



## Empowering Women In Need

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

ORIGINALLY known as START, the charity's remit was to help women suffering from the physical and psychological scars of Leprosy. Leah Pattison, a Fine Arts graduate from the UK, travelled to India in 1995 to undertake voluntary work at Dattapur Leprosy colony, in the state of Maharashtra, Central India.

Two years after she began teaching English to the colony's residents, Leah herself contracted the disease. She decided to stay in India to receive medical treatment. Within a year, she was fully cured of the disease.



During her recovery, Leah received support from Usha Patil, a Dattapur colonist and former Leprosy patient. They ultimately became close friends and soon realised they shared a desire to help and care for other Leprosy patients, particularly women who seemed to have little or no support. In 1999, both qualified as Leprosy paramedics at the Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation in Wardha.

Launched in 1997, START spent the first six years operating in the city slums of Nagpur, Maharashtra; here Usha and Leah encountered many others who needed help, not just with the effects of Leprosy. Rape, mental illness, violence, abandonment, HIV/AIDS; Indian women were living with the effects of all these socially-sensitive problems, with no help or care available. Leah and Usha therefore decided to extend their help to these women and thus START has become Women in Need (WIN).



## REHABILITATION CENTRE

The centre is a safe haven for all our ladies, a place they can call their own. Located in the heart of a slum area where most of our patients live, it faces off the main road onto a peaceful private garden and is a place where any Indian woman can meet and chat about their problems in confidence. Whether the individual requires advice on HIV/Aids, treatment for Leprosy or simply feels lonely and needs to talk, just knowing there is a place to come in a moment of need can make all the difference.



The clinic consists of a clean reception area for visitors to call in, a private consultation room, treatment area, kitchen, as well as bathing and toileting facilities. Visiting consultants specialising in Orthopedics, Gynecology, and Psychiatry enhance our level and quality of care, when many of our ladies are denied proper medical care elsewhere.



We currently cater for patients throughout Nagpur, those in rural isolated villages on the outskirts of the city and even those from states outside Maharashtra.

The premises is owned by Mr Sailesh Viaragade, an unusually enlightened pharmacist; when our original search for a base met with two months of constant rejection, his kind offer was gratefully welcomed. Mr Viaragade's chemist is right next door to the clinic, which makes for convenient access to medicines and has led to a good business relationship with our landlord over the years.

## MAHALGI NAGAR SHELTER

New property has been secured to expand the charity's operations. A property became available through the help of one of WIN's Indian trustees, Dr Charchekar. This new addition to the charity's infrastructure is now sheltering some of Nagpur's most neglected women.

With increasing numbers of individuals seeking help from Women In Need, there has been a demand for expansion, especially to accommodate those who are abandoned on the city streets. The new shelter offers safety and security for those who find themselves facing such insurmountable odds.



## WHAT WIN PROVIDES

Both charity premises are located in the heart of the Nagpur slums. They are within easy access for most of the charity's patients and provide the following free care:



### Medical

1. Anti-psychotic drugs for the mentally ill
2. Anti-retroviral drugs to extend the life expectancy of women suffering from HIV
3. Anti-cancer treatment
4. Medication to treat and control chronic Leprosy ulcers
5. Diagnostic tests
6. Surgery through various hospital contacts within the city



### Psychological Support

1. In addition to the drugs prescribed for those who are mentally ill, the charity provides a psychologist who gives counseling to women with anxiety caused by other problems such as terminal illness, destitution, violence and social exclusion.
2. In support of this, the charity actively seeks to re-connect patients with their families, the success of which is helped by education. This is predominantly within illiterate communities, who hold many misconceptions about conditions such as Leprosy, HIV/AIDS, TB, and Cancer. It is therefore important to dispel the myths by providing them with the real facts.

## Social and Economic Support

1. Provision of low-cost housing
2. Clothing
3. 'Meals on Wheels' service for patients who are disabled or too old to cook for themselves.
4. Provision of basic food needs such as grains, pulses and cooking oil for those unable to work due to ill health or are too old to provide for such needs.
5. Training to enable women to acquire new skills so they can gain employment.



6. Interest-free loans to enable women to establish their own businesses. In conjunction with the above, this provides security and independence.

7. Health education for the patient, their family and the immediate community to inform them about socially-sensitive conditions.

8. Legal Aid - There are laws in India specifically to protect women. However, most are unaware such laws exist and less still, how to access such protection. This is especially true of women who have been raped, who in disclosing this information, risk the possibility of bringing disgrace to their family and community. This is not helped by the attitude of the police, who are unresponsive when such attacks are reported. Therefore the correct legal counseling is necessary, not only for a successful prosecution but to afford women protection in future.

9. Social Events - Arranged throughout the year, these events are usually day trips outside the city, to enable the women to relax and enjoy themselves. It also brings them together with women who share a common life experience, out of which friendships are forged. A bus is provided which shows Hindi films which few have the opportunity to see in everyday life, followed by a picnic and a chance to socialise. These events are without exception a huge success and looked forward to with great anticipation. The success is seen in their reluctance to return to their day-to-day life.

## HOW CAN I HELP?

Women In Need's continued work has only been possible due to so many kind donations. If you would like further information about the organisation or wish to help the forgotten women of India, please contact us at:

Website: [www.women-in-need.co.uk](http://www.women-in-need.co.uk)  
Email: [win@pattison.orangehome.co.uk](mailto:win@pattison.orangehome.co.uk)  
Telephone: 01388 528545

Address: Women In Need (WIN)  
c/o Mrs Sandra Pattison (Charity Treasurer)  
Frosterley Cottage  
Intake Lane  
Frosterley  
Bishop Auckland  
Co. Durham  
DL13 2TH  
United Kingdom



Please make cheques/postal orders payable to: 'Women In Need'.

