



asha



**“To care for those
who once cared
for us is one of the
highest honors.”**

Tia Walker



► An estimated 98 million elderly live in India, and the number is expected to grow to 173 million by 2026. Asha provides services to 700,000 people of whom about 35,000 are elderly. They often experience malnutrition, chronic physical and mental illnesses, joint pains and visual impairment – complicated by low health literacy, social isolation, financial constraints, and limited access to effective health care. Many have spent years in hard physical labor,

without savings or social security. Asha's Founder Dr. Kiran Martin notes: "They are constantly worried about where they will live if their homes in the slums are demolished. Elderly women are the most vulnerable. There are estrangements in family relationships, worries about repayments that are due to money lenders, worries related to unmarried or widowed daughters, and alcoholism among male members in the family."



Pushpa's story

Pushpa, 65 years old, is a resident of Asha's Chanderpuri slum colony. She is alone as her husband passed away a few years back, and she has no offspring. She lives with a distant relative. To earn her living, she works as a maid in nearby colonies. This provides her with about 50 dollars per month. Out of her paltry income, she has to pay monthly rent and meet her daily expenses. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown resulted in loss of income for Pushpa as the owners of the houses where she was working asked her not to come. Presently, Pushpa has no money and no one to support and care for her. She has diabetes and high blood pressure and requires medicine. In such dire circumstances, the only beacon of

hope in her life is Asha. The Asha team and the Community Health Volunteers regularly visit her home and take care of her. She attends Asha's Geriatric clinic at Chanderpuri where she receives free treatment and medicines for her blood sugar and blood pressure, Vitamin-D and Calcium supplements for her general health, and access to groceries and the governmental widow's pension program. Pushpa enjoys coming to the Asha center since she can meet people, talk, and be less lonely. An Asha young adult also visits her house daily to provide comfort and companionship. Pushpa is grateful for the Asha team at Chanderpuri which she sees as a critical support in the twilight years of her life.



Care at the Clinic Level

Asha's approach to prevention of health problems and management of elders' health is holistic. Staff are trained to recognize early signs of common elder health problems and to address elders' social and economic conditions that adversely affect their health. Asha's Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) visit elders' homes and accompany them to the Asha clinic, where they receive free medical check-ups. They are screened for mental and physical problems including depression, anxiety, recent falls, joint pain, and hearing and vision problems. Asha provides referrals to specialists, medicines, vitamins, glasses and hearing aids.

Diabetes and hypertension are prevalent in elders in the slums. Asha runs weekly Diabetes and Hypertension clinics for elders. They are treated free of cost, and monitored regularly. From time to time, Asha holds eye and hearing checkups across the slums and provides necessary equipment.

Asha also provides regular essential groceries, so that nutritional needs are met. These weekly geriatric clinics provide compassionate, free health care to elders to promote healthy aging.

Care at the Community Level

Elders' Daily Needs

Asha team volunteers visit elders daily in their slum houses to talk with them about their well-being, engage them in conversation, provide companionship and help them with their day-to-day activities including personal and environmental hygiene, house cleaning, shopping and other daily chores. Having the Asha telephone number to call anytime has been especially valuable during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse, particularly verbal abuse has increased during Covid-19. Asha Advocacy Groups intervene when they observe that elders are being treated unfairly or poorly by their family members. In addition to daily visits from Asha volunteers, the women's and children's groups invite the elderly community members once a month to the Asha center, where they share lunch and refreshments – a sign of love, respect, and care for the elder members of the community. The groups also contribute money from their resources to provide items which the elderly need.

Covid-19 Care

Every day Asha monitors and treats Covid-19 positive slum dwellers, many of whom are elderly and frail. For those unable to attend Asha's vaccination camps located in every slum community, volunteers visit elders in their homes to vaccinate them, and collect samples for PCR testing.

Impact for Elders living in Asha Supported Slums

- 95% receive doorstep access to healthcare services
- 70% enjoy good health compared to 60% nationally under-privileged elderly who are malnourished
- More than 90% of elderly residents receive Government social welfare benefits through Asha's support
- Elderly receive help due to the void left by children and family members having no time for them
- The most vulnerable elderly (widows without family, those destitute and sick) receive ongoing support

Give \$700 to train 10 Asha community health workers. You could fund this by making a regular monthly gift throughout the year.

Give \$280 to provide a bag of groceries for a month to 8 Elderly

Give \$140 to provide free medicines for a month to 3 Elderly

Give \$70 to fund free Lab Investigations for 2 Elderly

Give \$45 to provide clothes and a blanket for an Elderly.

Contact: Richard Leder, National Coordinator, Australian Friends of Asha for Slums Limited (AFOA)

info@australianfriendsofashaslums.org.au

To donate online go to:

www.australianfriendsofashaslums.org.au

To donate by cheque: Make a cheque payable to "Australian Friends of Asha for Slums Limited" and mail to:

Richard Leder, Australian Friends of Asha, Australia India Institute, The University of Melbourne, 147-149 Barry Street, Carlton, VIC, 3053, Australia

Charity Registration No. ACN 161 085 650

www.asha-india.org • info@asha-india.org

Asha Community Health and Development Society
Ekta Vihar, RK Puram Sector 6, New Delhi 110022, India

