

Asha is a community health and development society dedicated to improving the lives of slum dwellers in Delhi

Asha High School Students Triumph in Final Exams!

The results of the final year high school exams that are necessary for college entrance have just been released. Once again, the children of Asha slums have surpassed all expectations and triumphed in the face of adversity. This year, 513 students passed their exams, compared to 240 last year. Incredibly, **8 students have scored more than 80%**, a remarkable result considering that last year, no student had a percentage higher than 80%. **46 students scored between 70 and 80%** compared to 19 in 2010. We would like to pay tribute to these children and the magnitude of their achievement. Asha is so proud of their success, as we're sure you all are. We would like to share the stories of a few of them with you.

Neha is one of 5 sisters. Her father works making tea in a canteen, earning only \$25/£15 per week. Her mother was very supportive of her and encouraged her to study as much as possible. Neha took these words very seriously and worked extremely hard. She learned English by listening to passers-by on the street and practiced by speaking to herself in front of the mirror. Asha gave her practice tests to prepare for her exams. When Neha's exam results came out, they reflected her incredible talent and hard work. She was the overall Asha topper, scoring **89%**. She also scored the highest marks in 3 individual subjects with **94% in Business Studies, 96% in Accountancy** and an astounding **99% in Maths!** Asha will support her in getting into the best possible college of Delhi University. Neha hopes to join the banking sector after college and eventually reach a high position. But she says her most important goal is to help her family.



Dr Martin celebrates the exam results with the highest achieving students



Lakshmi by the open drain next to her home in the slum

"Asha is like my mother and father. Just in the way parents look after their children, Asha has looked after me," – Lakshmi, Peera Garhi

Lakshmi is from a very poor family in Peera Garhi. In her community, girls traditionally don't study past the age of 14. Many relatives and community members tried to pressure her parents to get her married but Lakshmi really wanted to study. When she was studying for her exams, her mother became ill with cancer. Lakshmi had to take over her mother's sewing work so that the family could have enough to eat. She says that if Asha doesn't help with her higher education expenses there will be no way the family will be able to afford to send her to college. Lakshmi says, "I want to become a police officer so I can make my parents proud, Asha proud and my country proud."

Nisaar from Kalkaji slum says that Asha has had a great effect on his beliefs and his passion for Political Science. From discussions of social issues in the Asha youth group, Nisaar came to believe that many social interventions were incomplete; they only addressed certain groups and concerns, completely ignoring others. His experience with Asha has taught him that all people deserve their human rights and that the way to achieve this is through a unified community. For this reason Nisaar wants to become an activist raising community awareness. We are sure that he will achieve great things. He scored an amazing overall **83%**, and **95% in Hindi and Political Science!**

"If I hadn't come to Asha, I would be an illiterate delinquent, roaming the streets of Delhi. Whatever I am today is because of Asha. I have blossomed as a human being and my life is flourishing as I realise my potential," – Dilip, Ekta Vihar

Pooja comes from Zakhira, one of Delhi's poorest and most deprived slums. Her father, an electrician, earns less than \$5/£3 a day. There is a railway line on one side of her slum and a metro line roaring overhead on the other. Many children in Zakhira are forced to work instead of going to school. But Pooja always wanted to study. She has been an active member of the Asha children's group for many years. At Asha she learned how to use a computer and took English classes. She got a lot of encouragement from 4 girls from Zakhira who gained admission to college last year. She attended workshops on stress management and learning methods and received all the textbooks she needed for her exams. Pooja has never been inside a library. But she scored a fantastic **81%** in her exams and had the highest mark in **Economics with 92%**.



Pooja and her family outside their home the day the exam results were released

Kiran's Letter

Dear Friends,

After much thought and prayer, I would like to speak to you all about Asha's current financial difficulties, an issue which has been troubling me greatly in the last few months. Asha has always enjoyed a frank and open relationship with all our supporters, and in speaking with some of you recently, I have realised that it is the right thing to do to share with all of you the difficulties that we are going through at the moment.

