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WOMEN
IN NEED

DIGNITY “The recognition that human beings possess a special value intrinsic to their humanity and as such are worthy of respect simply because they are human beings”



World Leprosy Day January 22nd “United for Dignity”

Leprosy was the catalysis for WIN. Usha and I met in India’s first leprosy colony where she was admitted for treatment from the age of 8 to 18 years. Though I too caught the disease, it was in the early stages and presented mild, trouble-free symptoms. Usha on the other hand suffered the effects of lepromatous leprosy, along with repeated bouts of painful lepra reaction, requiring facial plastic surgery to correct the scars. I was inspired by this bold, brave young woman who wanted to encourage others with leprosy to challenge the stigma and live independent lives away from the colony. The early days of our work however revealed that life away from the colony was usually harsh, with women forced to live in poverty and isolation.

Through the charity we improved homes, paid for medical care, and arranged meals to be delivered to those with disability caused through leprosy related nerve damage. Above all else was an overwhelming need for companionship.

Our days were spent travelling across Nagpur offering ulcer management to women with chronic wounds. Most were of a generation of leprosy sufferers who’d been treated with monotherapy or Dapsone, which is a mildly bactericidal drug that required long term use to arrest the disease. Monotherapy was often discontinued through ignorance and neglect, causing advanced nerve damage and deformity to hands, feet, and the face.

The women we met looked forward to our visits, and though we had a long list of calls to make, we recognised the desire for meaningful human contact was great ... far greater than any physical discomfort they experienced.

Usha and I became the recipients of stories that were bursting to be shared. The women would proudly reveal photographs thick with dust, of themselves long before the ravages of leprosy. Leprosy and its associated stigma had robbed them of their identity, and certainly of their self-worth.

During our encounters, the women would recall memories of happier times when they were valued daughters, wives, or mothers. Some had been employed in respectable jobs while others were appreciated members of their local community.

It was at this time that we learnt the true value of human dignity and the importance of restoring it to women denied it through illness, violence, poverty, and neglect.

A special surprise for residents of Dattapur thanks to donations from "Ireshopeburn to India"



In the mid-1980's Dattapur leprosy colony had over 2000 residents who were either cured or taking treatment for the disease. Many, especially women, unable to return home following treatment, remained at the colony.

Decades on and most are elderly. Few have contact with the outside world and lack new company and experiences.

In recognition of this, WIN organised a day trip out to a nearby scenic spot where they were treated to lunch cooked out in the open and enjoyed the company of WIN's staff and trustees.





The Rotary Club of Washington donates water filters



Usha presented 4 water filters to communities that needed them most.

Demonstrating the magic of turning filthy water into crystal clear drinking water was well received.

The filters will prove especially effective during the monsoon season when the water courses become contaminated due to flooding.

A big thank you to Washington Rotary for donating these filters





International Women's Day

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2022



To commemorate International Women's Day, WIN founder Usha Patil invited program coordinators Mrs Manjusha Madke and Prathna Dive from the department of Social Justice and Special Assistance, to offer advice on government schemes.

Discussions on disability welfare, education and training, economic upliftment, social integration, and employment proved informative, as both women offered their support to helping those present access available but not often recognised schemes.

Following refreshments, volunteers from Dhrushti Eye Hospital offered free eye checks and reading spectacles. Special thanks to Dr Asha and Dr Sonkushre for their invaluable time and services.



One year on and Sunita is thriving



Last February we highlighted Sunita's story. The daughter of farm labourers in Yahatmal district, Sunita was subjected to abuse from her alcoholic father who resented having the "burden" of a daughter. Sunita's mother, also the victim of her husband's violent outbursts, was powerless to protect her daughter.

When Sunita was diagnosed with leukaemia the violence increased and her father refused to provide travel expenses for treatment in Nagpur

Enlisting the support of Sunita's brother, WIN pays for transport costs, symptomatic treatment, and her dietary needs.

The charity's constant presence has had a sobering effect on Sunita's father, who no longer troubles his daughter or wife.

Today Sunita's health is much better allowing her to concentrate on catching up with academic studies and planning an independent future.

UNICEF

"There are risks, violations and vulnerabilities girls face just because they are girls. Most of these are directly linked to the economic, political, social, and cultural disadvantages girls deal with in their daily lives. This becomes acute during crisis and disaster".

<https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/gender-equality>

Kushboo

16-year-old Kushboo is HIV+. She was 5 when her parents died from AIDS leaving her grandmother to care for her often-sick granddaughter. Despite years of hardship and their abject poverty, Kushboo has grown into a bright young woman who aspires to make a better future through education. Though a dedicated student, she lacked the financial support required to get ahead. Her grandmother's income barely covers the cost of food let alone Kushboo's medical and educational needs.

Here's how WIN is helping

1. **Improving living standards** – WIN has weather-proofed and decorated their home. The harmful “Chulha” stove they used has been replaced with a gas one and a water filter improves the quality of the well water they use.
2. **Improved nutrition** – both Kushboo and her grandmother were suffering from anaemia affecting their ability to function at an optimum level. Today with an improved diet supplemented by WIN, both are enjoying the health benefits.
3. **Paying travel costs to hospital**– though antiretroviral drugs (ART) are free, Kushboo was unable to afford the cost of travel to the ART centre causing her to default in taking treatment regularly. This can lead to drug resistant HIV. WIN now ensures that she attends monthly clinics at the ART centre by providing travel costs.
4. **Medical Aid** – opportunist infections require timely diagnostic tests and treatment before impacting on an individual's CD4 count. Like many of the HIV+ women we support, the neglect of treating an illness early is due to the constraints of time (as many are working single mothers) as well as the cost of travelling from the outskirts of Nagpur to visit a doctor. Kushboo's CD4 count was low when we initially met her. This was due to multiple factors: poor diet, drinking water and sanitation, and not seeking medical help when ill. WIN's social workers ensure that Kushboo takes her ART's regularly, and whenever she is unwell, they take her immediately to see a doctor.
5. **Support for Kushboo's education** – currently in 10th standard Kushboo is supported by WIN for the costs of books and tuition fees.



Before WIN's intervention, life was hard for Kushboo and her grandmother



“Women themselves have a right to live in dignity, in freedom from want and freedom from fear” – Kofi Annan

Thank you all for your continued support

