

ASHA TRUST

NEWSLETTER

March 2011



Foundation Stone laid for the new Community Centre



Radhika visited Sri Lanka in January where she was able to be part of the ceremony to lay the foundation stone for the new building.

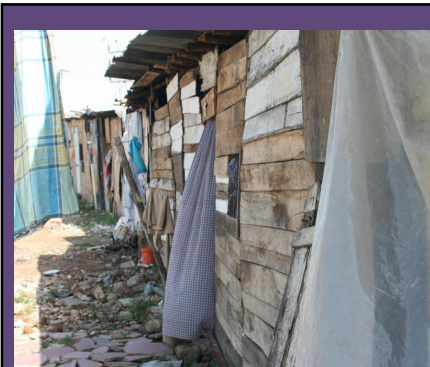
The laying of the foundation stone marks an important step in the journey towards establishing the purpose-built community centre in the heart of Athidiya. 2010 was a year of great effort and commitment from so many supporters and friends which meant we raised the money needed to buy the land. This ceremony was an opportunity to mark that achievement and to start the exciting construction phase.

“The ceremony involved each of us laying a brick - Sister, Mrs V, Chintaka (the architect) Anukshie, as well as Chris & Alison Aston from Forest Gate who happened to be visiting the Asha projects that week. We then ate Kiri Bath and bananas, the traditional ceremonial food, and shared it with the builders and all the neighbours. It was a lovely, joyful event.”

We now have full plans for the Centre. The building will be flexible, with multi-use spaces and sliding/folding partitions to allow for a wide range of activities. The ground floor will be designed with special needs children in mind – there are some 30 children with disabilities in the area, and there are no services nearby. The first floor will have offices, a counselling room, and a large meeting room for the after school classes and training.

We are working with a trusted, respected architect, well known to Radhika's family. Interestingly, he has designed and built 30 Methodist churches in recent years. We have taken care to select someone who shares the team's vision and has the skills and experience to deliver a high-quality building.

Last year's fundraising achieved enough to get started on constructing the shell and the ground floor. To complete the building we will need to raise a further £20,000 (at current exchange rates). There are details of fundraising activities on page 4 – please support if you are able or maybe organise an event yourself.



Asha Trust works in areas where housing and other facilities are basic. Schools are poorly resourced. Finding work is a daily struggle and many people earn less than £1 a day. These communities face multiple challenges, and our community workers run programmes to develop solutions, restoring hope and building ladders out of poverty.



As they look ahead to the new building, the team are beginning to lay the groundwork. They have made links with a physiotherapist who will visit all the local children with disabilities, to build strong relationships with the families and to better understand their needs as we plan the services in the new building.

Charity No. 1108536

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING ON THE GROUND?



Recent activities

- ✓ **Craft Enterprise.** The young women's group were supported to produce and sell 2000 Christmas cards to local craft shops and bookstores. They generated about £450 which was shared between the 12 in the group, providing a significant cash injection to these families.
- ✓ **Trips for the after school clubs.** All the children attending the activities in the current centre went on a day trip. The younger ones went to a playpark and the older ones visited the elephant orphanage.
- ✓ **RCCI, the school for children with disabilities in Nawala.** The cookery equipment has been purchased and the children are enjoying learning about food and healthy eating.
- ✓ **Sioll Centre.** The credit union has enabled several women to set up micro-enterprises, pay for healthcare and cope with temporary unemployment. The nursery staff are building good links with health providers and now hosts a satellite service run by the health visitors.
- ✓ **Science Resources at Sri Punyakami School**
Through the funding raised by Eston Park School, the science teacher has acquired models of body parts to support biology and a large circuit board to teach electricity.

Despite all the positive activity, we are often reminded that the team we support work in a very challenging community. In the last year, there have been five suicides in Athidiya. All men, fathers, whose widows are now struggling to earn enough to feed, house and clothe their children, not to mention the emotional effects. The causes of these tragic deaths are unclear, but they are likely to be connected to alcohol and drugs, lack of work and perhaps a lack of hope. The team will continue to support these families as much as they can.

Supporting Korralawella School

For the past 3 years we have been supporting a poorly resourced school in Korralawella, about 5 miles from Athidiya. We began supporting this school because for four years they had 40 tsunami families camped in the school playground, apparently forgotten by all the agencies. Those families were eventually rehoused, but we learned that a key issue at the school was that some children were fainting during lessons, due to hunger. We now fund milk for every child as well as a breakfast club, and the fainting has stopped. We also funded booster classes for the O level group. The Headteacher proudly told us that in 2010 they saw their best results ever, with 5 pupils passing (from a cohort of 12), and 3 going on to do A levels.

