

hope

News for Friends of Asha Issue 98 October 2023



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02 Director's Message

Dear Friends,

This August was very special to us as Asha turned 35! How time flies! In some ways, it doesn't seem a minute ago since we were in Delhi celebrating 30 years. Yet, in other ways, the last five years have been some of the hardest yet most rewarding we have had. Together, we battled the Covid-19 pandemic with all the crises and new interventions that entailed on the one hand; we have seen the International Higher Education Programme flourish on the other, with two very significant "firsts": Chandan, our first PhD student doing research at the University of Melbourne and Mohini, the first girl from the slums to travel abroad studying in University of Queensland in Brisbane.

These achievements are just notable highlights on top of decades of hard work by the whole Asha team. As with any milestone, you look back with gratitude and look forward with anticipation- 'Celebrating the Past and transforming the Future'.

Looking back, I am so proud that we now have 14 Asha centres serving 95 slums and over 700,000 people. We have hundreds of Bal Mandal and Mahila Mandal members who are amazing agents of change in their communities. In addition, through the hard work and dedication of the whole Asha team, we are running countless programmes that are tangibly changing lives and, as we do so, are trying to uphold values that continue to challenge and inspire us all to be better people.

We designated August to celebrate all that has been achieved so far. We decorated the centres, and had many different celebrations with dancing, cake cutting, speeches, and many other ways of celebrating. I hope you can share the joy with us from wherever you are.

I invite you to send messages of support and encouragement as a way of the global Asha family joining together in celebrating and affirming all that Asha is about. Looking forward, I am excited by the possibilities and potential I see. Whilst we have done a lot, there is still much to be done. I hope you will join me in moving Asha towards its next five years with vigour, passion, and optimism. I know you share my vision to bring hope to the poorest of the poor.

Let's together relish celebrating all that we have achieved so far and look forward to the continued transformation ahead!

Kalarti

With Regards,

Dr Kiran



03 Spotlight 1

Nikko's Journey to Motherhood: Overcoming Reproductive Health Challenges with Asha's Support

Nikko, a 23-year-old woman from Jasola Slum in Delhi, had her dreams overshadowed by societal norms. Early marriage was thrust upon her at the age of 19 in 2019, and she relocated to the Kusumpur Pahari slum, where she joined her husband and seven other family members. Nikko's journey took an unexpected turn when she became pregnant two months after the marriage, only to suffer a heartbreaking miscarriage. Following that, she went to her maternal home at Jasola since her in-laws and husband used to work as daily labourers, and no one could stay back to look after her. To add to her miseries, in the coming years, she had two more miscarriages, one in 2020 and another in late 2021. The repeated misfortunes led Nikko into a deep depression, leaving her feeling hopeless. She was brought back to her husband's home after the 3rd miscarriage.

Knowing about her condition, the members of Asha Mahila Mandal staying close to her shanty alerted Asha's Community Health Volunteer (CHV) about Nikko's plight. The Asha CHV visited Nikko and encouraged her to seek help at the Asha clinic in Kusumpur. The senior nurse practitioner referred her for advanced treatment at the Asha Polyclinic, where she underwent a series of diagnostic tests under the guidance of a specialist doctor.

The treatment brought hope to Nikko's life when she became pregnant again in December 2022. The Asha health team at the Polyclinic ensured she received timely care, ultrasounds, and medications. Additionally, the Asha CHV regularly visited her home, ensuring she followed the doctor's instructions and maintained proper nutrition, all aimed at preventing further miscarriages.

As per the Asha health team's guidance, Nikko enrolled for delivery at Safdarjung Hospital, one of Delhi's finest Government hospitals, to handle any potential emergencies during childbirth. On August 17, 2023, Nikko gave birth to a healthy baby boy weighing 2.95 kilograms. The newborn is free from neonatal complications. Nikko's journey is not without its postpartum challenges, including fluctuations in blood pressure. But she is not worried as Asha's team is always there to help her. The health team at Kusumpur Slum has initiated postnatal care for the newborn and mother.

Nikko's heart overflows with gratitude for Asha's health team for providing her with medical treatment and the emotional support she needed to navigate her arduous journey. Nikko's journey to motherhood reminds us that with the proper care and support, one can overcome even the most formidable challenges life throws our way.