Everyone is aware that the global economic crisis has affected and continues to impact world governments, international agencies, small organisations and individuals. Budgets everywhere are being slashed and jobs lost. We all know that we have to tighten our belts and be prepared to make sacrifices, but in some cases the reduction in funding resources has decimated programmes that benefit those who need them most.

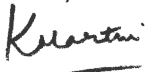
The effects of the financial recession have directly and catastrophically hit Asha in the last few months. Our largest donor, ICCO (Netherlands), as a result of sudden and large cutbacks to its own budget, has decided to cease funding to Asha with immediate effect. This is a loss of a significant percentage of our budget and will cost Asha around €220,000 annually. This has obviously come as an enormous blow to us because of the immense negative effect it is going to have on activities in many slums. If we do not find replacement funding, we will have to close these projects.

It grieves me to no end that we may have to stop working in slums that have shown such great improvement since Asha arrived. Lives have literally been transformed and dreams have been fulfilled. The people of these communities are relying on the services they get from Asha and I do not want to let them down. These people have the chance to turn their lives around but without an opportunity, they have no one else to turn to.

In opening up about Asha's present need, my hope is that replacement funding can be found through the generosity of existing supporters who will understand what we are going through. I am asking you to help in whatever ways you can. Please consider becoming an Asha Hope Giver, one of our monthly donors. Monthly giving is very helpful from Asha's point of view because it gives us an idea of our expected income. We are enclosing the form with the details of how to sign up to become a Hope Giver or you can go to www.asha-india.org/get-involved/donate.

Whatever may be our situation, we will continue to hope and believe in the goodness and trustfulness of God in the circumstances that have come to us completely unseen and unexpected. I express my deep gratitude to you for your support and I invite you to stand with us in solidarity around our shared vision, values and goals in transforming the lives of the poor in Delhi's slums.

With my warmest wishes,



Dr Kiran Martin
Founder and Director

Asha's Health Statistics Show Remarkable Fall in Infant and Child Mortality Rates!



A community health volunteer monitors the weight of an infant

The 2010-2011 Asha Health Statistics are in and they show incredible progress in the overall health of residents in the slums. Inhabitants of Asha slums display key health indicators comparable to those in the wealthiest sections of society. We would like to share with our supporters some of these highly significant numbers. These Asha statistics are compared to national figures from the Indian Government's National Health Survey.

The most remarkable statistics are in infant and child health. **The infant mortality rate at Asha has been reduced to only 14.** This means that children born in Asha slums are **3.5 times less likely to die in their first year of life than the average baby born in India**, which has a national average of 50 deaths for every 1,000 live births! The greater chances of surviving infancy reflect the many developmental improvements including those in child nutrition, health services and awareness, female empowerment, water and sanitation, and especially improved socio-economic status, that are a result of Asha's activities.

The under-five mortality rate is also a hugely important indicator in child health and overall development as well as a leading indicator of the Millennium Development Goals. This year, **Asha's under-five mortality rate was only 17.8** per 1,000 births, compared to 28.2 at Asha last year and 112 overall among India's urban poor.

Asha is one of the rare urban development programmes that has been able to demonstrate these type of reductions in mortality rates among newborns and children in urban slums. This success is a result of our holistic approach and the comprehensive nature of our interventions among the urban poor.

Ensuring that children are immunised against common preventable diseases is a huge part of Asha's child healthcare programme. This year, **95% of children in Asha slums were immunised against 10 preventable diseases** according to WHO recommendations, compared to 54% nationwide. This contributed to **only 8.5%** of children under 5 being unhealthy for their age compared to a nationwide average of 80% of slum children who are malnourished.

At Asha, healthcare for children begins before they are even born. Asha staff and Community Health Volunteers identify pregnant women in the slum and refer them for maternal healthcare services. As a result of this, **98% of mothers receive antenatal care** and have skilled attendance during labour and delivery. Nationally, less than 50% of mothers have skilled care from a hospital or trained midwife during delivery.

Tuberculosis is still one of the major killers in India, with 1,000 people dying of the disease every day. When Asha first began working in the slums, deaths from TB were very common. But thanks to Asha's TB treatment programme, the disease is no longer a killer in our slums. In the past year, **267 people were cured of TB** at Asha.

