



The newsletter of Kamla Foundation

वेदान

Providing hope...

They didn't become poor, they were born poor, as were their parents and probably their parents before them. For the communities we work with, being poor is an everyday reality and if they have children, they are born into this struggle as well.

What keeps these communities going is thinking they can find a way out - that they can give their children a different life. But eventually, it's hard not to suspect the same fate awaits their grandchildren too. So they just put their heads down and do what they can to get through another grinding day...constantly hindered by the crippling weight of poverty.

This is generational poverty. This is what it means to know hopelessness, something an estimated 40,000 people in the areas we work with experience daily.

But generational poverty is not hopeless. It is mired in a sense of futility that spreads among those people barely keeping afloat. This bleak surrender is part of what keeps them bonded to poverty, numbing them and us (those in far better circumstances) until it seems there will never be an end to it. Except there can be an end.

As we continue to better understand the impact of our work, we find that generational poverty is a multi-dimensional social problem. Its causes are varied but underpinned by a number of crucial factors. The caste system in India is fundamentally entwined with rural poverty. A system which has acted as a springboard for class exploitation and the subordination of the low caste people by the high caste people continues to exacerbate poverty.

In addition to this huge social stigma, the rural poor are also, in the main, illiterate, ignorant, conservative and superstitious. For them, poverty is considered as God given, something preordained. All these factors contribute to a sense of hopelessness and fatalism.

More importantly through our work, we are providing a solution to these factors with renewed hope and resolve. We are helping to restore hope and provide measurable, transformational change that can eventually eliminate grinding poverty in the areas we operate. We are doing this by building bridges, moving beyond our role of facilitating, enabling and grant giving. Enabling the most vulnerable to break the 'cycle of dependency' translating into economic independence.

We continue to strengthen our work with partners and key stakeholders. Maintaining this essential collaboration, providing leadership and best practice and continuing to affect lasting change, creating a platform for solace and hope for those most in need.

As always, we are extremely grateful to all our supporters and donors whose efforts are invaluable and enable us to continue to develop the stories that enrich these pages.

Bhupendra

Bhupendra Mistry

Founding Director

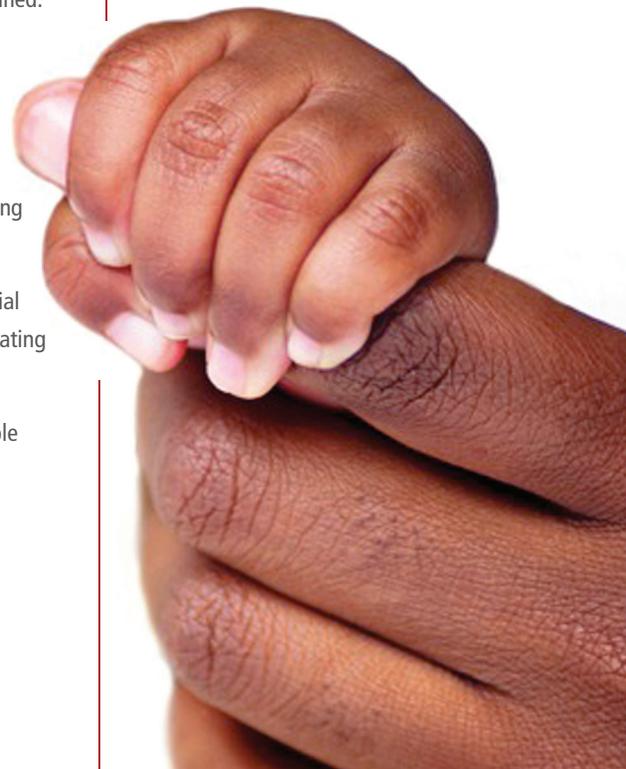
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**“Hands that help
are holier than
lips that pray”**

Mahatma Gandhi



Our understanding of poverty

Just imagine if you've never been to school...

How would you feel? You are not able to write your name, read simple words, or count money. You have low self-esteem. You are open to being exploited, cheated and abused. You don't understand official documents but have to endorse them anyway. You use a thumb print and feel humiliated.

Moreover, if you're a woman, your opinion is not important. The word of your 8 year old son may carry more weight. You fear the police and public officials, and have little or no understanding of your basic rights, including your rights over your children, your property, your inheritance and your body.