04 News at a Glance



Asha Signs Memorandum Of Understanding with the University of Melbourne

28th September 2023 was a historic day at Asha as an MOU was signed between the University of Melbourne and Asha in the presence of representatives from the University of Melbourne, the Australian High Commission and Asha. The partnership aims to collaborate on academic and research activities covering master's programmes for the students of the Asha slum communities in Delhi. The University's Provost, Ms Nicola Philips and Ayesha Seymour signed the document (on behalf of Dr Kiran Martin).

The event included a trip by the delegates to Dr Ambedkar Basti, a slum community where they interacted with Asha's undergraduate students on their educational aspirations and a visit to the shanty home of one of the students. Everyone is filled with great excitement and anticipation for the collaboration to begin shortly. We thank the UOM team for spending time at Asha to understand the Asha Model and for coming forward with this great educational opportunity for the Asha students.

Dr Kiran Visits Australia

Dr Kiran and Juhi, an Asha student from the Mayapuri slum, went on a 20-day trip to Australia in mid-August. The visit included Asha's 35th Anniversary celebrations and partnership-strengthening meetings with the Chancellors, Vice Chancellors and other key officials from the University of Queensland, the University of Sydney, and the University of Melbourne, as Asha's international educational partners. Meetings were also arranged with other long-time supporters like Macquarie Global Services, the Southern Design Group, and the Friends of Asha board members. At the University of Queensland Dr Kiran was welcomed with great warmth by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Brett Lovegrove and his team, who look after international students. Dr Kiran gave a public lecture on "Urban Development: The Asha Model", attended by various faculty members, students, and folk from the business community. Juhi and Mohini, Asha's student at UQ, shared their transformation journey with a vast audience. The visits also included lunches and dinners to celebrate Asha's 35th Anniversary, organised by Peter Varghese, Chancellor-UQ, Board members of AFOA and many great supporters of Asha. Our Asha students in Australia joined Dr. Kiran in the meetings and shared their remarkable life-changing journeys with the support of Asha.

Dr Kiran had a wonderful meeting with the CEO of Macquarie Global Services- Shemara Wikramanaike. They exchanged stories, after which Juhi, an Asha student who is selected for the International Higher Education Programme, and Mohini, who is studying a Masters in Development Practice at the University of Queensland, shared their stories.

At the University of Sydney- Dr Kiran met with Vice Chancellor Mark Scott. He is a marvelous man and so very excited about the partnership between the university and Asha. Dr Kiran discussed plans to expand



05 News at a Glance

in the future. There are 3 students currently studying there and the fourth is preparing to go next year.

Dr Kiran honoured all our supporters and well-wishers with traditional Indian shawls, stoles and gifted memorabilia, aprons, and bags made by women from our slums as a mark of great respect for their remarkable support ever since they got involved with Asha. The visit was made more beautiful and memorable as our students Sunny, Sumit, and Tushar hosted a celebrity dinner for Dr Kiran with the theme 'Asha's 35th Anniversary– Celebrating the Past, Transforming the Future' where they honoured her for her motherly love for everyone at Asha. The trip saw many come forward to volunteer their time and resources to help Asha transform many more lives in the slum communities in Delhi.

Here are some more Highlights: –

- A celebratory Lunch for Asha's 35th Anniversary was held at a restaurant called Tandoori Den by Robert Johanson, Chair and Harish Rao, Board member of Australian Friends of Asha. Asha students Chandan, Tushar and Juhi were present with Dr Kiran. Chair Robert was honoured with a shawl in the Indian Tradition and thanked him and the Board for the wonderful partnership over 15 years.
- A delightful dinner was organized with Peter Varghese Chancellor UQ, his wife Margaret, past AHC Harinder Sidhu who is now HC to New Zealand. Asha's old friend Liz Peak, who began the Internship program with Chancellor Peter Varghese, was able to join which was just marvelous.
- A lovely dinner was hosted by Friends of Asha Board Member Harish Rao at his parents' home, who have been known to Dr Kiran for many years. The trustees of Rochiram Parmanand Trust who have been making generous contributions to Asha, were present, and it was a joy to see them again and thank them for their support. Dr Kiran washed the feet of Harish's father Dr Janardhan Rao who was a renowned Indian surgeon in Australia and a great supporter of Asha.
- In Adelaide, Dr Kiran along with Juhi and Tushar spoke about Asha at a firm called Southern Design Group, Asha's long time partner. Steve, Emily and Jason are on the senior leadership team. Juhi and Tushar also shared their stories wonderfully. Asha is grateful to SDG for our partnership of recent years, and we believe that together it will grow from strength to strength.
- At the University of Melbourne, Dr Kiran had the wonderful opportunity to meet Professor Jim McCluskey, Assistant Vice Chancellor at the University of Melbourne, along with Asha students Chandan, Tushar, and Juhi. Professor McCluskey arranged meetings with key senior faculty members at the University of Melbourne to facilitate entry and scholarship requirements for Asha students. What a privilege to be hosted by a person so brilliant, so humble and so compassionate. Dr Kiran honored him with a shawl in the presence of his senior colleagues.
- Dr Kiran met the Founder of Friends of Asha Australia, Hon Alex Chernov, former Governor of Victoria, his wife Elizabeth Chernov and his daughter Caroline Chernov, who is on Asha's board.



