

hope

News for friends of Asha

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02 Director's Message

Director's reflection on Dignity

04 Spotlight

Santosh: Set to conquer the world as a Computer Engineer

05 COVID-19 Emergency Response: Third Wave

06-08 News at a glance

Updates from across the organisation

09 Spotlight

Anil successfully combatted severe Covid with Asha's support

10 Transforming lives updates

02 Director's Message

Dear Friends,

I want to share my thoughts on an Asha value, that of Dignity. The word for Dignity in Latin is Dignus, which means worthy. The Oxford English Dictionary defines Dignity as the state or quality of being worthy of honor or respect.

Human Dignity is the recognition that human beings possess a special value that is intrinsic to their humanity. They are worthy of respect simply because they are human beings. Therefore, every human being, regardless of age, intelligence, ability, status, gender, ethnicity, or religion, is to be treated with respect.

This concept gave rise to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 1 states that All human beings are born free and equal in Dignity and Rights. They are endowed with Reason and Conscience, and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2 states that Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.

Although most religions around the world have recognized the concept of Human Dignity, I would like to make a case for Human Dignity on the basis that it is grounded in Brain Science. The human brain contains regions and circuits that support the essential processes of freedom of one's will and actions. For example, cortical circuits involving positive emotion, goal directed behavior, internal motivation and so on, include dopamine pathways originating in the ventral, tegmental area of the mid brain. Studies reveal that Autonomy is critical for human learning, which is a fundamental property of the human brain. Long term denial of Autonomy and Self Determination results in profoundly adverse brain effects.

Poverty has a huge impact on brain structure and function. It is associated with reduced cortical surface area, reduced volume of the amygdala, and the hippocampus, resulting in degradation of learning, memory, and the regulation of emotion. Discrimination also inflicts similar injury to the brain.

The brain science of uniqueness teaches us that each human has a unique genetic and epigenetic landscape. This uniqueness is amplified over time by environmental factors and by differences in gene expression. Research has given rise to an entire branch of Neuroscience called Dignity Neuroscience. Therefore we can conclude that Universal Dignity and Universal Rights are based on fundamental features of human brain structure, function, and development.

So why is Human Dignity so important when it comes to Human Rights? Human Dignity justifies Human Rights. When people are divided and given a value based on characteristics such as class, gender, religion, and so on, it creates unequal societies where discrimination runs rampant. People assigned a higher value get preferential treatment. Anyone who does not fit into the privileged category, is abandoned or oppressed. While the privileged few flourish, society as a whole suffers enormously. There may be unrest. Violence may erupt. If a new group takes power, and also fails to recognize human dignity, the cycle of destruction continues, only with different participants.

Therefore, recognizing Human Dignity and the universality of Human Rights isn't just so that individuals can be protected and respected. It is for the good of the entire world. If everyone's dignity was recognized, and everyone got equal opportunities to thrive, the world would be a much happier and more peaceful place.



03 Director's Message

So why is Dignity such an important Asha Value?

This is because both Absolute and Relative Poverty are terrible violations of Human Dignity. Poverty is connected with Humiliation, depending on others to stay alive, Social Rejection, Marginalization, Poor Health, No access to Education, or Sanitation. The poor have the cumulative experience of not being able to afford the same clothes, entertainment, social events, or other features of typical life in the society in which they live. Consequently, they experience diminished self respect, and they cannot effectively participate in the society and culture they live in.

Asha's various interventions in the slums are made, not out of a sense of pity for the poor, but because of our belief that Human Dignity involves Reverence, Respect, and Protection towards each person, who was born free and equal. That is the reason we provide:

- Quality health care to all. Every person in Asha slums must receive excellent quality health care
- Equal opportunities for education, including university education, just like their wealthier peers. They should be able to get an international education in top universities, just like their wealthier peers.
- Empowerment of women
- Access to clean water and sanitation
- Access to land and housing
- Financial inclusion, and access to banking services, leading to dignified work
- We work hard to help break down discrimination related to caste, religion, and other cultural barriers, resulting in brotherhood and harmony. The rich and the poor sit around the same table, eat together, play together, and enjoy each others' company as equals. People from all over the world come together to share love and friendship and the experience of citizenship of the world.



Let us all promote Human Dignity wherever we are, and play our part in making the world a place where each person flourishes to their fullest potential.

Thank you to each one of you for the wonderful ways in which you are helping us to Restore Dignity to the Poor. May we always see them as our true brothers and sisters on our life's journey.

