

# Association for Health Welfare in the Nilgiris

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*This year has been uniquely different.....*

## COVID-19 Updates

Responding to the unexpected pandemic has strengthened us as a team by fostering resilience.

**VILLAGES:** As our Community Health Programme (CHP) has always been the backbone of the work, we were able to take stock and respond quickly and effectively. ASHWINI, with AMS, ACCORD, and VBVT formed a crisis management team in April, to collectively combat the virus. Initially, the community was made aware of the symptoms of COVID infection and the precautions to be taken. During the lockdown phase, communication with the Village Volunteers, who acted as the point of contact for daily follow up, was strengthened. Special permission from the Government was obtained to enable vehicles carrying food and medicine to go to the villages. The ambulance was busy all the time, transporting patients needing admission, blood tests, or scans to the hospital, taking the discharged patients HOME as well as serving as an antenatal checkup centre.

It was amazing to see each village having its way of preventing strangers from entering. Hand washing facilities were provided for the residents and migrant workers returning home were isolated either in the local Govt. schools or in temporary shelters in the villages.



**HOSPITAL:** At the Gudalur Adivasi Hospital (GAH) entrance, a screening booth was setup to triage patients. Those suspected of having COVID were referred to the newly organised Fever Clinic and their swabs taken in the SELCO Solar-Powered Kiosk. The swabs were then sent to the Gudalur Government Hospital, and the results obtained in 2-3 days.

A ward was designated for COVID patients, and all the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE), medicines, and other consumables were purchased immediately. Thanks to the timely support from APPI (Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives) and ANAHA Trust. By mid-August, the operation theatres were functional again, performing elective as well as emergency surgeries



**ISOLATION WARD:** As the tribal patients come to GAH from distant villages, they find it difficult to have the swabs taken for COVID testing, go home and then return for the results. To address this problem, SELCO helped fabricate a solar-powered 8 room isolation ward which was inaugurated on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec. Each room has a toilet and bed, for effective isolation of COVID suspects till the results are obtained.

SELCO also made a Portable Kiosk for use in the hamlets to obtain samples from those with suspected COVID. SELCO also donated a vaccine carrier to transport the samples to GAH and solar powered the ambulance to recharge the vaccine carrier, if needed. We are grateful to APPI, ANAHA Trust, Yahoo and SELCO for their help in tiding over these very difficult times. We received 10,000 N95 masks through ACT grants. Several individual donors and Volunteers have been equally supportive and making significant donations.

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## **COVID TESTING**

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On Oct 1<sup>st</sup>, with the help of Molbio Diagnostics, we upgraded the lab to do the TruNat PCR test for COVID, so that we could get the results within 2-3 hrs for our preoperative and emergency surgery patients. It was a long and arduous task, and we are proud that our lab passed the grueling evaluations to get both NABL and ICMR certifications.

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## ***New Staff:***

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Dr. Aleena, the new bonder from St John's, joined us in April. Two young specialists also joined us: Dr. Royson, who just completed his Surgery training at CMC, Vellore, and Dr. Nirupama who completed her ObGyn training from St John's Medical College, Bangalore. Dr. Royson had earlier finished his 2year bond with us.

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## ***New AVNI Modules for Community Health Programme***

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In mid- 2017 we decided to switch from the 25-year-old, register-based data recording system used by our CHP to AVNI, a mobile-based app. This has been possible by the support from Chintugudiya Foundation. Initially, as the tribal workforce were very anxious, not well-versed with the technology, we began slowly with only the Mother and Child programmes. However, the CHP team was successful in collecting and collating patient information using this system with ease. Now additional modules to capture each programme of CHP have been included by the support of Chintuguniya foundation (through Tech4dev project).



### **STORY TO SHARE**

Viji, a 33 yr old Betta Kurumba woman with a history of pregnancy-induced hypertension and miscarriages, was pregnant with twins.

She was found to have edema and hypertension, and taken to the nearby Primary Health Centre. The doctor there referred her to GAH, where her BP was controlled and she underwent a successful Cesarean section, delivering two male babies weighing 1.9kg and 2kg respectively. As she was anemic she had a blood transfusion after surgery. Post-operatively, she had a blood transfusion for anemia. Mother and baby did well and were discharged on the seventh postoperative day.

Even with all the travel restrictions due to COVID, we were able to identify and treat the high-risk antenatal patients early,

### ***Training***

5 students from our first ANM batch joined the Government Primary Health Centres (PHCs); three joined our hospital and two the CHP team. A **remarkable** achievement! Thanks to the Poristes Foundation for making possible this milestone in the education of the tribal community.

### ***Research***

The newly established research department has been busy with two grants from ICMR. The spinal study done in collaboration with the Program in Global Surgery and Social Change (PGSSC) of Harvard Medical School came to a close, and the results are being published.

*We take this opportunity to thank each one of you for trusting and upholding us at all times...*

## Donations

**In India** - Are exempt from income tax under section 80G of the income tax act. Money can be transferred directly to our account in SBI, Gudalur as ASHWINI DONATIONS, Current account No: 35765454150 IFSC Code: SBIN0001016

**In USA** -Tax deductible donations can be made **by check** to Vidyalay.org Foundation Inc and mailed to Ms.AsmitaShendye, 35 Meyer Drive, Clifton, NJ 07012

**OR**

By **online donation** through Tribal India Health Foundation <http://www.tihf.org.in/> and click the “donate” button on the page “How you can help”.

**In the UK** - Gift Aid can be a benefit if donations are sent to Account Name: From Here To There, Sort Code: 30-65-92, Account number: 16621468. Email: [friendsofgudalur@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofgudalur@gmail.com).

**Direct foreign donations:** Net Banking to ASHWINI, Ac No: : 11317309429, State Bank of India, SWIFT Code :SBININBBT03 (Ooty branch) IFSC Code : SBIN0001016

