

hope

News for Friends of Asha | Issue 101 | Asha Turns 35: Special Edition | July 2024



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02 Tribute to the Founder at our 35th Anniversary Celebrations

Dear Friends,

Dr. Kiran, fondly known as Doctor Ji, has dedicated her career to serving the underprivileged in slums since she began her work in 1988. She chose to focus on the needs of the poor, despite facing entrenched power structures and numerous challenges within the community. Her unwavering determination and courage have defined her remarkable journey.

Dr. Kiran's visionary approach has created a globally admired Model of Excellence in Slum Development. She recognized that isolated efforts could never bring long-term solutions, so developed a holistic transformation model for slum communities.

Dr. Kiran's resilience and boldness especially shone during the pandemic, when she led her team through the crisis, saving countless lives with courage and dedication. Her non-violent approach has won over even the formidable slum mafia, transforming adversaries into collaborators.

Her leadership is marked by emotional intelligence, passion, and clarity. She writes, "The dimensions of my task are huge and multifaceted, full of complexity and contradiction. My remarkable team, marked by compassion and courage, requires my attention to their needs and aspirations. Their values will be shaped by my heart's true intentions and not just management techniques."

Under her mentorship, we feel seen, heard, and respected, functioning as a unified family aligned with Asha's vision. Her ability to connect with people from all walks of life, from slum children to heads of state, demonstrates her unparalleled compassion and love.

As a role model, Dr Kiran inspires thousands in the Asha communities. Her instillation of Asha values has created a culture of compassion, equality, and excellence. Her legacy in ethical leadership is reflected in the everyday acts of kindness and justice within the communities.

Beyond her professional achievements, Dr. Kiran is a devoted wife and mother, balancing her roles with grace. Her life in the slums, washing our feet and embracing us with love, makes her our greatest teacher and mentor.



03 The Asha Way of Life – Values that Define our Journey

Values are the heartbeat of the Asha ecosystem, infusing life and purpose into every action we take. Ten core values form the foundation upon which we operate, build our dreams and strive to create a better world. These values—Affirmation, Compassion, Dignity, Generosity, Gratitude, Joy, Positivity, Power of Touch, Non-Violence, and Simplicity—are not mere words but powerful catalysts for transformation and change, shaping the lives of everyone involved. Dr. Kiran, our Founder, has embedded these values into the very core of Asha, integrating them into every thematic expression, so fostering an environment marked by vitality and passion for her vision. These values are crucial in forging Asha’s strong relationships with the community and act as a moral compass for the team and slum residents alike. At Asha, we have not only recognized the importance of these values, but have also embraced them as a formal practice titled the Asha Way of Life. Asha team members strive to embody the principles of integrity, compassion, and dedication, envisioning a future where every individual can thrive.

In our Children’s Group, the Asha Way of Life serves as a beacon of hope and strength. Our children, often vulnerable to negative influences, find in these values a safe haven and a guiding light. Through the consistent practice of these values, we aim to nurture their development, fostering a sense of self-worth, resilience, and hope. These values act as a shield against adversity, helping them to grow into well-rounded individuals who are morally grounded. For the Women’s Group, the Mahila Mandal, the Asha Way of Life is a powerful force for unity and empowerment. These values serve as a unifying thread, weaving together diverse lives into a harmonious tapestry. Among our students, the impact of the Asha Way of Life is profound. These young minds are shaped into sensitive, compassionate, and responsible human beings. As they grow, they become role models for their communities, embodying the concept of “Paying it Forward” and inspiring others through their actions. In the broader community, the Asha Way of Life defines and strengthens relationships.

At the heart of it all, the Asha Way of Life is a testament to the power of values in creating meaningful and lasting change. It reflects our unwavering commitment to fostering a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. When young children contribute their savings to buy food for a needy widow, when Asha student ambassadors lovingly accompany an elderly to the Asha centre, when women from the Asha Mahila Mandal share food demolishing barriers of caste, creed, religion, and colour, the real impact of the Asha Way of Life is felt and understood. As these values drive the process of excellence and commitment in every Asha team member, their powerful message resonates across the communities. Through the Asha Way of Life, we are not only transforming individual lives but also building a legacy that will inspire generations to come. Together, we can create a world where these values are the cornerstone of every action, decision, and relationship, paving the way for a brighter and more inclusive future for all.



04 Spotlight 1

Slum to Scholar: Rubina's Journey of Education with Asha

Rubina's story began in the narrow alleys of Thokar No. 8, where life was a constant struggle. Her family of six lived in a one-room shanty, and her father, a daily wage laborer, barely earned enough to support them. At just ten years old, Rubina faced one of the most difficult experiences of her life when bulldozers demolished her home to make way for infrastructure for the Commonwealth Games. Left homeless, her family lived beside a road, surviving on meager meals of potatoes and tomato chutney.

Dr Kiran and the Asha team petitioned for land for the displaced families and helped them secure a plot in Savda Ghewra. With a loan arranged by Asha, they built a new home, giving Rubina the chance to rekindle her dreams and continue her education.

With a passion for learning, Rubina enrolled in the local school and, despite studying by candlelight, scored 80% in her school leaving exams. With Asha's support, she pursued a bachelor's degree in political science at Delhi University, commuting long distances and overcoming societal resistance. Incredibly, she graduated at the top of her class and went on to complete her Master's in Political Science, becoming the first female student from Asha to do so.

