

NEWS

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for friends of asha

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

The health of Asha slums: the numbers

Even as Asha expands to more slum communities and more patients, with over **50,000 patients** treated at the Asha polyclinic, slum based health centres or mobile clinics in the last year, we continue to see improvement in the health indicators of people in Asha slums. We thought you might be interested in some of our health statistics for 2009-2010.

The under five mortality rate is a leading indicator of the level of child health and overall development in countries. This year, the under five mortality rate in Asha slums was only **28.2** (out of every 1000) compared to 112 among India's urban poor. This improvement in child health starts with **100%** of pregnant mothers receiving a birth kit and at least 3 ante-natal checks. As a result of improved health of pregnant mothers, **95%** of newborns were of normal birth weight (2.5 kg or more). By contrast, 28% of newborns are born underweight in India on average, and by the age of 5, 80% of slum children are malnourished. To contrast, this year **88%** of children under 5 in Asha slums were healthy for their age.

For another year, Asha recorded **no deaths of children** from preventable diseases. **99%** of Asha children were fully immunised compared to only 43% children nationally. The health of children under 5 is crucial to their development later on in life and has implications for their educational futures as well.

Asha has increased health awareness and responsibility in the slums. **80%** of eligible women have been trained in reproductive health and **68%** of couples use **temporary or permanent contraception**.



A CHV distributes medicine to a mother and child

75% of female and **70%** of male adolescents have received health education courses. These young people encourage community members to access health services and take responsibility for their personal health. These actions can transform the slums for the next generation so that they will no longer be seen as centres for disease but as an example of the changing face of urban centres in the developing world.

Dr. David Finch (Chair of Friends of Asha GB) on healthcare at Asha

If I asked a hundred people what they believed to be most important in life I'm sure I'd get a range of wise answers from the practical to the theological. When I watch Asha staff preventing another child dying and go on to see them transformed into a mass of smiles and playful energy I know how I would answer the question!

In Asha slums everyone matters. The World Health Organisation statistics show that amongst the poorest 20% of India, 101 children die under the age of 5 out of every 1000. In Asha slums that number is reduced to 28.2. To everyone in Asha, this is still much too high, so when Kiran asked my wife Helen and me to review the Child and Maternal Health programme in Asha to see if we could bring any ideas or challenge, we didn't need asking twice.

What we witnessed was a remarkable demonstration of clinical care in very difficult circumstances. In technical terms, the information systems were effective and appropriate, the quality of learner-centred training was high, the clinical systems were effective, the level of ownership, and staff and community participation was exemplary. Throughout the organisation there was a high level of integration from the strategic level to the operational level. Everywhere we went there was palpable evidence of enthusiasm, technical competence, and a culture that valued richness of relationships, excellence, personal warmth, acceptance and openness. We left Asha with some minor suggestions for change, Asha left us with a sense of passion, joy and privilege to be counted as Friends of Asha.



As an inner London GP and Chair of Friends of Asha (GB), I never tire of seeing transformational change in people's lives. The health policy theory which explains why Asha is so exciting to politicians and health professionals is fascinating but essentially, while many people write about what 'should be done', Asha get on and do it! Kiran and the team see the needs and prayerfully and vigorously develop ways to meet those needs and to overcome desperate poverty, enabling healthy individuals and healthy communities to grow.

I love the UK's National Health Service because we aim to care for everyone, throughout their lives. Asha has taken that aim a stage further. The new born baby in an Asha slum now has a real chance of not only surviving to their fifth birthday, but entering adulthood in full health, of getting an education to University level and being able to provide for his or her future family, breaking the generational cycle of poverty forever.

Asha students granted time with Hon Mr P Chidambaram

Dr Kiran Martin along with Harvard University students Sam Michel and Cait Visek and Usha and Mahinder, two college fresher students from Ekta Vihar slum, met with India's Home Minister, Hon Mr P Chidambaram. The group was honoured that Mr Chidambaram made the time to see them. Mr Chidambaram congratulated Usha and Mahinder and asked them a lot of questions about their educational journey. Usha is starting a BA programme at Maitreyi College, Delhi University and Mahinder has been admitted to Galgotias College of Engineering and Technology to study engineering. The Home Minister was very appreciative of Asha for having brought the students to this point. He encouraged them to take advantage of these opportunities and break the cycle of poverty. Mr Chidambaram, a graduate of Harvard Business School, was also pleased to hear that the Harvard students had chosen to volunteer at Asha and discussed their education and future plans.



