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WOMEN
IN NEED

BE STRONG because things will get better. It may be stormy now, but it never rains for ever
Thank you for your continued support. Keep safe and well xx



COVID-19 Supporting the vulnerable during these uncertain times

Coronavirus has turned our lives upside down. But during lock down most of us will have food on the table and access to friends, family and entertainment through the internet.

For the women WIN supports, daily life is already fraught with challenges and uncertainties. And whilst the Coronavirus makes little distinction between the rich and the poor, there is no doubt that for most of our women, the odds of coming out of this pandemic unscathed are significantly less than they are for the rest of us.

Whilst India's lock down has been firmly imposed,

WIN continues providing essential supplies of food and medicines to our most vulnerable – especially the elderly and those with HIV and cancer. We hope and pray this crisis will pass soon.





WIN's WhatsApp support group - During the lockdown the charity is maintaining contact with women through the medium of WhatsApp. This advice and help line permits WIN to share information and news about COVID-19. Especially important as there are already opportunists promoting "alternative" cures for COVID-19
WIN's medical officer will answer questions on medical matters, whilst various faith leaders will contribute weekly discourses on all things spiritual. We will also add in some humorous posts to lift everyone's spirits

In other parts of India, lock down is causing chaos



India's strict lockdown of 1.3 billion people is causing chaos and especially for migrant workers, who are being forced to walk thousands of kilometres home or face hunger. With only 4 hours' notice following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's lock down announcement, the stress of lockdown appears to be

overtaking the stress of the disease as thousands of migrants have found themselves stranded across India without work or an income.

Police have also resorted to heavy-handedness against migrants, street vendors and meat sellers. One person died in the state of West Bengal after being beaten up by police for venturing out to buy milk during the lockdown.

In a video shared on Twitter, police appeared to use batons on Muslim worshippers leaving a mosque during a ban on religious gatherings.

Meanwhile, in an apparent violation of the lockdown rules, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath of India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, was seen organising a religious function in Ayodhya town.



Nagpur's jail prisoners are manufacturing hundreds of protective face masks to be used in government departments such as the social justice & tribal development depts.



Living in India as a woman with HIV – by Emma Mulholland WIN's social media writer
Imagine being born with HIV and having a family who ostracised you for it. The disease was contracted by your father, passed on to your mother and then to you. You were caught in a cycle of vulnerability, and you'll feel the repercussions for most of your life: the prejudice, the rejection, the differential treatment. You had no voice, you had no choice but you live with the stigma. This is the reality for almost a million women in India.

Even today, in an era where stereotypes about HIV have - for the most part - been debunked in the west, families in developing countries still turn their back on women who test positive for the disease. These women are doubly disadvantaged because of their gender and their condition, entangled in a web of prejudice with overlapping experiences.

As a woman, you face an onslaught of societal norms that pressure you into early marriage, encourage submissive behaviour and reduce your life's purpose to spousal devotion. As a HIV positive woman, your gender and condition coalesce to form a storm of stigma that shames you for failing to fulfil your gender roles, and shames you for failing to practice effective HIV-preventative measures.

The reality is much more complex. Many women don't know how to protect themselves. Some men don't care to. But it isn't just about a lack of education or a sense of responsibility. There is a network of issues at work, embedded firmly in the structure of society. From predominately male perpetrated adultery, to how their inferior position in social structures puts women at a higher risk of domestic violence, many women are crushed under a system of power that favours men regardless of their actions. One that vilifies women and sanctions men for contracting the same disease – even if the man is responsible for passing it on.

A young woman, Jyoti, whose real name we're omitting to protect her privacy, spoke frankly with us about her family cutting their ties with her. Her crime? Being born with HIV.

"They don't even speak to us. My brother is not HIV positive, but my cousins aren't allowed to play with him. My relatives told the neighbours that my mother was responsible for giving HIV to my father. That because of her, he died from AIDS. Now that I'm older, I can speak up for my mother and defend her. For years, she suffered abuse from them. We are isolated from our relatives and within the local community."

Even though it was in fact her father who carried the seed of HIV, the family blamed her mother and the mistreatment was unrelenting. Not only were they cut off from communication, they were also cut off from a network of support. Struggling for food, living in isolation and facing waves of daily abuse from her own family, she felt desolate: "our condition was really bad, I can't explain it, it makes me feel upset when I remember how bad it was".

When we first met her and her mother, both needed urgent medical treatment, especially her mother who needed blood transfusion, but they couldn't afford the cost of travelling to the hospital, or the cost of the

transfusion itself. We lifted this financial burden and put them on a path to recovery, but our efforts to stitch the familial relationship back together weren't as successful as we'd hoped.

"They have talked to our relatives and made it clear that if they continue abusing us, they will file a police complaint. This has helped a bit, but the family still hate us. They are however afraid of the support we have from WIN, which gives us strength."

Even though the family haven't reconciled, now that the abuse has ceased, Jyoti can start to focus on her studies, without having to worry about medical bills. With our support, she's free to pursue her dreams of becoming a chartered accountant and we'll be backing her every step of the way, funding her living costs and tuition fees.

Living with HIV in countries like India is like living with a badge of shame that's been tattooed onto your skin without your consent. Thousands of women contract HIV through no fault of their own, yet they're punished for it. Society may try to drag HIV sufferers down, but we'll be there to lift them up where we can and give them the opportunity to believe in a better future.

WIN is changing Rani's life



Featured in our January issue, Rani was contending with health problems caused by HIV as well as struggling to look after her incapacitated and blind 8 year old son and her two and a half year old daughter. This small family was crippled by health issues and poverty. **Today with our support their lives are improving.**

The incredible changes we make to people's lives wouldn't be possible without your continued help – THANK YOU X