Dr Kiran Martin

Watch Asha's Founder Dr Kiran Martin speaks on Dignity in the Slums of Delhi: <https://bit.ly/35gCdHJ>

04 Spotlight

Santosh- Set to conquer the world as a Computer Engineer

It was a proud moment for Asha when Santosh, the first boy from the slums of Delhi, graduated from the prestigious Delhi Technological University in Computer Science Engineering. He has recently secured a job as a Technical Analyst in one of the world-renowned Multinational Banks through Campus Placement. Santosh has become a role model for thousands of young people from the slums of Delhi.



His life's journey started in Asha's Zakhira slum in extreme poverty and deprivation conditions. His family, including his parents and younger sibling, lived in a tiny 25 sq. foot room shanty. His father was a landless farmer in Bihar who migrated to Delhi to seek a better livelihood.

In Delhi, he worked as a daily wage laborer and earned 100 US\$ per month. His mother worked as an assistant at a nearby Government Centre for Nutrition of Children, with no fixed remuneration.

Santosh's journey with Asha began when he was just two years of age. He began visiting the Asha centre at Zakhira with his mother. She would bring him for check-ups and immunizations at Asha's Well-Baby Clinic. When he was six years of age, Santosh became an active member of Asha's Bal Mandal (Children's Group).

The Asha centre, with all the facilities like proper study spaces, computers with internet connectivity, and books, created not only an enabling environment but helped Santosh develop an interest in and focus on academics. With the help of academic support, counseling, and guidance of the Asha team, Santosh scored good marks in his high school National board exams. Dr. Kiran decided to take him under her wings and mentor him. As she counseled him, it became clear that if she helped him all along, he could make efforts to begin the journey of appearing for engineering entrance exams. Dr. Kiran gave him the financial support to enroll at a famous private coaching centre. Santosh prepared hard for the engineering entrance exams. He secured a seat at the renowned Delhi Technological University in their most competitive Computer Science Engineering Programme.

Dr. Kiran arranged and paid for hostel accommodation at the university for his studies. Santosh had some major health issues that affected his progress. She arranged for his treatment through her network of friends from her medical school days. Asha also provided him with a balanced and nutritious diet which was equally important for his recovery; without Dr. Kiran's intervention, his health could have significantly deteriorated. Asha provided Santosh with internship opportunities in top-notch multinationals like SMEC, Macquarie, and Rio Tinto. He acquired professional skills in a multicultural work environment. He learned business etiquette and how to conduct himself in a competitive environment. Asha also recommended Santosh for the Future Research Talent (FRT) award at the prestigious Australian National University. He was awarded the scholarship, and that was such a remarkable achievement! Unfortunately, due to Covid, the programme got cancelled.

In Feb 2021, Asha helped him to learn English from Dr. Richard Hogben, Trustee and National Coordinator of Friends of Asha Great Britain. During the pandemic, Santosh worked as an active Asha Corona Warrior, helping in Asha's Emergency Covid Response, spreading awareness, and distributing masks, sanitizers, and food parcels. He helped many in his community to receive the Covid vaccine. Asha provided his family with food and medical support during this terrible crisis. When students were asked to leave the hostel and study online from their homes due to the spread of Covid-19, Asha arranged for a high-speed internet connection at his place so that he could complete the final semester without any disruption.

Finally, Santosh's dedication and perseverance have paid off. Today, he is a Technical Analyst at one of the largest global investment banks earning a good salary, and has moved out from the Zakhira slum with his family. Santosh's story is such a powerful example of Dr. Kiran's vision, never to allow poverty to become a barrier to the dreams of the poor children from the slums.

05 COVID-19 Emergency Response: Third Wave

During the last week of December 2021, the third wave of the covid pandemic struck Delhi and the rest of India. It was dominated by the Omicron variant, which was more infectious and fast-spreading compared to the Delta variant. In a very short period, cases started rising exponentially and more than 20,000 infections per day were recorded in Delhi.

Asha immediately geared up its infrastructure to control the spread of the virus and protect the slum communities across its project locations in Delhi. The Asha team and the Corona Warriors intensified their efforts to spread awareness and sensitization messages through door to door community visits.

High-quality masks were distributed free in the slums and their proper usage was explained to the community residents. The Asha team ensured that everyone used double masks and only used clean masks.

The Healthcare team made daily home visits to identify people with symptoms of covid who were immediately isolated and treated at home. The Asha team ensured that the entire team and the Corona Warriors were fully protected with proper PPE.

Asha also decided to conduct RT-PCR tests for people with symptoms of covid across all the slums in its project locations to understand the positivity rate and the extent of spread. Based on the results, the strategy for containment and controlling the spread of the virus was determined.

