

hope

News for Friends of Asha Issue 103 | January 2025



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Asha wishes all its friends and supporters a

Happy New Year

2025

02 Director's Message

Dear Friends,

As 2024 comes to a close, I am filled with gratitude for a year of remarkable milestones. This February, we celebrated 35 years of transforming lives in Delhi's slums with a week-long event, "Celebrating the Past, Transforming the Future." Joined by our global Asha family, women's groups, CHVs, students, and alumnae, it was a profound reminder of how far we've come—and of the journey ahead.

This year, we made significant strides in healthcare. In April, a new dental clinic opened at the Asha Polyclinic, thanks to Dr Gandhi's selfless service. In May, we inaugurated Asha's Physiotherapy Centre, offering free care to the elderly and those with arthritis or spinal injuries. These initiatives reflect our steadfast commitment to ensuring accessible healthcare for all.

We are proud to share that 234 students have successfully gained admission to universities, including those in allied healthcare, vocational courses, and open learning, through our Higher Education Program. Globally, Tushar began his PhD at the University of Melbourne, while Juhi, Tripti, and Fazia embarked on master's programs at the University of Sydney. Mohini, Sumit, and Sunny completed their degrees in Australia and are ready to create change in their communities. This year also marked a new milestone: a Scholarship Agreement with the University of Melbourne, enabling students to pursue master's programs starting in 2025.

Asha graduates Madhu and Surabhi represented us on a UK trip, and Education Officer Shiv joined me on a visit to Australia.

On a personal note, I was honored to receive the Best Humanitarian Excellence Award from FICCI and an Honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Melbourne—recognitions I dedicate to the entire Asha family.

Guided by the "Asha Way of Life," we continue to embrace values like love, compassion, and optimism. Together, we are building a brighter, more equitable world.

To the global family — I am profoundly grateful for your steadfast love, dedication, and belief in our mission. Your relentless support is transforming lives every single day. Together, we are not just creating a better world; we are building a brighter, more compassionate future for all.

Wishing you a joyous and fulfilling 2025, filled with love, peace, and endless possibility.

With heartfelt appreciation,



Dr Kiran



03 Spotlight

19-year-old Aliya's life has been marked by a series of challenges that began at a very young age. At just three years old, her parents divorced, and she was left in the care of her grandmother, Rihana in Chanderpuri slum community. The pain of separation shaped Aliya's childhood, leaving her emotionally scarred.

Her mother remarried, but the relationship proved unstable, and her stepfather did not accept Aliya. The second marriage ended in separation, adding to Aliya's growing sense of abandonment. As she grew older, she faced bullying and taunts from children in her community, isolating her further and causing her to become timid and withdrawn. Struggling with depression, anxiety, and trauma, Aliya discontinued her studies, unable to cope with the emotional toll.

One day, during a routine community visit, the Asha team came across Rihana and Aliya. They learned about their difficult situation—living alone and facing many hardships without anyone to support them. Seeing the desperate need for help, Asha immediately stepped in, providing regular support with monthly rations and enrolling Rihana in Asha's Love & Lunch feeding program. The members of the Women's group and Children's group showered them with kindness, offering both emotional and material support.

When Rihana shared her wish to arrange Aliya's wedding, the Asha family came together to make it happen. Mahila Mandal members, young ambassadors, and the Asha team pooled their resources and efforts to organise the marriage. They collected funds, arranged gifts, prepared food, and managed logistics, ensuring everything was in place for the special day.

Tragically, Rihana passed away less than two weeks before Aliya's wedding. It was a devastating loss for Aliya, but the Asha community stepped up as her extended family. They provided support, standing by her side to ensure the wedding proceeded smoothly. Their love and care allowed Aliya to feel her grandmother's presence through their heartfelt efforts.



04 News at a Glance



Dr. Kiran's Prestigious Recognition: Honoring a Legacy of Service and Social Change

In November 2024, Dr. Kiran received the prestigious Humanitarian Excellence in Healthcare Award from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). This honour recognized her remarkable contributions to healthcare and her unwavering commitment to improving lives. Dr. Kiran graciously dedicated the award to the Asha healthcare team, acknowledging their tireless and transformative work in bringing life-changing impact to underserved communities.

On December 15, 2024, Dr. Kiran was further celebrated with an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Melbourne. This rare and distinguished recognition, only one before given to an Indian national, highlighted her profound dedication to driving social change and inspiring generations.



University Admissions Update

With the efforts of the Asha Education Team 234 students have successfully gained admission to universities, including those in allied healthcare, vocational courses, and open learning, through our Higher Education Program.

This achievement represents a significant milestone, as many of these students are the first in their families to pursue higher education.

Asha's Family and Healthcare Initiatives

Dr Kiran's daughter, Dr Madhuri Martin, an Internal Medicine specialist from Boston, alongside Dr Prerana Roth, a Consultant in Infectious Diseases, spent 10 days in Asha slums. Their time at Asha was marked by clinical work and vital training for our health teams, leaving an enduring impact on both the patients and the healthcare professionals at Asha.

05 News at a Glance

Asha's Associate Director Visits the UK with Two Asha Graduates

In November 2024, Asha's Associate Director, Mr. Godfrey Martin, embarked on an inspiring month-long journey across the United Kingdom, accompanied by two remarkable Asha graduates, Madhu and Surabhi. Together, they shared compelling stories of transformation, highlighting the profound impact of Asha's initiatives on individuals and communities.