The above is just one of hundreds of examples of the many vulnerable women we support. Through our work we often find that the ultimate victim of poverty is the female. In most cases, they are classed as secondary level citizens. They are extremely vulnerable, asset less and invisible on the socio-economic front. They do not have access to any form of financial credit and are denied rights to property. This results in further exploitation by mainstream society but our support is helping to turn their lives around by providing a comprehensive package of livelihood skills.

Our understanding

When we think of the poor, we often think of them in broad strokes. We think of a village devastated by a hurricane or a group of faceless beggars on the street or daily wage labourers huddled over a field. But our experience indicates that the poor are not one entity. Far from it, they are Gita, who feared her dark skin led to a bad marriage, or Indu, a member of India's marginalised dalit community, or Nirmila, whose husband will not let her work outside the house.

Much has been written about the meaning of poverty. Our experience suggests that poverty is defined relative to the standards of living in a society at a specific time. People live in poverty when they are denied an income sufficient for their material needs and when these circumstances exclude them from taking part in activities which are an accepted part of daily life in that society.

Of course, poverty is not just about physical deprivation, it is also about lack of opportunity and loss of hope (poverty of spirit) so this is the story of our journey so far. Join us and together we can change many more lives.

Bhupendra Mistry

*"The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need,
but not every man's greed"*

Mahatma Gandhi

A word from our Patrons



It is truly heart warming to hear about the expanding work of the Kamla Foundation. From a standing start the Foundation has made most impressive progress in addressing the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in Indian society. Most importantly it aims to impart skills and capacity so that the poorest of individuals and families can learn to help themselves. The Foundation has an impressive record and I am delighted to be a part of it and wish it every future success with its life changing work.

Baroness Jill Pitkeathley



A life changing gift for my new Grandchild

The UK is in something of a turmoil right now as we contemplate leaving the European Community. The papers are full of what this might mean for savings, for mortgages and for house prices. But it is worth remembering that worrying as these things might be, relative to much of the rest of the world, nearly all of us in the UK will continue to live lives of relative affluence. It is a remarkable fact that if any of us have some loose change at home, some surplus coins in a saucer, or on a bedside table, money for which there is no particular purpose, we are among the 8% most affluent people on our planet. 92% of people on earth have no such surplus coins. Every penny they have is needed and used for life's essentials.

The inequality of the world we live in is particularly vivid in India, a country my wife and I have visited many times and which we love for its colour, astonishing city bustle, beautiful beaches, sensational food and kind and welcoming people. But, particularly away from the beaches and the cities, it is a country of immense and grinding poverty where millions of people struggle for the very basics of life.

That is why, earlier this year, we decided that to celebrate the birth of our first grandchild, Ezra, we would not buy him the traditional Christening mug or open a Trust Fund. Instead, we'd do something to remind him as he grows up, of his own good fortune in being born here in the UK. And the relative misfortune of so many other babies born in poorer parts of the world.

In the Sivagangai district of the state of Tamil Nadu in India, lies a small hamlet called Pillathienhal. The population of Pillathienhal is just under 2,000, mostly working in agriculture, the people who live there are – as described by the Indian Government, not by me or the Kamla Foundation members of the 'Most Backward Class'.

The village has one overhead water tank, but it functions poorly and irregularly. As a consequence the villagers use open tank water from an adjacent village, two kilometres away. That water is polluted and sometimes prompts epidemics including scabies and dysentery. Children are particularly hit. During the summer, the water crisis is severe.

In a few weeks a bore well will be sunk in Pillathienhal as a celebration of Ezra's birth. He may never see it. But who knows? What is certain is that it will be a reminder to my grandson, as it is to his parents and to my wife and I of our own good fortune. In truth, it has cost me very little: taking account of gift aid, about £1,100. That's less than the cost of a modest holiday. My grandson won't miss his Christening mug or his Trust Fund, while the children of Pillathienhal can expect to suffer less from dysentery. Fewer of them will die early.

Sir Martin Narey



The beneficiary village

Why should charity start at home?

India has more billionaires than any other country outside the U.S. and China, according to an annual list of the world's richest individuals, so why should we help them? The reason is that they also have one third of the world's poorest people too, living in overcrowded slums.