We congratulate all the Asha team members for all their incredible hard work which has brought about these remarkable results.

Visit the Asha website at: www.asha-india.org

Prema: From Dead-end to Opportunity – The Story of a CHV

Lost dreams of education

When Prema was a child, it was clear that she was unusually bright. Defying the community trend in which girls drop out of school by their early teens, she excelled in academics and was able to finish high school. She should have gone on to higher education and a career but because she grew up in a small village in rural Uttar Pradesh, none of these options were open to her. She had no choice but to accept her parents' decision to get her married. She had succeeded at school but was still trapped in following the same path of generations of village girls before her.

Prema's husband was an uneducated farm labourer. As a young wife, she looked at their situation and could see no possibilities in the village of a better life. So, with thoughts of job and education opportunities, she convinced her husband to come to Delhi. They ended up in Mayapuri, one of the city's poorest slums. While her husband earned a poor living from a tea stall, Prema raised their 4 children in a one room home amidst unhygienic conditions and wondered if coming to Delhi had been a terrible mistake.

Then 12 years ago, Asha started working in Mayapuri. The Asha staff saw potential in the shy, defeated-looking woman hiding behind her veil. They asked Prema to train as a Community Health Volunteer. As she gained skills and responsibilities, her self-confidence improved. Her spark and ambition for her family's happiness returned as she experienced the satisfaction of making a difference to her community and the lives of her neighbours. Today she is responsible for the welfare of 300 families. Finally, her dreams for her family are also being realised as her eldest son is studying to be a lab technician and her daughter is in high school and plans to attend college.

Saving lives in her community

A few months ago Prema came across a particular family on one of her regular visits. Kiran, her husband and their 4 children live in a tiny cramped room made of mud and plastic sheets. The inside of the house has hardly any protection from severe weather conditions and leaks water when it rains. There is no room for a bed and the whole family sleeps on the floor.

Prema could see that the youngest child, two-year-old Krishna, was severely malnourished. His eyes were deeply sunken, his skin was very pale and he had a poor appetite. Prema asked Kiran to bring the child to the Asha clinic as soon as possible, but Kiran was overwhelmed with work and did not realise the severity of the problem. She did not bring Krishna to the clinic until personally escorted by Prema. The doctor's examination found Krishna to be grossly underweight and largely unvaccinated. The child was immediately referred to the Asha Polyclinic for tests and further treatment.

Prema brought the family's situation to the attention of the slum women's association. They started providing supplementary nutrition to Krishna with Prema carefully monitoring his health. 6 months later, Krishna has gained weight and is much more active and cheerful.

This was an eye opening experience for the child's parents as they realised that they could have lost their child out of ignorance. They are grateful to the women's association for their timely intervention and support, but most of all they are thankful for Prema. As a result of her counselling and advice, Kiran has felt empowered enough to join the women's group, so she can educate herself and spread awareness to others in the community.



Prema's intervention saved the life of Kiran's son Krishna

Leaving a Legacy to Asha

Gwen's Testimonial

When I am gone, my legacy gift to Asha will continue to change lives.

Although I have not got much worldly wealth by Western standards, when I die it will be worth a lot more and I want to ensure that my money continues to work when I have gone to be with my Saviour. Whatever I leave will be of benefit to people who have never had the blessings and privileges I have known. It is reassuring to know that the charities and causes that have been a passion for me in life will benefit even more when I move on.

When my Mum died recently I was surprised she had not left any legacy to her favourite charity that she had supported down the years. Don't leave it too late to consider the charities and causes that are dear to your heart and be sure to include them in your will.

Gwen Montgomery - Asha Supporter, Ireland



If you are reading this you probably are a supporter of Asha's work, giving monthly, through occasional gifts or fundraising and spreading the good news of Asha's work. Leaving a legacy as Gwen is doing is another way of giving which we would like to sensitively lay on the hearts of those who already contribute to transforming the lives of Delhi's slum dwellers. By leaving a gift to Asha in your will, you can ensure that the support you have offered our work in life will continue to benefit countless others after your death. If you feel this is something you would like to explore, we would encourage you to contact your Friends of Asha Coordinator or email us directly, and we will advise you on how to go about including us in your will. Thank you.

