



# Focus on the SHALOM DELHI PROJECT

FALL 2024

## A PIONEERING WORK IN HIV/AIDS CARE

This issue focuses on EHA's largest project—the Shalom Delhi Project. Begun in 2001, Shalom was the pioneering work in HIV/AIDS care in Delhi. Today, unbelievably, Shalom is the only HIV care center in this city of almost 19 million people. It is estimated that at least 55,000 people in Delhi and 2.5 million across the country are living with AIDS.

The word Shalom means peace, but it also means quietness, wholeness, and wellness. Under the leadership of Dr. Rajni Herman, the staff at Shalom care for the medical, emotional, and social needs of people infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS. In a small facility with just 10 beds, they run an extensive program of home-based care with very few staff.

Many of the people they care for are widows and their children, as well as transgender individuals (men who identify as women), who often work in the commercial sex trade. Often, wives get HIV from their husbands and unknowingly pass it along to their children. When the husbands die from the disease, their widows are left to support the family while struggling with the illness themselves. It is a fragile, vulnerable, and marginalized group of people.



Dr. Rajni Herman,  
Project leader

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INDIA

SHALOM DELHI  
PROJECT  
NEW DELHI





## A PIONEERING WORK

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Medical care for patients with HIV/AIDS (as well as life-limiting diseases like cancer) is just one of the services that Shalom offers. They run literacy courses for women and life skills programs for adolescents. They train young people in leadership and educator skills, and help them access higher education such as a nursing degree. Shalom staff launched the Kiran Project, which trains women to sew and sell purses, pocketbooks, and other simple products. The staff become deeply involved in the families' lives and help them in countless ways.

Shalom's tiny staff of 20 has a remarkable impact. Often, Shalom is the only place people feel seen and heard. We hope these heart-wrenching yet encouraging stories will touch your heart and help you learn more about this people group in India.



## OVERCOMING *discrimination*

Sangeeta has been a part of the Shalom Project longer than anyone else. Nothing about her life has been easy. As the youngest of seven, she had learned to put herself last, and she thought her life would improve when she was married off at 15. But her husband was a drug addict who needed money to pay for his habit, so he became her pimp and forced her into prostitution.

A few years into this horrifying life, Sangeeta discovered she was pregnant. When she went to the doctor, she learned that she was also HIV-positive. Then she lost the baby and was told she could never have children, which completely broke her.

After her HIV diagnosis, Sangeeta was discriminated against and oppressed by her in-laws. They blamed Sangeeta for having HIV and were afraid they would catch it. No one would eat with her, and they forced her to do all the household work and to sleep on the floor.

In 2006 Sangeeta enrolled in Shalom, and one of the staff shared a plate with her in front of the in-laws to show she wasn't contagious. This was the first time in Sangeeta's life that she felt seen and heard—someone actually understood her and spoke up for her!

Sangeeta is thankful for her illness because it led her to Shalom. Now that she is a widow, she is part of the Shalom widows' group, encouraging and inspiring the others as they all work to ensure a better life for themselves and their loved ones.





# A STANDOUT *among her peers*

Komal's family was enrolled in the Shalom Project in 2013 because both of her parents as well as her younger sister were HIV positive. When Komal's father died in 2015, it devastated the family. Their extended family abandoned them, with her uncle claiming her father's shop for his own and blaming Komal's mother, Rita, for his brother's death. Komal's childhood was stolen from her as she had to step up, take care of her siblings, cook, and clean.

Shalom helped Rita begin earning an income by training her in sewing as part of their Kiran livelihood project. Komal joined Shalom's younger adolescent group, which allowed her to express her grief, anger, and frustration in a safe place.

A standout among her peers, Komal was made a peer leader and then the first-ever peer educator with a stipend. She also became the first girl enrolled in the Invisible Girl Project, which seeks to rescue girls from becoming child brides or brothel workers and give them an education to empower them.

Shalom's adolescent program staff become deeply involved in the young people's lives, but some kids just can't keep up. Komal has grabbed every opportunity offered to her and is hanging on while helping to take care of her family. She wanted a transformed life and dreamed of becoming a nurse. She sought out and completed all the paperwork for further schooling on her own, ready to move to another state if necessary.

Komal has become the first candidate from Shalom to be accepted into a three-year nursing school program at Herbertpur Christian Hospital. She is currently in her second year, and she continues to love and invest in her younger siblings. The Shalom staff are thrilled to have watched her transform from a sad, unsure girl into a confident, successful young woman.



*The staff are thrilled to have watched Komal transform into a successful young woman.*

## A CLOSER LOOK: SHALOM DELHI PROJECT 2023-24

91	Inpatients cared for in 10-bed unit
924	Outpatients served
72	Families living with HIV cared for through 582 home visits
52	Transgender women cared for through 306 home visits
125	Food hampers distributed to patients with food insecurity
41	Adolescents enrolled in Bible-based life skills and character development programs
7	Young women receiving education assistance in nursing, design, and teaching through the Invisible Girl Project
92	Individual mental wellness sessions held
83	Patients with cancer cared for through 498 home visits
489	Families trained on non-communicable diseases such as cancer
1026	Phone calls made to patients and families

Amazingly, all these activities were carried out by just 20 people. The Shalom staff includes one full-time and one part-time doctor, five nurses, seven community health workers, three administrative aids, and three support staff! Many wear multiple hats.

Getting around is a challenge. The team has no vehicle to use for home visits, relying instead on public transportation and walking in all kinds of weather.





## Going the EXTRA MILE

Anjali was born into abject poverty. She was married at 14 to a man 20 years her senior, but after having a baby boy, Anjali learned that she and her son had contracted HIV from her husband. As her health declined, she lost her job. Thankfully, she heard about the Shalom project and joined immediately. The staff offered counseling for her difficult situation and also taught her to read and write.

Anjali soon joined the Kiran livelihood project and learned to stitch and sew. She is now able to make handicrafts and clothing to earn a modest living. Going the extra mile, the Shalom staff paid for rehab when Anjali's son became addicted to drugs. The transformation in the lives of Anjali and her family is wonderful to see.

*The Shalom Project is facing numerous challenges. Will you help with these needs?*

## URGENT NEEDS *Will you help?*

The Shalom Delhi Project is facing numerous challenges. Their rent and utilities have skyrocketed to almost \$1,200 a month. Since most of their patients are destitute, the project receives very little income. Applying for Indian and international grants is an endless process, and many organizations don't want to give toward medical care or urban projects. The Shalom staff, along with the EHA Central Office, have been looking for a building or land to purchase, which would be a huge benefit for them. They also desperately need more staff. In 2019 they had 27 on the team; now they have just 20, with more work than ever. If you feel led to give to this worthy project, please see below.



## THANK YOU *for your support*

As you've seen in these stories, the Shalom Delhi Project is touching the lives of many HIV-positive patients in Delhi. Our team not only provides medical care but looks after patients' emotional needs. We are so grateful for your partnership with EHA, which makes this care possible. Go to <https://eha-usa.givingfuel.com/eha-shalom-delhi> to support this deserving project.



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