We've been supporting Kamla Foundation for several years and I'm really pleased that we chose this particular charity. Making a donation to a charity is an act of faith, especially when the charity is huge and you can't actually see where your money is going or how it's being spent. We wanted to have the visibility to see the difference our support made, which is why we chose Kamla Foundation. Through their work and intervention they help people to sustainably change their lives for the future. They don't just give people money!

I've been lucky enough to travel out to India to see the work they do first hand, along with another of our Directors Steve Farthing. We visited one of Kamla Foundation's partners, the Medlife Foundation and its founder, Dr Shyam Sheth. They carry out operations to correct cleft lips and palates, mostly for children and babies from the poorest communities. We visited their clinic and hospital to see and experience the important work that they're doing.



“Extreme wealth and extreme poverty sit side by side”

The amazing thing is that Dr Sheth, and his medical team, all give their time freely to carry out these life changing operations, each lasting about 40 minutes and costing on average £190. We visited many of the recovering patients. I asked Dr Sheth about the children he operates on and the effect it has on their lives. Here are some of the problems he described to me. Babies born with a cleft palate and/or cleft lip struggle to feed because they can't suck and a lot of the milk that they manage to get goes out through their nose. This leads to other complications and problems with their development. The problems don't stop there. The children then struggle to learn to speak and also bear the stigma and prejudice associated with being different because of their lack of language skills and facial disfigurement.

There are the other obvious problems, such as bullying and being isolated, that children who look and sound different face in any society. They also face other issues as they get older, such as the burden on their family due to them being unable to get married, get a job and to carry on a normal life. These operations really do fulfil Kamla Foundation's ethos of changing minds and lives.

On a personal note I could tell you so much more about the great work being done, but I hope this helps highlights it a little. It's impossible to really understand the plight of these children and I've probably only just scraped the surface, but it was an amazing experience and one that I'd certainly recommend.

Do you think we should we be supporting people in a country that has the world's third largest number of billionaires? I do.

John Urpi, CEO - First Recruitment Group



Steve and John seeing the work of Medlife Foundation

“The experience was life changing”

First observations was how extreme wealth and poverty sit side by side in India. Followed by total chaos, noise and the lack of rules for road traffic

We were exposed to the partnership work of Medlife and Kamla Foundations and seeing at first hand their life changing work.

This process highlighted the distances many patients travel to receive medical care (some travelling for 2-3 days). We spoke with patients and their family members to gain a better understanding of their individual stories and plight.

We visited the charitable hospital where Dr Sheth pays for space to perform operations. We were invited into the Operating Theatre where we had the opportunity to see Dr Sheth and his team in action and perform an operation with great skill and care. The hospital was tired and in need of maintenance but Dr Sheth was very humble and happy he had somewhere to work.

As part of our visit, we undertook an arduous 10 hour journey to a camp where the Medlife Team assessed villagers for potential operations. Stayed overnight in Hotel Paradise....an irony as our experience was anything but a night in paradise!

It was very interesting but heart breaking to see children in poverty and having other deformities, which limits their life opportunities and increases the social stigma. These operations are instrumental in keeping families together, as due to the undue social pressure, the father often leaves the family home.

We visited the homes of several patients who had been treated. One had over 20 family members living in 2 small rooms. I am so grateful it was very humbling and confirmed we had done the right thing linking with Kamla Foundation.

John and I have so much admiration for Dr Sheth and his team after seeing their work at first hand. Both Dr Sheth and Bhups were greatly influenced by the charitable work of their mothers.

The experience was life changing for John and I and made us both proud to be a small part of two amazing charities. Bhups organisation and care was tremendous and we have gone from associates to being good friends

I look forward to returning to India with Bhups and John to see the work of Kamla Foundation in the South of the country as well as catching up with the inspirational Dr Sheth in Gujarat.

Steve Farthing, Founding Director - First Recruitment Group

“We are both proud to be a small part of two amazing charities”



“We look forward to returning to India”

Steve and John's first ride in a rikshaw

“Everything about their homes and not least their desire to have you be there regardless of its frugality, is nothing less than absolute humility, such humbleness that it touches me to the extent of making me feel emotional.”