Along with awareness, precaution and treatment, Asha intensified the vaccination drive across the slum communities. The booster dose of the vaccine was started in January 2022 as per the Government of India guidelines for frontline healthcare workers and those above the age of 60 years. Also, vaccination for the 15-18 years age group was started.

Asha collaborated with the Delhi Government and organized vaccination camps at all the Asha centres. The entire Asha team was vaccinated with the booster dose of the vaccine. The focussed vaccination drive has resulted in more than 98% vaccination of all the residents across Asha communities.

Along with this intensive vaccination effort, Asha also provided supplements and Vitamin D injections, especially to the vulnerable, elderly and people with comorbidity to build immunity.

The regular clinics for control of Malnutrition amongst women and children were also organized at the Asha centres. Asha's multipronged strategy has been effective in controlling the spread of the virus across its communities as well as reducing the severity of the illness during the third wave.



06 News at a glance

RT- PCR Tests conducted in the slum

When the third wave hit the city, Asha started getting RT-PCR tests for a sample of the population in certain communities. So many people had colds and coughs, and the aim was to determine whether it was mostly Covid we were dealing with or just a regular cold.

Samples were collected by a private lab from Asha centres as patients couldn't go all the way to govt hospitals and stand in long lines. Reports from the private lab were made available to Asha within 24 hours.



Booster dose to Asha team and above 60 years

As per the Government of India guidelines for frontline healthcare workers and those above 60 years of age, the Asha team and older slum residents received their precautionary booster jab.



Celebration of Week of Hope

Asha celebrated the Week of Hope in the first week of February. At the time, there was a lot of discouragement and desperation around, specially among those who had lost their jobs and had no source of income to support their families. Dr Kiran made an inspirational video on "Cultivating Hope during the Pandemic". As we showed her video, their spirits were raised and they received the strength to fight their circumstances.

Here is the link to Dr Kiran's message of Hope in Hindi <https://youtu.be/sI8Xk99siyA> and in English <https://youtu.be/UNQGgEVLHVU>



07 News at a glance

Asha celebrates World Health Day

World Health Day is celebrated every year on the 7th of April to mark the anniversary of WHO's founding in 1948. The theme for the current year was: Our Planet, Our Health. The Asha family also observed the Day across its communities in a unique way, respecting the true spirit of the occasion by organizing programs in all its Asha centres in Delhi. Asha's relationship with the communities extends to more than 34 years, providing doorstep access to healthcare services to the residents. The two years of the pandemic have strengthened the relationship further. When the hospitals and healthcare care centres were under huge strain, the community residents had nowhere to go, even in an emergency. Nobody cared even for their emergency needs; Asha was the only organization that stood by them and provided healthcare services with care and compassion, saved their lives, provided them food support, took care of their emergency economic needs, and provided mental health support. In every Asha centre, the people from the slum communities felicitated the Asha Team members with garlands, gifts, and applause. Everyone thanked Dr. Kiran and the Asha team for their invaluable contribution to transforming their lives.

They showered blessings to the Asha Team through short speeches. They specifically shared their happiness and gratitude for Asha's presence in their lives through the daily Asha services such as home visits for day-to-day healthcare, nutritional care for under-five children and ANC/PNC, and health care for pregnant and lactating mothers, ration relief support for the poor and needy, counseling support, Covid-19 Emergency Response, and Vaccination. They thanked them for changing their lives through Education, Empowerment, Infrastructure development, financial Inclusion, and much more. The Women's and Children's group and the warriors organized awareness drives, rallies, and community walks in their respective communities and public spaces with posters and placards in hand. The occasion was also marked by expressing gratitude to the doctors and other officials of the Immunization Department of the Delhi Government for supporting Asha's vaccination campaign in the communities.

Fun activities and poster-making completions for the Bal Mandals were also organized on World Health Day 2022, and the children from Bal Mandal shared how they have inculcated Asha values in their lives. The Day's events in every centre ended with everyone enjoying a shared meal or refreshments, bringing lots of positivity and enthusiasm to everyone's hearts. The programme across the different Asha centres had uniqueness, diversity, and richness with drum beats, songs, and the playing of conch shells. The theme was common. "Thank You, Asha, for being a part of our existence."



08 News at a glance

Celebration of International Women's Day

International Women's Day was celebrated with great joy across Asha communities everywhere on March 8. The women belonging to Women's Associations all over Asha took this opportunity to appreciate the pivotal role of women in community development and encouraged each other for a better tomorrow.

While in some slum communities, women decided to celebrate this day with a lunch followed by songs and dancing, others invited officials from civic agencies and police departments to strengthen their relationships.