Currently, Rubina is completing a PhD, aiming to be the first girl from Asha to achieve this impressive milestone. Her journey from a slum to the halls of academia exemplifies the transformative power of education and Asha's unwavering support.



05 News at a Glance



Asha's class 12th toppers

The recent class 12 high school results are a testament to the dedication and hard work of Asha students. Once again, they have excelled, with eleven students scoring more than 85% and many others achieving scores between 80% and 85%. This is a remarkable accomplishment for these children.

With university admissions set to begin later in the month, Asha is committed to supporting all its students, ensuring they secure placements in Delhi University as well as other central and state universities. Asha remains steadfast in its mission to support every student from the slums, ensuring that no child is left behind.

Tripti's Journey to the University of Sydney

This quarter, we witnessed Tripti from the Vivekananda slum achieve an extraordinary milestone by enrolling at the University of Sydney for her master's in Strategic Public Relations. She was awarded the prestigious Sydney Scholars India Equity Scholarship, specifically designed for Asha slum students, which generously covers all her educational and living expenses for the duration of her course. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the University of Sydney for providing Tripti with this life-changing opportunity.



06 News at a Glance



Inauguration of the Dental Clinic and Physiotherapy Centre

In April 2024, Dr Gandhi and Dr Kiran, alongside Dr Sharmila, inaugurated our new dental clinic at the Asha Polyclinic. The event was attended by our dedicated Polyclinic Team, the HQ team, CHVs, Women's Group members from nearby slum communities, and some students. This clinic will make an enormous difference for the poor who cannot afford dental care, ensuring that the neediest patients receive urgent attention first. We are grateful to Dr. Gandhi for volunteering her time and skills and providing a vital service for those who have nowhere else to turn.

Following this, on May 30th, 2024, Asha's Physiotherapy Center was inaugurated by renowned orthopaedic surgeon, Dr Pradeep Sharma. This new center offers essential physiotherapy services to elderly patients and others suffering from various conditions, including arthritis, spinal injuries, and post-surgery rehabilitation. This initiative has already begun to provide relief to those in acute pain, combining machine treatments with compassionate care and emotional support.

Both new facilities are free of charge, catering exclusively to those who cannot afford to visit private clinics. We are thrilled to share these exciting developments and extend our heartfelt thanks to all our supporters and volunteers who made these initiatives possible.



Inauguration of the New Asha IT Centre at Vivekananda Slum Community

As part of Asha's commitment to enhancing educational opportunities, a new IT centre was inaugurated at the Vivekananda Slum Colony. Equipped with advanced laptops and high-speed internet, this center aims to support the educational development of slum residents, providing them with essential resources for learning and growth.



Australian Friends of Asha Hosted students in Melbourne

In June 2024, Friends of Asha Australia organized events, including one at RSM, the sixth-largest accountancy professional services network in the world, and at Wotton Kearney, Australasia's leading specialist insurance and risk law firm. These events were attended by Asha international students, Chandan, Tushar, Juhi, Mohini, Sumit and Sunny, studying at various universities in Australia, including the University of Melbourne, the University of Sydney, and the University of Queensland, who shared their journeys and the challenges they faced along the way.

During their time in Melbourne, the students enjoyed their first classical concert, featuring a Tchaikovsky symphony performed by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. They also experienced the excitement of an AFL match between Richmond and Hawthorn at the MCG.

Huge thanks goes to Robert Johanson, Chair of Friends of Asha Australia, and Richard Leder, Board Member, for making the events successful and creating lasting memories for the Asha students.

07 Spotlight 2

Finding Family in Asha: Shyam's Journey of Hope and Healing

Shyam, a 62-year-old resident of the Mayapuri slum community for the past 40 years, moved to Delhi with her husband shortly after their marriage. Her husband found work as a laborer in a nearby factory, earning minimal wages. Over the years, the couple had three children: two daughters and a son. All of their children were vaccinated at the Asha center. With whatever savings they had, Shyam and her husband married off their children. However, after marriage, the children distanced themselves, choosing to focus on their own families and neglecting their ageing parents.

Shyam regularly visited the Asha center for her diabetes and hypertension medicines. During one of the visits at Asha centre, Shyam shared that she was experiencing white discharge despite being post-menopausal. Vidya suggested she should visit the Asha center to consult Senior Nurse Practitioner, Shiny. Shiny provided her with medications and referred her to a government hospital, where she was diagnosed with first stage cervical cancer.

Heartbroken and facing community discrimination, Shyam found hope and support from the Asha family, where she gets a grocery bag every week to take care of her need for a nutritious and balanced diet. In an incredible act of generosity, the children of Bal Mandal pooled their savings to buy fruit, eggs, and daily necessities for her. They also helped with chores, creating a loving environment that lifted Shyam's spirit and reminded her that she was not alone.

The Asha team also included her in the Geriatric "Love and Lunch" program. Since then, Shyam has found new hope, courage, and strength to battle her disease. She enjoys freshly prepared, healthy lunches served by the Asha team with love and compassion and cherishes the company of other elderly community members, which acts as a tonic for her.

She often says, "My children may have abandoned me, but in Asha, I have found a family who has made me look forward to life with renewed vigour and joy. If Vidya and Shiny hadn't intervened, I might never have known about my disease and would not have been able to get the treatment I needed. I know now that I am not alone. I am grateful and feel blessed to have such a wonderful Asha family who stand by me in this tough period."



08 Transforming lives

Support our cause

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

£75 – will provide Antenatal 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 elderly for a month

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

£550 – will support 30 high school students 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**
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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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