Impressions of Asha

At Asha we are privileged to have friends and supporters from all over the world. We feel so grateful to all those who have pledged their support to Asha in many different ways. A few of them share their thoughts on Asha here.



Mr P. Chidambaram, Hon'ble Home Minister of India, presenting educational scholarships to Asha students

In the time that I have been here in Delhi, I have been not just impressed by the work of Asha, but inspired by what it is doing and even more so by what it intends to do. There are many aspects to the Asha story. It's a story about commitment, about tenacity, about vision, but most of all it's a story about transformation and the transformative power of education. For me the significance of Asha's work is that it lies at the intersection of public policy and personal responsibility.

HE Mr Peter Varghese, Australian High Commission to India

(Excerpt from a speech made at our 'Celebration of Learning 2010,' November 15, 2010 at India Habitat Centre)

At Asha I met community health volunteers, mostly illiterate women, who were strong, purposeful and dignified. They have in their eyes the look of people who have endured tough times but who have a strong sense of their own worth. By respecting the lives of others they have learned to respect themselves. They tell stories of slum transformation, of standing up against corruption, of taking responsibility for the health of their neighbours, of sensing the quiet power of democratic pressure and of acting as a proud team of human restoration. No one who has met them can ever forget the look of steely determination softened by compassion that looks you back straight in the eye, proud but not prideful. I ask them of their dreams for the future and they talk of good houses, happy and successful children and dignified lives.

Dr David Hempton, Professor, Harvard University

(Excerpt from introduction to 'The Greeley Lecture for Peace and Social Justice' delivered by Dr Martin on April 13, 2011 at the Centre for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School)



Members of the St Michael's Church Team in the slum

It is very rewarding teaching children who are so enthusiastic. It is inspiring to see the way in which Asha has made a difference to the slum area. I hope to return in the future to provide teaching assistance again. I will also spread the word amongst friends and family and let them know the work that is being undertaken by Asha.

Kerry Trewern & Calum Fife, Edinburgh, Scotland

Just imagine the vast potential that we will release if every one of our children in India is able to go to school, complete school and aspire to gain admission to a college or university. What Asha has done since June 2008 is to put a handful of students on this journey. Dr Martin hopes it will be 5000 in 5 years. In fact if each one of us contributes our mite, if each one of us gives a little money, time, a little attention, I think this number of 5000 can easily be multiplied by several factors. I warmly congratulate Asha for this pioneering effort. You know what you have to do. Give money, give time, give care, but above all, give your love and give your support to these children.

Mr P. Chidambaram, Hon'ble Home Minister of India

(Excerpt from a speech made at our 'Celebration of Learning 2010,' November 15, 2010 at India Habitat Centre)



HE Mr Peter Varghese with Asha college students



Dr David Hempton speaking at Asha's Celebration of Learning 2009

We have been so welcomed here. It was very special to be invited into peoples' homes - to sit with them, hear about their lives, and pray with them too. I have learned again that you can find hospitality and be blessed anywhere. Thank you!

Steven Faux, St Michael's Church Team, Bath, England

The community here are so welcoming. We feel very honoured to be visitors here. We are very impressed with the great work that Asha is doing here and the way that the local community are working so hard with Asha for their families, community and those who have less than them. The most *beautiful* children and babies in the whole wide world!

Domenica and Dean Oatley, St Michael's Church Team, Bath, England

Call for Volunteers for Fundraising & Promotions to Help Meet Asha's Mission of Sending 5,000 Slum Children to University within the next 5 Years.

As many of you know, Asha has a mission to send 5,000 slum children to University within the next 5 years. To help us achieve our goal, we are putting out a call for volunteers to assist us in procuring the support and resources to make this possible.

Role and responsibilities: To work with the Asha Promotions Team in Delhi on fundraising & developing communications material related to Asha's higher education programme. Volunteer duties may include soliciting donations from trusts and foundations, writing proposals, meeting with supporters, creating leaflets, audio/visual material, social networking, and assisting with other tasks related to promotions. Most of the work will be office-based but there may also be some field work in the slums.