Mr Chidambaram, India's Home Minister and Dr Kiran Martin with Harvard student Cait Visek, Mahinder and Usha

Hon Mr Kapil Sibal meets Asha Founder Dr Kiran Martin



Dr Kiran Martin met with the Hon Mr Kapil Sibal, India's Minister of Human Resource Development. Since the time Mr Sibal visited Ekta Vihar and met the students there, he has taken a keen interest in Asha's educational programme. On the evidence of Asha's recent successes, Mr Sibal requested Asha to meet slum kids from his own constituency in Delhi and motivate them to access higher education. With encouragement from Asha, 8 students from Peera Garhi in Mr. Sibal's constituency have enrolled in Delhi University this year. They are the first children from this area to attend college. Mr Sibal was eager to know how the college students were getting on in their courses, particularly those hailing from his constituency. He was delighted to hear of their progress.

Children's crusade against TB

Members of the children's group in Dr Ambedkar slum in South Delhi are on a mission to wipe out TB in their area. In a TB education programme designed by Cornell University student Madhuri Martin, selected members of the children's group received training in a 3 day workshop where they received information on TB and learned how to educate their community. They go door to door in Dr Ambedkar slum, educating local residents about getting tested and treated for TB. TB treatment is available at the Asha centre in the area. Recently the kids were very excited to receive t-shirts given to them by Asha that read 'Crusade Against TB,' and they are determined their campaign will be a success.



News in Brief

FRESHER STUDENTS RECEIVE CLOTHING GIFTS

The 146 new college students from Asha slums gathered at Asha's Headquarters where Dr Kiran Martin presented them with new clothes for college from Asha. Dr Martin congratulated the students on their achievement and advised them to work extremely hard at college. Asha is proud of each and every one of our students and will continue to support them as they try and achieve their dreams.

MONSOON RAINS HIT ASHA SLUMS

August 2010 recorded the highest rainfall in Delhi in 15 years. Many areas of Delhi had to deal with flooding, including many Asha slums. Flooding in the slums can devastate community members' homes and bring greater risk of mosquito-borne diseases like dengue fever. The Asha centre in Tigri was heavily affected by flooding this month and suffered extensive water damage. If you want to support repairs of the Tigri centre please see the donation form on the back page.

VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS

Lizzie Dale and Jonathan Meldrum from the UK, Jessica Arnold from New Zealand and Rebecca Brown from Australia, taught children English between July and November. We're very grateful to all volunteers for their hard work and enthusiasm. Also, we were very happy to welcome two groups of visitors from Northern Ireland.

COLLEGE PREPARATION WORKSHOP

Volunteers Shalini Rao and Cait Visek from Harvard University and Arushi Varma from Delhi University conducted a 3 day college preparation workshop for students from Asha slums in the 3rd week of July. The Harvard students came to Asha on a collaborative fellowship between Asha and SAMC.

ASHA RESOURCE CENTRES GET NEW COMPUTERS

The Reserve Bank of India generously donated 5 computers to Asha for use in the computer resource centres in the slums. RBI regional director Mr Sandip Ghose presented the generous gift. We are very grateful to the RBI for supporting additional education resources for slum children.

First impressions of college in students' own words

If you were to ask 6-year-old children from the slums what they'd like to be when they grow up, most would confidently say: a doctor, a lawyer, a professor, or an engineer. A decade later, the same children (if they were still studying) when asked the same question would look around nervously, get embarrassed, and hope that someone else would give an answer.

Having seen their hopes and dreams broken one after the other until they stopped seeing the point in dreaming would be the reason for the difference. In those 10 years they would have realised that their lives were always going to be a struggle – they would continue to sleep hungry on a cheap mat in a single room house, not have even the cheapest toy to play with, and always be wondering when they saw better-off children why things were different for them.



Sunil Kumar

But young people from Asha slums are different. Their wish to attend college has been granted! And, dear friends of Asha, these students would like to thank you for supporting them as they realise their dream of a college education, and to tell you in their own words about their experiences in college so far: Sunil Kumar from Dr Ambedkar Basti is studying Commerce at Moti Lal Nehru College. "My teachers are dedicated, and very supportive – it makes it easy for me to believe that, with hard work, I can achieve my ambition of becoming an accountant. They even take time to answer my questions after class. I'm really grateful for the help as I don't get much support from my family, because the idea of college is so alien to them."

