



Dear Mercy,

Human Rights Day is observed every year on 10 December – the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This year, Human Rights Day marks the 70th anniversary of the milestone document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being -- regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Human Rights

are for everyone.
are internationally guaranteed.
are protected by law.
focus on the dignity of the human being.
protect individuals and groups.
cannot be taken away.

Sources: www.seekandread.com and www.pearsonpublishing.co.uk

One of the articles in the Universal Declaration of Rights is that “All human beings are born free and equal with dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

When being born free and equal is a right, why are human trafficking and other forms of social evil still prevalent? It is because, although individuals are born free and equal - they are bound by poverty. In India, 73 million people live in extreme poverty as of 2018.¹

Hailing from Jharkhand, North India – Ashik's* family lived in poverty for generations. He grew up with four siblings under impoverished conditions and had no access to education at his village. His father, a farmer who worked hard to make ends meet, often found it difficult to sustain his family.

So when Ashik's favourite uncle visited them and offered him a job in Mumbai, Ashik jumped at the prospect. He was more than eager to help his family and this seemed like the perfect opportunity.



It was only later when he arrived in Mumbai that he realised his uncle worked as a pimp in one of the biggest red-light areas (RLAs). And now he was thrust into the job too.

Like Ashik there are many young men who come to Mumbai from villages in extreme poverty, desperately seeking for jobs. This desperation is time and again exploited by those running the brothels.

How can we help young men like Ashik live a life of dignity?

At Oasis we help pimps who wish to leave the RLA find other employment opportunities. We network with job placement agencies that train and provide employment. During one of our outreach visits, our staff met Ashik who expressed his desire to quit his job as a pimp. We invited him to our drop-in centre to attend counselling and life skill sessions. In a few months not only did Ashik leave the RLA, he is now helping other young pimps who find themselves trapped with no scope of employment outside. With career guidance from our staff, Ashik went back to his

village and opened a small food stall of his own. His thriving business motivated him to start a food stall in the city as well.

He says, "I hope to help and protect those like me to live a respectful life." While his struggle to achieve a secure life is not over yet, he continues to fight for the rights of those like him.

*Name changed

¹Source: www.timeofindia.com

Did You Know?

An Indian woman helped shape the Universal Declaration.



Hansa Mehta, the only other female delegate to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1947- 48 (the other was Eleanor Roosevelt), was a staunch fighter for women's rights in India and abroad. She is widely credited with changing the phrase "All men are born free and equal" to "All human beings are born free and equal" in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She was born in Surat, India, received her undergraduate degree from Baroda University, and then did journalism in London. She later went on to become the Vice Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations in 1950. She was also a member of the Executive Board of UNESCO.

#IndianWomenInHistory

What does it take to create more men and women like Hansa Mehta who can be true agents of change?

In our communities, we try to offer early intervention and channel young people's energies into useful activities. And it is encouraging to see our students come forward to participate in those activities. Six teens from our Blue edge vocational program in Bangalore participated in the Mukthi Bike Challenge this year.



The students were hugely involved with the organising team for the ride in Mysore and Mangalore, as the Bike Challenge sought to create awareness on human trafficking in communities, public places and schools. We hope that these change agents will become role models of positive influence and advance towards social change and a promising future.



"It was one of the most beautiful experiences. The journey itself was a great opportunity. During this trip, I learnt a lot about leadership, interacting with the public, how to contribute



"Initially I was very nervous thinking what if we don't do well. I was worried that we may make mistakes, but after each performance we improved and I became comfortable. I

to society and to raise our voice against social issues. On a personal note, I am now more confident than before as I have realised the potential that is there in me and that I can rise up to any occasion.”

learnt so much about street theatre and raising awareness. It was a great opportunity for me. I learnt not to fear anything.”

Sunain Khan

Umme Aliya



Do adults have more rights than children?

