

hope

News for Friends of Asha Issue 102 | October 2024



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02 Director's Message: Overcoming the Challenges of Higher Education & University Entrance Exams

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on the challenges our students face in their courageous pursuit of education, I am both humbled and inspired. Life in the slums is a constant test of endurance. These young individuals grow up in cramped shanties, their homes barely large enough to house their families, let alone provide a quiet place to study. Yet, amidst the noise and chaos, their determination burns fiercely, lighting the way toward a brighter future.

For many young students, especially girls, education is not an expectation but a hard-fought battle. These girls are often weighed down by societal norms, shouldering household responsibilities from a young age like cooking and cleaning, and caring for younger siblings. The hours these students dedicate to supporting their families come at the cost of their own educational aspirations. Their tenacity, in the face of such overwhelming odds, leaves me in awe every day.

Their journey to take crucial exams like the CUET is not just a test of knowledge, it is a profound demonstration of endurance, patience, and sheer willpower. Rising before dawn, they begin arduous journeys that sometimes stretch over 20 miles, navigating overcrowded buses in the sweltering heat, often enduring temperatures as high as 45°C.

By the time they reach their exam centres, several hours have passed. Yet, they persist. Every step of the way, Asha ambassadors and team members stand with them—escorting them safely to their destinations, waiting patiently outside, and ensuring they return home. This quiet, unwavering solidarity is the heart of our community, a testament to the shared belief that no one should have to walk this path alone.

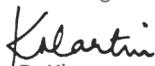
When these students return to the Asha centres, they find more than just a place to study—they find a sanctuary. Our centres provide more than academic resources like IT facilities and coaching; they offer warmth, love, and most importantly, hope. It is within these walls that they gain the strength to keep going, fuelled by the support of their peers and mentors, knowing that they are part of something bigger than themselves.

Every day, I am reminded that our work at Asha is about more than just providing education. We are nurturing dreams that have the power to change lives and uplift entire communities. It is a privilege to walk alongside these students, witnessing their courage and resilience.

As we approach the university admissions season, we are confronting unprecedented challenges. University fees have nearly doubled this year, and many of our students are pursuing professional and allied science courses that come with even higher costs. Asha has already begun paying fees to secure seats for these deserving students, but the need for financial support has never been greater. We cannot allow financial barriers to stand in the way of any deserving student's dreams. Education has the transformative power to reshape lives, families, and entire communities. Your unwavering support ensures that no dream goes unfulfilled. In standing with us, you are making it possible for them to dream, to hope, and to create a world brighter than any of us could ever imagine.

The Asha Way of Life, rooted in integrity, compassion, and gratitude, continues to be the cornerstone of our collective efforts and practiced across all groups—children, women, students, and the wider community. These values nurture personal growth and inspire collective change, building a compassionate, inclusive community.

With Regards


Dr Kiran



03 Stories of Determination: Students Securing University Admissions



Vishakha

Vishakha, from the Vivekananda slum community, has achieved a remarkable milestone by securing admission to the prestigious History Honors program at Delhi University. Her family's financial struggles, with her father unable to work due to a spine condition and her brother being the sole breadwinner, made this journey challenging. With Asha's support and her dedication, Vishakha's hard work has paid off. "This opportunity means everything to me," she shares, grateful for the chance to pursue her dreams despite the obstacles.



Sujal

Sujal, from Seelampur slum, has overcome significant hurdles, including 40% vision in one eye and financial difficulties. With his father unable to work and his mother supporting the family as a domestic helper, Sujal's dedication to his studies never wavered. His hard work has earned him a place at Delhi University to study History and Office Management, highlighting his determination and perseverance.



Asif

From the Zakhira slum community, Asif faced immense challenges, including a year of illness that kept him bedridden and caused him to miss a year of school. Reflecting on his journey, Asif shares, "I remember being in 9th grade, bedridden for 3-4 months, which set me back in my studies. But with Asha's support, I have overcome these obstacles and am now pursuing Hons in Russian Language at Delhi University. My story is one of resilience, and I am grateful for every step forward."



Ritika

Ritika, from Dr Ambedkar Basti slum, comes from a large family with significant financial constraints. Her father cleans cars and her mother works part-time as a domestic helper. Ritika's hard work earned her a place in the Economics program at Delhi University.

04 Stories of Determination: Students Securing University Admissions



Megha

Megha from the Tigri slum community is on a new path to a brighter future, thanks to Asha's support. Despite feeling discouraged by her father's drinking habits and her mother's exhausting work as a housemaid, Megha has been empowered to pursue a course in Medical Laboratory Technology.

In her own words, "With Asha's help, I've found the strength to follow my dreams. My family's struggles made me doubt my future, but now, I'm excited about the opportunities ahead. This support is changing my life and giving me hope for a stable career."



Iqra

Iqra from Chanderpuri slum community has overcome tremendous challenges, including a locomotor disability and her father's illness that took away their main source of income. Despite a year-long break from her education, she remained determined and focused. Now, Iqra is thrilled to share that she has been accepted into Delhi University to study History and Political Science.

