract infections, vaginal itching, and reproductive tract infections.

In response to this Crisis of Menstrual Hygiene Management, Asha has distributed sanitary napkins and soaps to hundreds of young girls in the slum communities. Asha has begun to run an Adolescent Girls Clinic to diagnose and treat young girls with diseases resulting from poor menstrual hygiene. Particular attention is being paid to the diagnosis and treatment of anaemia in young girls due to excessive bleeding, poor menstrual management, and the absence of a diet containing iron-rich foods. Asha is educating young women and girls on hygienic menstrual practices.

## 06

### Fighting Childhood malnutrition in Asha slums

When the lockdown occurred, it brought the families here to the brink of starvation. It has been almost impossible for them to survive. The slums witnessed a high increase in children rapidly falling back into malnutrition, which has been a direct repercussion of the lockdown. To arrest this process, Asha Great Britain Board Member and author of Hope and Spice Amanda Clegg has created a wonderful high-calorie and high protein Laddoo, a round-shaped Indian sweet. Each laddoo contains approximately 387 calories. It is made up of nutritious ingredients such as peanuts, gram, jaggery, milk powder, desiccated coconut, clarified butter and cardamom powder. These laddoos are being distributed to all the young children aged under 5 in the slums. Within the timespan of just a month, the children here have all gained 1-1.5 kilograms each. Their growth is being monitored carefully by the Asha team.



### Antenatal care provided to pregnant women in Asha slums

Antenatal care comes under one of those categories of healthcare that has been severely neglected by the government hospitals owing to the pandemic and the lockdown in Delhi. Asha realized an urgent need of Antenatal care clinics to be conducted as soon as possible to provide aid to helpless pregnant women in slums.

We are providing the best quality of Antenatal care possible to our pregnant women during this pandemic. We make sure of regular check-ups, identifying high-risk cases, providing vitamin and mineral supplements, and postnatal care, including initiating early breastfeeding.

### Geriatric Clinics- Elderly in the slums looked after

This pandemic has caused suffering from hunger, disease, deficiency of micronutrients, loneliness, and depression to all. The most vulnerable are the elderly. The Asha team and the warriors are holding special clinics where every elderly person is lovingly looked after. All their health parameters are carefully studied, and appropriate medications are given free of cost which includes Vitamin D supplements and other multivitamins.

Recently Asha has also extended its Supplementary Feeding Program to each elderly person who is undernourished.



## 07 News at a glance

### Asha's Anna Nagar slum community faces a deadly natural disaster

A terrible incident took place in Asha's Anna Nagar slum community on 19th July. It rained very heavily, and the homes of some families toppled into the open drain they were located near by. Fortunately, they left their homes just 5 minutes before the houses fell. They lost everything. The poor have no insurance. They lost whatever little money they had. All their national and state documents were also lost. They were immediately provided shelter by the local government.

The Asha team has provided them with groceries, utensils, clothes, and footwear. The team and Warriors are with them all day, treating the sick and giving comfort and solace.



### Kindling hope during these challenging times

The Asha team at Seelampur had taken an initiative and showcased the Asha value 'Generosity' in action even during the tough time. The team made a contribution to purchase some household items for a bride belonging to a poor family in Seelampur slum. The selfless and generous Asha team at Seelampur has set an example by leading the way for all of us.

### Celebrating a day of Joy

The members of Women's and children's Group from all the Asha slum communities observed a day of Joy by cooking and eating together following all the social distancing norms. They affirmed one another and made expressions of gratitude. The women found that the problems they had amplified in their minds, small.



### Asha students excel in their class 12 exam results

Asha students in the slums awaited with great excitement for the announcement of their high school national results (equivalent to A levels). 99% who appeared for the exams, passed. 16 students scored above 90% in aggregate. We are delighted to say these are the best results that Asha students of class 12 batch have received so far. The topper is a girl from Seelampur called Faiza. He has scored a whopping 96%, with 97% in Geography, and Political Science, and 95% in English. The students all aspire to study further and are now seeking admission to the University of Delhi.

## 08 Transforming lives

### Providing help during Covid-19

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**£15** – will provide a bag of groceries for one needy person for a month

**£45** – will provide High Energy High Protein Drink for ten malnourished women for a month

**£65** – will provide High Energy High Protein Laddoos for ten malnourished children for a month

**£155** – will provide medicines and nutritional supplements for ten malnourished children/ malnourished women/ elderly for a month

**£800** – will provide one year of entire university expenses for one student

## 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 (Great Britain) aids our activities through donations, fundraising events, volunteering opportunities and raising awareness of the work we do.

**For more information, contact:**  
**Dr Richard Hogben, National Coordinator,**  
**Friends of Asha GB**  
[foasha.richardhogben@gmail.com](mailto:foasha.richardhogben@gmail.com)

### Donations

If you would like to make a donation to Asha, and you are a UK taxpayer, you can Gift Aid your donation. Download a form from the website or request one from the Coordinator. Friends of Asha GB (Charity Registration No. 1085071) can collect an extra 25p for every pound you donate.

**1. To donate online directly from your Bank** Make a payment to  
The Lloyds Bank account of Friends of Asha (GB);  
Sort Code 30-96-31; A/c No. 01899891

### 2. To donate online

Send your contribution to Asha by visiting our website at:  
<https://asha-india.org/get-involved/donate/great-britain-donations/>

### 3. To donate by cheque:

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