

# hope

News for friends of Asha Issue 88 January 2021



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## 02 Director's Message

Dear friends,

This is a season of one of the greatest challenges the world has ever faced. It may be a time to fight, a time to question, a time to mourn, but there is always one thing we can hold on to, Hope. Where there is life, there is hope. Hope brings light into the darkest places we never thought will have light. That has been my experience all through life. Let us think of the challenges we have faced in the past and have overcome them. Fear is a big hindrance to hope. Let us give doubt and fear less room in our hearts to breathe. Hope is a beautiful thing. It gives us peace and strength and keeps us going when all seems lost. Hope is the only thing stronger than fear. Hope is Asha.

The Asha Corona Warriors continue working tirelessly with compassion and kindness for the slum communities under Asha's care ever since the lockdown began. The team is made up of doctors, nurses, paramedics, social workers, volunteers, drivers, maids, admin and finance staff, and the communications team members. The elderly under our care are in great distress at this time and Asha continues to provide monthly food kits to them. Each Asha Warrior in their communities is given the responsibility of an elderly person. The warriors visit them every single day. The elderly now look forward to their daily visits.

Asha centres within the slums continue the Asha supplementary nutrition program of feeding malnourished children and women the Asha high calorie high protein Laddoos and Asha high protein powder. Every day many women and children visit the Asha centres in their slums to receive and eat their daily dose of laddoos and high protein powder. Through this program, Asha has managed to successfully promote weight growth ranging from 5-10 kilos in hundreds of children and women.

The Delhi University admissions process has begun, and the Asha students have begun to get in! So far this year, Asha has secured 80 plus admissions of students who have opted for varied courses of their choice. The process is still going on and will continue for a month longer. The students who have scored lower are anxiously waiting to see if they might get in through the declaration of the next list by the university.

The benefits of higher education to entire communities are visible and bring me much joy. The communities are much healthier with higher life expectancies. Many have been able to break free from the cycle of poverty. The strong are lifting the weak. They are politically aware, are good citizens, and are highly involved in civic affairs. Child marriage has gone down dramatically, age at marriage has advanced, and women are equal partners with men, rather than just future wives and mothers.

There are certain characteristics of leadership that are helping us to successfully strategize, implement, and see the impact of our efforts on Asha communities, especially during this pandemic. I truly believe that the effectiveness of our efforts is directly attributable to the strength of our leadership team. Talent and skill among leaders are particularly important. But the most important demonstrations of our leadership qualities are the ways in which we love, we serve, and our authenticity, solidity, and personal substance.

We must necessarily lead by example, demonstrating compassion and courage amid the most difficult circumstances. Boundless energy, passion, and optimism rooted in reality will gain leaders many supporters who when empowered, will carry Hope, to the farthest corners of every Asha community.



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

### Saddam: A story of pursuit for higher education

Saddam is the youngest of nine siblings. He was born in Delhi after his parents shifted from Bihar to Delhi's Savda Colony in search of work in the early 2000s. His father has been working as a daily wage unskilled labourer at construction sites, all his life. Today, his father has become too old and frail to continue working.

Saddam, himself, began to work as a waiter at weddings and parties from class 10 onwards, doing two shifts a day. He earned Rs 300 (US \$4, AUS \$5, £2.99) a day and gave the money to his mother to buy food for the family.

Saddam was an ordinary student till the 10th standard, barely managing to score 54 percent in his 10th board exams. His life took a turn for the better when he got associated with Asha in the 12th standard through Asha student Rubina and CHV Rajwati in Savda.

Through Asha, he received books and mock exams preparations along with unconditional care and support by the Asha team members. Through his hard work, Saddam scored 88% in his 12th board exams. The Asha team and volunteers at Savda mentored and inspired Saddam through his journey.

Saddam has now been admitted to Delhi University's Shivaji College where he is studying Bachelors in Liberal Arts. His life in the slums has been small and he has been greatly limited by his circumstances. He is extremely grateful for Asha's financial and emotional support and is ready to begin the next chapter of his life, exploring the world and all it has to offer him. And at the same time absorbing the Asha values to become a man of compassion and integrity.

"Once a person falls into a debt trap, it becomes difficult to come out of it because, by the time we realise it, the burden has already increased way too much. To repay one person's debt, we borrow money from another, and the chain goes on" says Saddam.

As Saddam's family is financially incapable of paying his college fees, Asha made sure to support him and secure his seat for admission. After graduating from college, Saddam wishes to pursue a Bachelor of Education degree and secure a government job as a teacher.



## 04 Asha's COVID-19 Emergency response

### Asha Warriors take personal care of the Elderly in the slums

The elderly in Asha slums are in great distress during the pandemic. Most of them are living in shanties and on street corners; they have little to eat and wear. Many of them have been abandoned by their families. Each Asha Warrior in their respective communities has been assigned the responsibility of caring for an elderly person living in their lanes. These warriors visit them every day and help the elderly in cleaning their bedroom, washing, and cleaning themselves, brushing their hair, providing them with medicines and other daily activities. The warriors spend quality time and listen to the many stories that the elderly share with them. The elderly people have created a friendship and special bond with the warriors over time and now look forward to their daily visits.