06 News at a Glance



Update on College Admissions

With the relentless effort of the Asha Education team and the student ambassadors, the Asha students got step-by-step guidance to navigate the tough grind of CUET followed by the online University admission process. Asha ensured that their college fees and other expenses were covered and also helped them acclimatise to the college environment. This year, we have been able to enrol 137 students into different prestigious universities in and around Delhi, the majority joining Delhi University. They will study various courses such as History, Political Science, Economics, Sanskrit, Commerce, Food Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and many others. The Asha team have worked tirelessly with true passion and commitment, caring for each student, and guiding them through the complicated admission process. The students are very excited about their achievement as many are the first ones from their families to attend regular college. We wish all our students a successful academic journey!



Student testimonials

"My name is Khushi; I have multiple disabilities in my upper and lower limbs. I need help with daily activities such as eating, going to the bathroom, etc. My mother, father and brother support me in everything. My brother wrote my school leaving exams, and I scored 82%. The Asha team helped me with the CUET Process. I'm so happy I've found a place in Psychology Honors at Delhi University. I chose this course because I understand behavioural difficulties due to various causes and want to help others like me. I thank Dr Kiran and the Asha team for helping me fulfil my dream to go to college".

–**Khushi, Asha Student, Nepali Camp Slum Community**



"Hello, I'm Anand. I live in Chanderpuri Slum colony. My life took an unexpected turn during the Covid lockdown when I lost my left leg in a train accident. My father, a tailor in a garment factory, spent all he had on my treatment, and we struggled to make ends meet, even for food. I was clueless about college admissions, but the Asha team and their ambassadors became my guiding light. They helped me apply online and prepared me for the CUET. With their support, I secured admission to the B.A. Program in History and Political Science. I express my sincere gratitude to Dr Kiran and the Asha team for filling hope in me and encouraging me to dream big".

–**Anand, Asha student, Chanderpuri Slum Community**

07 Visitors at different Asha slum communities



Victoria Thampi, Chair of FOA Ireland and her husband Mat spent one week at Asha in August 2023. They encouraged the women, the elderly, the young ambassadors, and the children through a host of fun-filled activities.



Mr Harish Rao, Friends of Asha Australia Board Member, a long-time supporter of many years, and his wife Monica visited Asha in August 2023. They had a lovely time spending with the community members and the young ambassadors.



Mr. P.S. Narayan the Global Head-Sustainability & ESG Wipro and Managing Trustee of Wipro Foundation, one of Asha's CSR funding partners, visited the flood-affected Yamuna Riverbed slum community and listened to the residents' survival struggles.



A team from Mazars, led by Tom Brichieri-Colombi, Partner, UK, along with his colleagues Neha Sood, Swati Agarwal, Hannah Gupta, Rachit Bhatnagar, and Priyamvada Nath visited the Mayapuri slum in September 2023. The team conducted a lively workshop, imparting valuable lessons on teamwork and collaboration through the "follow the leader" game.

08 Transforming lives

Support our cause

£50 – will provide basic health education for 1,000 slum dwellers for a month

£75 – will provide Ante Natal care for five pregnant women for a month

£150 – will provide books for one child for a year

£250 – will provide geriatric health care and Love and Lunch for five elderlies for a month

£500 – will provide medical care for ten chronic ill patients for a month

£550 – will support 30 children for their college preparation

£600 – will cover university tuition fees for one student for a year

£1000 – will cover university expenses for one student for a year

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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 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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