It is a common misconception that children do not understand the concept of human rights. Although they are restricted from things that adults can do like using alcohol or engaging in paid employment, children are entitled to be treated in a morally-right way. Many children from underprivileged communities often accept their harsh reality as the norm, but offering them freedom of choice and opportunity is necessary for their wholesome growth.

There are several rights that children in vulnerable communities are deprived of. Beginning from birth to their journey into adulthood, they face many obstacles.

Education

Thousands of children in India lack access to education. In Kannagi Nagar, Chennai, a community where we are looking to work, children are unable to attend school because they the government has relocated them far away from their school. Many children between the ages of 11 to 14 years have dropped out because of this and spend their days on the streets while

their parents are at work. The lack of motivation and role models also leads children themselves to lose the interest to go to school. we hope our after-school programme (ASP) will provide holistic education to help in self-development, in turn creating a sense of purpose for the children in their education and living.

Gender equality

Gender discrimination has been a social issue in India for centuries. In India, the birth of a girl child is still not welcomed in some families. It is also a well-known fact that the prejudice sometimes starts even before birth, leading to female foeticide. In such a scenario, it is but obvious that for many reasons girls in underprivileged communities drop out of school to take care of the family and marry early. This is an irrevocable cycle, as these young girls go on to have malnourished children who in later years, are recipients of the same fate. We create awareness among parents to help them understand the importance of treating children equally, irrespective of their gender.

Inclusive Education

Children with any kind of disabilities are often marginalised in society. Schools are ill-equipped to identify a child with learning disabilities and often are not inclusive of children with physical disabilities. Our ASPs have tutors who are trained to identify children with learning disabilities and give them the individual attention they need.

Childhood is a special time as children develop both socially and mentally. During this time they form important relationships with their family and adults; these adults provide guidance and support in the child's growing autonomy. We hope that we as adults give child rights as much importance as we do ours.



Whilst we have focused on human rights, it's only fitting to finish this segment with some focus on 'responsibility' and how it's knit together with human rights. At Oasis India Chennai we recently had a campaign on the theme 'Namaste'. Namaste is a Sanskrit word which means 'I bow down to the divine within you'. The motivation for me to initiate this campaign in Chennai was to infuse a deeper value for the people around us (family, friends and our community). As part of the

campaign, we had several activities conducted including daily discussions focused on four major themes namely, *working on communications with others, having the right attitude towards others, valuing others and their responsibilities, dependency on others is inevitable*. Each day's reading had a reflection and a space for discussions, followed by a set of action points. Staff were encouraged to show their love and respect in action. It was an opportunity for all to put our 'rights-based' attitude into action and take responsibility to create a positive and respectful environment.

Mathew Nathaniel
Regional Head - South

What can you do?

Be a part of our She Is Priceless campaign



This is a public engagement initiative to inform, influence and mobilise support against abuse and trafficking. Creating conversations can foster a deeper understanding on issues around us.

Email: divya.nissi@oasisin.org

Greetings for the season!

From the board of Oasis India, staff, community projects and individuals with whom we work, a big thank you to all our supporters and donors. We wish you the best of the festive season and the new year.

In this season of joy and new beginnings, what are we grateful for? Are we grateful for the opportunities we have had in the past, the education we have received etc? It is good to look at the reality around us and continue to uplift those that still lack the awareness of their rights. Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings. Even in the communities we work, there are many that lack the basic knowledge of their rights and what they are entitled to. It is our civic responsibility to empower and educate our fellow people on their rights.

The point is that we find meaning when we love and help people, no matter who they are, or how difficult they may be. We find meaning by loving and helping them anyway.

Once again, on behalf of those who benefit from our projects, thank you to all who show your love and your kindness through your help and support to Oasis India 's projects. We hope you continue to find meaning through the goodwill extended to us not only at Christmas but all year round. May the blessings and joy of this season be with you and yours throughout the coming year.

Regards,
Mangneo Lhungdim
Executive Director

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