Mayes Park Primary School in Redbridge is keen to form a link with this school.



St Mary's College, Dehiwala

This non-denominational school serves an area neighbouring Athidiya, and attracts number of children from that community. Asha Trust does not currently fund this school, but we are supporting them to establish a link with Murton Primary in Durham. Radhika was able to take some information from Murton to St Mary's in January, and on her return, visited the Durham school to develop the link. The leadership at both schools are enthusiastic about the potential for helping their pupils and staff to understand more about life in a very different context and are planning to do a project which will involve pupils sharing work across the two schools.

How the funds are coming in

Cycle for Asha

Saturday 7th May 2011



Last year 22 intrepid cyclists pedalled the 50 miles from East London to Harlow and back, and raised over £4000 for the community centre. We had such a good time we thought we would do it again!

The route will take us along the canal from Bow picking up the River Roding as far as Burnt Mill Lock near Harlow, where we will stop for lunch before heading back to London. It's a pretty and relatively easy ride, and we all really enjoyed doing it with a great bunch of people.

If you are interested in taking part please contact us at Asha Trust and we will send you a registration and sponsorship form and route map.

SEE THE DIFFERENCE

Thanks to our partnership with See the Difference we have raised £667 toward the first stage of the community centre

See The Difference is a video-based website, and when trustee Steve Carrick-Davies was last in Sri Lanka, he made a video of the land and interviewed Sister Concepta, capturing something of her vision for the future. Though See the Difference we met Raquel Priego a documentary film maker who volunteered her time to produce a short film. You can see this on <http://www.seethedifference.org/charities/asha-trust-sri-lanka>

We'd like to say a **Big Thank You** to everyone at **See The Difference** and Raquel who has gone the extra mile with all the support they've offered.

Judy's long run.



Judy Winge ran the Brighton half marathon in February and raised an amazing £1300 in sponsorship for Asha Trust. Impressively, she persuaded her employers (Northern Trust) to match the money she raised in sponsorship. How fantastic is that!

You can see Judy's page on <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/JudyWinge>

A BIG thank you to Judy, Tony and Northern Trust

Newham Make Poverty History.

5K FOREST RUN.

We will help to organise the 5K run through Wanstead Park again this year, probably the 2nd Sunday in September but do contact the fun run team who will be sure to send you details closer to the time.

Email funrun@hotmail.co.uk

Or log onto

www.forestrun.co.uk



Janet's Magical Garden 28th & 29th May

Once again Janet Daniels will be opening her amazing garden. It is inspirational and has been featured on BBC and in the press. It's hard to believe we are still in East London surrounded with all the colour and wildlife. Her plants are also available to purchase at VERY reasonable prices. Along with tea and homemade cakes.

Health Team Visiting Athidiya

In March we have two Public Health Nutritionists (Buvana & Kiran) travelling to Sri Lanka to support the work. They have raised some funds from the BMA to spend 2 weeks in Athidiya, raising awareness of health and food issues. They will work with the young mums in the area as well as the yr 10s and 11s at the local school, sharing key health message including the benefits of breastfeeding as Sri Lanka's has a low take up rate. We also hope to arrange a 'community feast' bringing people together to share a healthy meal.



Buvana said, "I'm so looking forward to meeting the team in Sri Lanka. I've heard so many good things about them. I hope we can contribute in a small way, passing on some skills and knowledge to local people"

Volunteers Travelling to Sri Lanka, 24 July - 8th August 2011

We are taking a group of volunteers to Sri Lanka in the summer. We will be working in the local schools running English sessions through drama, games and singing. We will also run an after school club in the afternoons. We will join in with activities in Asha Centre, get involved in the new building and spend some time with Sister Concepta, Mrs Vellupullai and other members of the team.

"No words, written or spoken, photographs taken or videos recorded can reflect or describe the emotions I felt in Sri Lanka" – *Scott*

"I arrived in Sri Lanka blind for what I would encounter on the trip-I got to see firsthand how ... people lived.... It made me reflect more on myself and I hope to go back and help in that part of Sri Lanka again"- *Jessica*

Contact

If you would like to support Asha Trust in its vision to build a community Centre in the heart of Athidiya,

Asha Trust, 141 Capel Road, London E7 0JT

E-mail: info@ashatrust.co.uk Web www.ashatrust.co.uk

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Visit us at "Asha Trust" group

For more information on trips go to
www.tuktuk.org.uk

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