That descriptive opening sentence speaks volumes about the people for which I have come to this part of India and they are people and families of all ages with all sorts of needs. Seeing the work being carried out by Kamla Foundation and the Ford Trust, re-kindles in me a hope and a confidence that the people pictured in my opening paragraph and all who they represent, will day by day and year by year gain a quality of life they more than deserve and should expect to receive. Such is the consistent pioneering and progressive endeavours of these charities, always working at the coal face, but with the attainable vision of the light at the end of the tunnel. Let me tell you something of my participation in these life-changing and life-enhancing enterprises.

At the time of writing this I am due to visit schools, colleges and educational establishments in order to gain as much information as possible as research for a school/academy to teach English to the very poor children and families, from rural village communities and then collating the evidence for future reference. In conjunction with this we are exploring possible sites on which we might build such an educational establishment.

I have the pleasing experience of meeting our students on the Child Support Programme and gaining insight into their progress and also their hopes and aspirations for their future. I’m also piecing together a format that could supersede the way the support programme is managed and on-going care is given namely; by appointing and training chaplains to all the students.



It has been good visiting and inspecting the numerous bore wells that have been installed and are maintained and meeting some of the village folk using them. They are clearly an invaluable asset and an important means to raise the standard of village and family life. Whilst spying out the location for the next bore well, I have come up with an idea that could simplify and replace the existing management of the wells.

Sitting alongside people in the comfort and security of community orientated homes knowing the residents individual needs are met, must be reassuring to them, but also reassuring to people like me in the knowledge that young or old, personally exploited or left abandoned, dignity is restored and heads that were once downward looking are held up high again.



Appreciating the overwhelming need to raise the living standards of India’s rural village families is something that is always at the forefront of non-government organisations agendas, so it was exciting for me to accept the suggestion at a meeting of NGOs to write a proposal for discussion on ‘The Holistic Village’. I await the outcome with anticipation that more work on the possible pilot scheme will be forthcoming.

The above work is part of a team effort and I am simply one member of that team and very happy to be so, as it is also my privilege to be here among a people whose needs speak for themselves. Kamla Foundation fulfils a wide range of social, spiritual, medical and educational responsibilities and deserves as much recognition for its achievements as it does for its philosophical principles that underpin all its work.

Rev. David Bown



Fundraisers - Rita & Adrian

When I started training for my first ever 10km race at the beginning of 2013, I had no clue that I'd be standing with 38,000 other people in London two years later, about to begin my first ever marathon.

I remember how hard it was just to get around the park without stopping, and that was only two miles. But I slowly progressed and by the end of 2014 I'd completed five half marathons. So really, a marathon was the next logical distance and how hard could it be, right?

Just to make absolutely sure that I wouldn't bottle out I decided to run for charity. After all there's no better kick up the backside, a.k.a. 'encouragement' than scores of people pledging money to a good cause if I got over that finishing line. I picked Kamla Foundation because I know it well and I knew that every single penny raised would go into the incredible, life-changing projects it facilitates.

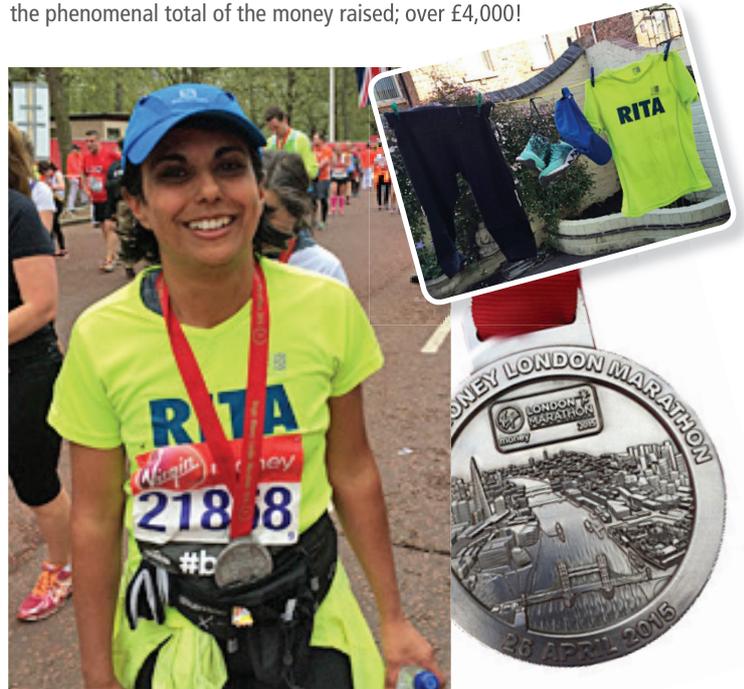
The training had been really, really hard but steady. I had some running buddies at work who came out with me for lunchtime gallops and for one of my big 20-mile training runs, my sister Hersha popped up several times along the route, with my niece and nephew, to cheer me on.