Time Period: Volunteers must be prepared to give a minimum volunteering commitment of 4 months, and ideally up to 1 year, as it typically takes time to understand and orientate oneself to the programme.

Qualifications: It is not necessary for volunteers to have specific qualifications or experience in fundraising but some relevant voluntary or work experience is preferable. Candidates should have very strong communication skills and an interest in fundraising.

Accommodation: Asha will be unable to provide inclusive accommodation for this volunteering post. However we will be able to assist you with securing an affordable place to stay, according to your budget.

Contact: Interested applicants should contact us at info@asha-india.org.

News In Brief

ASHA LAUNCHES NEW FACEBOOK PAGE WITH VIDEOS & PHOTOS OF ASHA COLLEGE STUDENTS

As part of our appeal to send 5,000 slum children to college within 5 years Asha has launched our new Facebook page. The link is www.facebook.com/ashasociety1. The difference with this new page is that we are putting up a whole bunch of new photos, stories and videos of people from our slum projects. We are especially trying to capture the college students at this incredible moment in their lives. We urge you to log on to Facebook and 'like' our page. This will allow you to see all the latest updates. You don't even have to be a member of Facebook to go to the page and watch the videos. It's open to all. Please forward the link to friends, family and colleagues.

WELCOME TO THE NEW JAPANESE AMBASSADOR

Asha would like to welcome the new Japanese Ambassador to India Mr Akitaka Saiki. Asha is very grateful for the support of the Japanese Embassy and looks forward to a long and fruitful relationship during Mr Saiki's time in India.

UK SUPPORTERS CAN TEXT TO DONATE TO ASHA

The newest way to donate to Asha has arrived and it is really simple. Donors will need to text "FAGB34" and the amount (up to £10, in units of £1, £2, £3, £4, £5 or £10 - e.g. "FAGB34 £5" to 70070. The donation will be added to your mobile phone bill at the end of the month. You will also have the opportunity to use Gift Aid if you donate by text. For more information on how this works, please click on the help section at <https://www.justgiving.com/justtextgiving/>.

NEW ZEALAND HIGH COMMISSIONER VISITS ASHA

The new High Commissioner of New Zealand, HE Ms Jan Henderson recently paid a visit to Asha. Ms Henderson paid tribute to the long relationship that the New Zealand High Commission has had with Asha. To the children she said, 'You carry the future of the world in your hands. I wish you the best of luck.'

DR MARTIN MEETS WITH BISHOP ANDREW WATSON

Dr Martin recently met with the Rt Rev Andrew Watson, Bishop of Aston in the Diocese of Birmingham. Bishop Watson has been associated with Asha for many years. When he was Vicar of St. Stephens Church in Twickenham, he volunteered in the slums of Delhi. He has invited Dr Martin to address a variety of churches in the Birmingham Diocese in the future.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

ASHA CONFERENCES TO BE HELD IN THE UK

Several Friends of Asha chapters in the UK will be holding Asha conferences in the UK later this year. Please mark these dates in your calendars and stay tuned for more updates on these and conferences in other regions.

Midlands Conference: Will be held in Lincoln in November. Other details TBC. Contacts are Sam & Lisa Gibson (email: lisa.gibson6@btinternet.com)

South-West Conference: Will be held on November 12th at Claverton St. Mary's, Claverton, Somerset. Contacts are Rev Paul Burden (email: p.burden@tiscali.co.uk) and Rev Martin Lloyd Williams (email: daftblackdog@yahoo.co.uk)

DR MARTIN LECTURES AT HARVARD & BOSTON UNIVERSITIES

In April, Dr Martin delivered lectures at Harvard and Boston University in the USA. At Harvard she gave the distinguished Greeley Lecture at the Centre for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School. In her lecture, entitled 'Beyond Distinction, Beyond Difference: Transforming Lives in the Slums of Delhi', she emphasised the promotion of peace and justice as the key to improving the lives and conditions of the urban poor.