Reflecting on her journey, Iqra says, "The path has been tough, but I never lost hope. I am grateful for the support that Asha family gave. My dream of studying at Delhi University is now a reality, and I'm excited to embark on this new chapter in my life."



Sachin

Sachin, from the Mayapuri slum community, has been part of the Asha family since birth. Asha supported his mother during her prenatal period, and his older sister is now pursuing a bachelor's in commerce at Delhi University.

Despite his father's modest income from selling clothes on a bicycle, Sachin has just been accepted into the Political Science Honors program at Delhi University.

Sachin shares, "Asha has been a guiding light in my life. From the support my family received to the opportunities I have been given, I'm grateful for every step of this journey. I hope to use my education to make a difference and help others like me."

05 News at a Glance



Inauguration of New IT Centres at Ekta Vihar & Peeragarhi

In a groundbreaking move to enhance educational access, Asha has opened two new IT centres in the Peeragarhi and Ekta Vihar slum communities. These centres represent a significant step forward in providing advanced technological resources to under-served areas.

The newly inaugurated centres are equipped with state-of-the-art laptops and high-speed internet, offering a range of benefits to local students and young adults. School and college students will have access to essential digital tools for their academic work, while young adults can develop valuable job-oriented skills through various training programs.

The opening ceremony was graced by Asha's Associate Director, Mr. Godfrey Martin, who emphasized the transformative potential of these facilities. The event also featured inspiring testimonials from students and ambassadors, who highlighted the crucial role these centres will play in their educational and professional journeys.



Launch of Asha Yuva Mandal Group

We are thrilled to announce the launch of Asha Yuva Mandal, a youth group for ages 11-18 across our communities. The initiative focuses on academics, IT education, community work, and nurturing interest in science and other subjects. This program will empower youth, fostering a sense of purpose and community involvement.

06 News at a Glance



Gratitude to Our Internship Partners

We are incredibly grateful to our internship partners, New Zealand High Commission, F1f, and Mazars, for providing invaluable opportunities for young talent from the Asha slums. With guidance from dedicated professionals, Asha students have enhanced their communication and analytical skills, gaining vital insights into the corporate world and boosting their confidence. Thanks to our supporters, the number of internship opportunities for our students continues to grow each year!



Asha Speaks at the Wipro Office

On 25th September 2024, Asha had the honour of being invited to speak at Wipro office in Gurugram, highlighting our impactful work and the strong, long-standing partnership we share. Wipro's support has been instrumental in advancing maternal and newborn health, child healthcare, and community empowerment in Asha communities.

At the event, one of Asha's dedicated Community Health Volunteers proudly represented the voice of the community through a presentation, showcasing the transformative impacts.

Asha is privileged to be a partner of Wipro Foundation, the CSR arm of Wipro—an Indian multinational leader in IT, consulting, and business process services.

We deeply appreciate this continued collaboration, working together to uplift communities and create lasting change.

07 Visitors at Asha



Mercer University Nursing Students Visits Asha Slum Centre: Engaging with the Community

In August, Asha welcomed a team of 16 nursing students from the College of Nursing, Mercer University, USA. Led by senior nurse tutor Stephanie, the team observed clinics for antenatal care, hypertension, respiratory diseases, and more. They also provided nutrition and health counselling while engaging with women's and children's groups, and university students.



Chairman of Australian Friends of Asha, Robert Johanson, Visits Dr. Ambedkar Slum Community

On September 19, 2024, Robert Johanson, Chairman of the Australian Friends of Asha (AFOA), visited the Asha Centre in the Dr. Ambedkar Slum Community. The day began with a warm reception where Asha's university students shared their inspiring personal journeys, highlighting the challenges they faced while growing up in Delhi's slums and how Asha's support was pivotal in their success. In a heartfelt gesture of gratitude, the students tied a gratitude thread around Robert's wrist, symbolizing their appreciation for his unwavering support. The program also included the beloved "Love and Lunch" initiative, allowing Robert to connect with the elderly members of the community. He concluded his visit by expressing encouragement and reinforcing the enduring partnership between AFOA and Asha.



Macquarie Group Foundation Visits Asha Head Office

On 27th September, Asha had the pleasure of hosting Ms. Lisa George, Executive Director – Global Head, Macquarie Group Foundation, Jasmine Chew, Regional Head Asia, Macquarie Group Foundation, and Ruchika, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager from Macquarie Global Services at the Asha Head Office. The team received updates on the Macquarie Higher Education project, which supports students in accessing higher education and professional programs. They also interacted with Asha's education team, discussing ground-level challenges and solutions. The visit concluded with a fruitful conversation with a new batch of college students.

We thank the Macquarie team for their visit and their continued support in transforming disadvantaged communities and strengthening our partnership with Asha.

08 Transforming lives

Support our cause

£1,200 – Covers one year of all university expenses, including tuition, books, stationery etc

£900 – Covers one year of expenses for allied health course for one student

£700 – Covers one year of university tuition fees for one student

£400 – Provides one year of clothes and transport for one student

£150 – Provides one year of books for one student

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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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36 Combe Street Lane
Yeovil, Somerset BA21 3PE, UK