So finally, on April 26th 2015, the big day had arrived. It was cool and grey but dry. I had an army of supporters, over ten members of my family who navigated the streets and squeezed into the tubes of London with apparently 750,000 other marathon watchers, in order to catch me at various points. I started quite well and was in awe of all the people clapping and shouting out our names. Random strangers calling out 'Rita' and urging me forward. It started going a bit pear shaped at about mile 14, when I was in the queue for the loo and waited about 15 minutes just to get in, which made my muscles start to seize up. By about mile 17 I was jogging a bit and walking a bit, and at around mile 21 I had to pause at a St John's point to get a calf massage just to help with the cramps.

I did finally make it to the end, apparently going past the London Eye and the Houses of Parliament but I was so tired that they barely registered on my vision! I was relieved to wobble over that line; apparently so many people aren't able to finish and I can understand why!

Rita gives herself a kick up the backside!

My family met me after I got my medal and as I leaned against a tree I had a sister on each leg rubbing furiously to ease the soreness while my brother mixed up some protein chocolate shake for me to drink and other family members wrapped me up in layers! It must have been quite a sight! But the whole experience was definitely worth it. After the pain had subsided a bit I felt a huge sense of achievement and astounded by the phenomenal total of the money raised; over £4,000!



Adrian Roebuck, from Amey Consulting's Trafford Council team scaled Mount Kilimanjaro at 5896m in aid of the Foundation in October last year and raised over a whopping £1000! Adrian's challenge was the climax to a year long health improvement drive with the added incentive of supporting our work in India. A massive thanks to Adrian.



Meet Gowsalya Balaji

Hello, I am Gowsalya Balaji and I would like to thank Bhupendra for giving me the opportunity to share my story for Kamla Foundation's Newsletter.



I come from a very poor background and have two brothers and we live with our mother in a rural village called Nedumaram in the district of Sivagangai, in the State of Tamil Nadu, India. I am 19 years of age and some 7 years ago I was one of the lucky few to be chosen for the child sponsorship program led by the Foundation. To this day I still can't believe I was selected but thank my lucky stars that I have been afforded a life changing opportunity.

Currently, I am half way through a BSc Degree in Nursing which I enjoy immensely. My father died of tuberculosis when I was eleven and I remember thinking, if only he could have received proper medical treatment with good nursing care, but he didn't and he died. That's when I started thinking about a medical profession and to help people like my father, so they can receive the care they fully deserve. You see, because of our status, like most of the villagers in this region, we are not able to access medical facilities for serious illnesses.

Furthermore, I wanted to work in a profession like Nursing, so I would be able to help my mother because she has worked so hard and done everything possible for the family. It is important to me to give her the love she has given to us children.

Through the support I have received from Kamla Foundation and the FORD Trust, I have made good progress at school and now University. I am relishing the University experience and have made some very special friends. I particularly enjoy visiting an elderly people's home every week and talking to the residents there. I also enjoy dancing and singing at religious services.

On qualifying as a Nurse, I wish to serve the poorest in society as they receive little or no care and I think this is very unjust. If I do that, I will be keeping the promise I made when my father died and it will be a way of remembering him. Thank you for reading my story and my sincere thanks to my sponsor in the UK, for believing in me and for giving me hope and inspiration and helping to turn my life around.

Gowsalya.



Special thanks to our donors, supporters & corporate sponsors

We wish to extend our sincere thanks to all our supporters and donors that have provided funding and in-kind support to make our mission a reality.

This collaboration has enabled us to scale up and increase our reach and impact, helping some of the most stigmatized members of Indian society.

Since the last Newsletter, we have received tremendous support from individuals undertaking enormous personal challenges to aid our work. From Adrian climbing Mount Kilimanjaro to Rita running the London Marathon.....your efforts are truly humbling.

Finally, we wish to thank our corporate partners;