At Jeevan Nagar and Mayapuri, Police officials came to the Centre. They screened a movie based on Women's rights for the community members, and provided them with refreshments. Asha's Mahila Mandal members shared their remarkable transforming stories. The Police and Asha women worked together for their communities. Anna Nagar, Seelampur, Chanderpuri, Dr Ambedkar Basti, and Ekta Vihar celebrated this day with singing and dancing. Young Asha warriors also participated in the celebrations with great enthusiasm. Then they ate together, breaking down all caste and religious barriers. The women from Kalkaji slum colony came together to celebrate the day at a local park. They discussed women's empowerment and celebrated by singing, dancing, playing some games and having lunch together.



Workshop taken by Vitamin Angels at Mayapuri

Asha partners with a US-based organization called Vitamin Angels. They provided the team with Vitamin A for Asha children between 1 and 5 years of age. They came to Asha to do some training and also gave doses of Vitamin A for those under the care of Asha.

Thank you Vitamin Angels!



World Tuberculosis Day celebrated at Asha communities

The Asha slum communities celebrated World Tuberculosis Day (March 24) with a lot of enthusiasm, raising awareness about the disease as well as working towards the total eradication of the disease from slum communities.

The Women's and Children's Associations organised awareness drives in their communities, public places and hospitals. Asha centres across Delhi invited officials from TB DOTS (directly observed treatment, short-course) centres and hospitals as chief guests to help make the celebration notable.



09 Spotlight

Anil successfully combatted severe Covid with Asha's support

Here is the story of Anil from Dr. Ambedkar Basti. He suffered from Covid-19 during the third wave and was saved by Asha's home care covid treatment protocol.

Anil is a 33-year-old man who resides in the lanes of Dr. Ambedkar Basti slum. He has a two-room shanty, where he lives with his wife and three children. Anil was barely a teenager when he relocated to New Delhi from his village in Uttar Pradesh to help his father. He picked up odd jobs and started to earn some money to support his family financially. He soon got married and had children. He worked as a peon in a private company to earn around \$160 every month, insufficient for a large family. Moreover, he had to face many hardships during the pandemic as he lost his job, but Asha's Emergency food ration programme helped him and his family survive.



When the third wave of the covid pandemic struck the city with almost 30,000 cases per day in the peak period with a positivity rate of around 31%, Anil got infected with the virus but was saved by Asha's Home Care Covid treatment. Here is a story of his recovery in his own words.

“One day, I felt very sick with body pain, sore throat, and fever. I got myself tested and was diagnosed as covid positive. The nearby Government clinic could not provide me with any medicines as they had run out of stock. However, Asha's Healthcare team and the warriors immediately visited my house, isolated me in one room, and started my treatment. I was given paracetamol tablets along with other supplements. I was also nebulized twice a day for seven days. All my vitals, temperature, and SpO2 levels were monitored daily. I was advised to gargle with warm saline water two to three times every day, which I strictly followed. Asha's team visited my house twice a day to monitor my health and follow up on the medicines. My family was also taken care of and explained all the necessary covid appropriate behaviour and the precautions for their protection. After 15 days of treatment, my condition improved and I felt much better.

Along with the treatment, Asha also advised me on a healthy diet based on cheap protein food, milk, pulses, and such items to recover quickly. After my recovery, I was enrolled in the Laddoo and Sattoo programme- High energy, high-calorie drink that improved my health, increased my weight and made me feel energetic. After my recovery and completion of the stipulated time, Asha provided me with a second dose of the covid vaccine to complete my vaccination as per schedule.

I am grateful to the Asha team for providing me with the necessary treatment during covid and saving my life when the healthcare services were under strain, and even the Corona Helpline numbers were not responding.”



Transforming lives

At the time of emailing this Newsletter, the Covid cases in Delhi have started rising again and the positivity rate has crossed 7%. People are scared of another wave fearing their health, employment and financial condition.

The residents are in desperate need for your help. We will be most grateful for a generous donation.

£35 - will provide RT PCR Tests for 5 patients

£40 - will provide N95 Masks for 10 needy persons

£45 - will provide PPE for our 15 frontline healthcare workers

£50 - will provide a High Energy High Protein Drink for 10 malnourished women for a month

£65 - will provide a bag of groceries for 5 needy people for a month

£70 - will provide High Energy High Protein Laddoos for 10 malnourished children for a month

£185 - will provide free medicines to 100 chronic diseases patients for a month

£250 - will provide Free Lab Investigations for 25 Sick Patients

£275 - will provide Financial Assistance to 150 Asha Corona Warriors 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

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 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

3. For other ways to donate, for standing order forms and Gift Aid forms please visit our website at:
<https://asha-india.org/get-involved/donate/great-britain-donations/>