The visit was made truly special by the unwavering support of Friends of Asha across Great Britain. Warm gratitude is extended to all those who graciously hosted Mr. Martin and the students in their homes and organized engaging events to celebrate Asha's mission. Your hospitality and commitment have been instrumental in strengthening the bonds of this enduring partnership and inspiring collective action for change.

Forging Connections Down Under: Dr. Kiran's Inspiring Visit to Australia

In December 2024, Dr. Kiran embarked on an important journey to Australia, connecting with Asha supporters in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane. Her visit included inspiring events organized by Australian Friends of Asha and esteemed institutions such as the University of Sydney, the University of Queensland, and the University of Melbourne.

Dr. Kiran was joined by Shiv, a former Asha student and now a passionate Education Officer at Asha, who represented the aspirations of thousands of students striving for a brighter future. Adding to the impact of the visit, several Asha graduates currently studying in Australian universities—Chandan, Tushar, Sumit, Sunny, Tripti, Juhi, and Fazia—shared their inspiring stories of resilience and success.

In Sydney, Dr Kiran had a productive meeting with Shemara Wikramanayake, CEO of Macquarie Global Services, where Asha's students, including Sunny, shared their inspiring journeys. Shiv also highlighted the challenges faced by slum communities in accessing higher education.

Warm gratitude goes to the Australian Friends of Asha for their unwavering support and commitment to fostering hope and opportunity.



06 News at a Glance



Three Asha Students Achieve Historic Graduations from Australian Universities

Sunny, Sumit, and Mohini, three remarkable students from Delhi's Asha slums, have shattered barriers by graduating from world-renowned Australian universities. Sunny earned a Master's in Strategic Public Relations, and Sumit completed his Master's in International Relations, both at the University of Sydney. Meanwhile, Mohini made

history as the first girl from the Asha slums to graduate from the University of Queensland, earning a Master's in Development Practices. Alongside their academic achievements, they gained invaluable professional experience through internships, further preparing them for successful careers ahead.

Their journeys, from underprivileged communities where such dreams seemed impossible, are a testament to their extraordinary determination and the transformative support of Asha. By overcoming immense challenges, they have become powerful symbols of hope, inspiring countless students in the slums to dream big and strive for a better future. These trailblazers have proven that with hard work, an enabling environment, and the right support, no dream is beyond reach.



Graduates Meet New Zealand High Commissioner

Asha graduates had the unique opportunity to meet His Excellency Patrick Rata, the New Zealand High Commissioner in New Delhi. The meeting was a celebration of their academic journeys and achievements, symbolizing their resilience and determination. We extend our gratitude to HE Patrick Rata for his continued support and partnership with Asha.

Fazia's Journey to the University of Sydney

One of the most inspiring stories of the quarter is that of Fazia from Seelampur slum, who has enrolled in the University of Sydney's Master's in Strategic Public Relations program. Awarded the prestigious Sydney Scholars India Equity Scholarship, Fazia's education and living expenses are fully covered for the duration of her studies. This life-changing opportunity was made possible by the University of Sydney, and we are deeply grateful for their continued support.



07 Visitors at Asha



Methodist College Belfast's Inspiring Week in Kalkaji

In October 2024, a dedicated team of 21 students and teachers from Methodist College, Belfast, spent a life-changing week volunteering in the Kalkaji slum community. Their visit was marked by dynamic educational activities that ignited a passion for learning among children and youth, leaving a lasting impact on the community.

Accompanying the team was Dr Catherine Patterson, a critical care expert, who led several invaluable CPR training sessions for Asha's health team and ambassadors. Her efforts ensured that these essential life-saving skills would be disseminated throughout the slum communities, enhancing the health and safety of countless residents.

Fostering Connections: Dunclug College Spends Week at Asha Kusumpur Pahari Centre

In October 2024, students from Dunclug College, Northern Ireland, led by Ms. Valerie Alexander, spent an inspiring week at the Asha Kusumpur Pahari Centre. They engaged with elderly, students, and community members, sharing meaningful interactions and cross-cultural experiences.

A heartfelt thank you to Dunclug College for their generosity in donating four laptops to the Asha IT centre at Zakhira Slum Community. This contribution has created invaluable learning opportunities for students.



Empowering Voices: Filmmaking and Communication Workshops

In November 2024, a team led by Caroline Chernov visited various Asha slum communities to conduct engaging workshops on filmmaking and communication. The sessions, led by Cam Mathewson, a Melbourne-based filmmaker, cinematographer, photographer, and educator, were lively and insightful. They offered students a deeper understanding of creating short films for social media, media production, and effective communication.

Through this hands-on experience, students gained valuable skills that empowered them to express themselves creatively and share their stories with a broader audience. The workshops culminated in the Ashawood Film Festival, where participants showcased their work, celebrating their newfound talents and creative voices.

08 Transforming lives

Support our cause

£1500 – Covers one year of all university expenses, including tuition, books, stationery etc

£1500 – Covers one year of expenses for an 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

£ 200– Covers running & maintenance of one IT Lab in a slum for one month

£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:

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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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