### Training the Trainers

Training sessions have been organised in all Asha slum centres for Asha warriors and Asha team members in topics such as infant health, immunization, nutrition along with the causes and treatments of illnesses such as malnutrition, diarrhoea, diabetes, hypertension, and anemia, etc. These sessions are highly insightful in training the Asha team and the warriors and equipping them with the correct knowledge to diagnose and treat hundreds of slum dwellers. This training will help in aiding and bettering the Asha communities for the long run and lead them to live a healthy and long life.

## 05 Farewell to KC from Dr Kiran and the Asha Family



It was with much sorrow that we learnt of the passing of our beloved friend Kailash Chaudhary on October 13, 2020. KC as we all fondly called him, first heard about Asha through Congressman Mike and his wife Jan Thompson. The Thompsons had visited Asha in the year 2000, and returned to Napa Valley in California, to share their exciting experiences at Asha with their long time friend KC. KC immediately responded to their request to organise a fundraiser for Asha in Napa. That was the start of a wonderful friendship with KC which extended to his family and to his many friends in Napa and beyond.

KC spearheaded a fundraising event every single year in Napa around September time. They called it Asha Day. From helping us to vaccinate babies and young children, to looking after sick children, prenatal mothers, and funding the university education of hundreds of young people from the slums, he led the effort of raising thousands of dollars for Asha over the years.

The legacy he has left behind has transformed the lives of some of the poorest residents of his motherland, India. He deeply influenced the lives of his children and his grandchildren through being a shining example, and he would get them involved in the Asha Day event in a variety of ways each year.

He would be waiting with a smile for me at the Napa bus station as I would travel over from San Francisco airport, and insist on carrying my bags and placing them in the boot of his car. My children Perna and Madhuri stayed at his home on many occasions when they were young, and he saw them grow each year into the wonderful women they are today.

Words can never be enough, KC, to express how much we love you and miss you. We would like to create an everlasting memory of you in the slums of Delhi this fall. You will never ever be forgotten, and will live in our hearts forever.

## 06 News at a glance



Dr Kiran interacting with the Elderly people and their respective warriors at Seelampur Slum Community

introduced themselves and shared how the Asha teams in their respective areas helped secure their admissions in their desired courses and colleges. The new Asha students were extremely emotional as they thanked Dr Kiran for providing Asha scholarships through which these students were able to pay their college fees.



Dr Kiran interacting with the Asha warriors at Kalkaji slum community



Dr Kiran examining a patient at Asha's Mayapuri Slum Community

### Dander to Delhi Virtual Walk

Friends of Asha Ireland took a different route this year and planned for a collaborative project to complete a virtual walk to Delhi! A distance of 4354 miles was the distance targeted in this 'Dander to Delhi' campaign. It started off on 1st December wherein initially 45 volunteers signed up and committed to walking or running as a part of the journey. More supporters were attracted along the way in both Delhi and Ireland where volunteers walked facing every possible weather condition to travel and make up the total distance to Delhi. By 31st December, this campaign was overwhelmingly successful with volunteers walking over 9000 miles doubling the initial goal. In spite of 2020 being a difficult year in many ways, Friends of Asha Ireland ended on a positive note by supporting Asha's work.



### Dr Kiran visits Asha communities

Dr Kiran visited various Asha slum communities in the month of December. She was met with great warmth and love by the Asha warriors, community members and the Asha team. The warriors, women and the elderly maintained the protocols of social distancing while wearing masks during their meet and greet with her. Dr Kiran held clinics for the elderly and spent time interacting with each elderly person, enquiring about their health, personal issues and listened to the stories they had to share. She also met with the Asha corona warriors in each area, who shared their experiences of volunteering in their communities during the lockdown. Dr Kiran also held an interactive session with the new Asha students in each community. The 1st year college students

## 07 News at a glance



### Asha Scholarship Awards given to Asha students admitted to the Delhi University

Asha awarded scholarships to 82 Asha students who have gained admission. This year the focus has been on providing access to students with competitive and resourceful courses to secure their future with jobs as soon as they complete their graduation. Due to the pandemic, the admissions were held online this year, making the entire process more rigorous to secure seats in desired courses. Asha Scholarship Awards were awarded and distributed to all Asha college students who have secured their admission. These Asha students are extremely excited to begin life at university and start a new chapter in their lives.

### Asha Corona Warriors honoured for their hard work and dedication

The Asha Corona Warriors have been working tirelessly with compassion and kindness for the slum communities under Asha's care ever since the lockdown began. This team is made up of doctors, nurses, paramedics, social workers, volunteers, drivers, maids, admin and finance staff, and the communications team members. To express gratitude for the dedication and hard work of these wonderful people, certificates of appreciation were awarded to each warrior.



### Virtual Meet at Asha

Amidst the outbreak of COVID-19, Asha organised a Virtual Meet with Discovery Schools Academics Trust, the first of its kind on December 7, 2020. The meet was attended by various schools under the trust from the UK, David Briggs, the leader of the team, Dr. Richard Hogben, Coordinator of Friends of Asha GB, and the high school and college students Asha team from Seelampur and Chanderpuri in New Delhi. It was not only a great way to network and interact virtually but also the DSAT team got an opportunity to hear an update on Asha's emergency COVID-19 response. The Virtual Meet started with the introduction and later the school children from the UK asked questions regarding the school system in Delhi which were responded to by the Asha team. The meet also included a virtual tour of Asha's Seelampur centre. The interaction took an emotional turn and brought nostalgia to everyone.



## 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:  
Dr Richard Hogben  
36 Combe Street Lane  
Yeovil, Somerset BA21 3PE, UK