ASHA SLUM CHILDREN INTERN AT MULTINATIONAL COMPANY

Thanks to a new partnership between Asha and F1F9, a leading financial modelling services firm, 8 slum children in their second year of college will be interning for 2 months at the company. During their interning period, the students will get a thorough orientation on working in an office environment. They will be given a mentor who will provide on-the-job training in spreadsheets and will also receive a certificate after their internship that will be useful in starting their career after they graduate.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEER DOCTORS & ENGLISH TEACHERS

Asha is looking for medical doctors who are interested in volunteering in the Delhi slums. The doctor's role will be to help with running outpatient clinics in our slums as well as training our nurses in protocols for common illnesses in the slums.

We are also looking for English Teachers to teach children in the slums. Those applying to be teachers would preferably have a teaching degree or ESL qualification and be prepared to come for at least 3 months.

For more information, please contact us at info@asha.india.org

VOLUNTEERS & TEAMS

We would like to thank volunteers Kerry Trewern & Calum Fife, Nigel & Sue Rees and Dick & Julie Hogben from the UK, Jenna Tenold from the USA and Dr Cathy Day and Emma Burchall from Australia. We were also happy to welcome a visit from Friends of Asha (GB) coordinator Phil Leighton along with Ian Linton.

It was also a pleasure to have Steven Faux and the team from St Michael's Church, UK renovating the centre in Zakhira.

Friends of Asha

If you want to contribute to the lives of poor slum dwellers in Delhi, then we suggest that you become a Friend of Asha. As a Friend of Asha we welcome you to join the Asha family that exists to help the downtrodden and oppressed live a life of dignity and hope. Friends of Asha make a huge contribution to our activities through donations, fundraising events, volunteering and raising awareness of our work.

In the UK, 130 people attended the third annual Asha Quiz Night and Curry Evening in Yeovil, and raised money for Asha's education programme. Organised by long-time supporters Dick & Julie Hogben and Nigel & Sue Rees, the event was a great success. A variety of curries started off the evening, with very close team competition as play went on. Dick explained Asha's work to the participants and Roger Allen acted as Quizmaster.

In the USA, Kevin Fan, a volunteer from Harvard University, set up a webpage at our online giving site: www.givengain.com. He created an appeal for higher education and emailed it to his friends and networks with the link to his webpage. Dozens of people donated to Asha through his page. Great job Kevin!



Asha Quiz Night & Curry Evening

There are all sorts of things you could do to raise funds for Asha. If you organise something interesting, please send us details and photos, and you may be in this space next time!

SUPPORTERS FROM ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD CAN DONATE DIRECTLY TO ASHA IN INDIA

Asha is registered to receive donations from overseas which means that we do not need to pay tax on any of your gifts. Sterling donations are acceptable, as are those in any other currency. If you'd like to make a valued contribution to our work, you can donate online or via cheque.

To donate online, please visit our website at www.asha-india.org/getinvolved/donate and follow the simple steps to make your payment via a secure server. This is the simplest and most cost-effective way for us to receive your donation.

If you want to donate by cheque, please fill in your details below, write a cheque made payable to "ASHA SOCIETY" and post it to us at this address:

The Administrator, Asha Society, Ekta Vihar, RK Puram Sector 6, New Delhi - 110022, INDIA.

Posting named cheques to India is a perfectly safe and secure method of making your donation. Please be assured that you will not incur any bank charges when donating directly to Asha in India.

Yes, I want to become a 'Friend of Asha'

- My contribution of _____ is enclosed.
- I would like to become a Hope Giver and contribute _____ every month. My first contribution is enclosed. Please send me a standing order form.
- I particularly want to contribute towards _____
- Please keep me informed about Asha's activities. My email is _____

Full name & title _____ Organisation (if any) _____

Address _____

City _____ Postcode _____

Country _____

How we will put your money to work

- **\$30** - will cover one college preparation workshop for 30 children
- **\$40** - will buy books for one child for one year
- **\$70** - will cover the college admission process expenses for one child
- **\$100** - will provide a student with new clothes for university
- **\$300** - will cover university tuition fees for one child for one year
- **\$700** - will cover all university expenses for one child for one year

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