Shahin Zehara from Trilokpuri is taking Hindi Honours at Mata Sundri College. She enjoys singing and performing, and her favourite part of the college is the large auditorium. She's looking forward to singing at the Freshers' party, is going to audition to be in a play and plans to participate in cultural events. She enthuses, "I'm so happy to be here and studying for a degree, but I never imagined there'd be so many opportunities to do other things I enjoy while I'm a student. I can choose how I spend my time outside of my classes and studying, and I have never had the freedom to make these choices on my own before – I feel as though I've experienced more here in these few weeks than I have in my whole life until now!"



Shahin Zehara



Nandini and Usha

Both Nandini and Usha from Ekta Vihar are at Maitreyi College, taking Political Science Honours and the Bachelors of Arts programme respectively. According to Nandini, "Our college is huge! The facilities there are absolutely amazing, but the garden is in a class of its own! It's such a change from life in our slum where there is absolutely no greenery. We play volleyball and basketball. I feel so alive amidst the greenery".

Usha agrees, and adds, "My favourite place is the library. Imagine - you can find any book that comes to your mind there. And, it has a computer section. Other students have a computer and internet connections at home, but for me this is a real treat! I can surf the net and read any book of my choice for as long as I want. And yes – I forgot to tell you, it's so quiet in the library! There is so much more noise where I live even at 4 in the morning!"

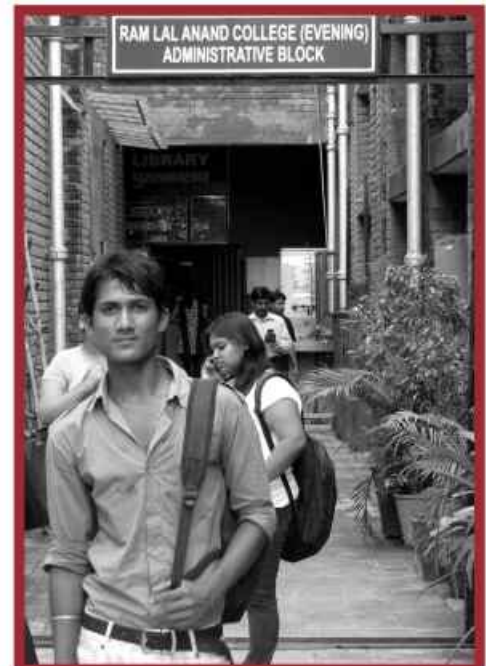
Shashi from Anna Nagar is studying Hindi Honours at Mata Sundri College. "Before I started college I spent a lot of my free time cleaning and preparing food for my family. Now, they realise I need to study at home as well, and so other family members are taking care of most of the chores. Now I can enjoy eating food from the cafeteria that has been prepared by someone else!"



Shashi

Ravi Kumar lives in N86 slum and is studying Hindi Honours at Ram Lal Anand College. "It takes me about 2 hours to get to college each day, but when I arrive it's like being in a different world! I've made so many friends as well – we meet in the cafeteria, and now I wonder why I was ever worried about not meeting any people while I was here."

These are some of the 146 students who have recently enrolled in college. We are proud to have been able to give them a chance to realise their dreams, and hope that when they leave college, they will be able to find better jobs and help their families come out of the slums and break the cycle of poverty.



Ravi Kumar

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.

As we go to press, Asha supporter Tim Curnock is due to undertake an epic challenge to raise funds for Asha in mid-September. He'll be driving an auto rickshaw much like Delhi's ubiquitous machines - "145 cc of raw power", according to Tim - from Sikkim in the north-east of India all the way across the country to Jaisalmer in western Rajasthan. The trip is completely unsupported once the rickshaws cross the starting line, and Tim and his companion, Laurie, intend to complete the trip in just two weeks. You can see more details of their journey at <http://rickshawrun.theadventurists.com/>

We wish them the very best of luck, and can't wait to hear how they get on!

Two other Asha supporters are also planning an extremely challenging trip in an auto rickshaw next year, and we look forward to giving you the details nearer the time.

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, please see below on how to donate online or via cheque.

To donate online, please visit our website at www.asha-india.org/get-involved/donate and follow the simple steps to donate online 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 _____

County _____

ASHA CURRENCY CONVERTER

- **\$ 15** - will provide medication to put 1 TB patient on the road to recovery
- **\$ 40** - will guarantee a child full medical care and vaccinations for the first year of its life
- **\$ 80** - will pay for full ante-natal care for 3 women
- **\$ 115** - will provide essential health awareness training by a CHV for 200 people
- **\$ 230** - will provide initial and ongoing training for a CHV
- **\$ 510** - will train and equip a Community Health Volunteer with medical supplies for one year

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