



**ADITYA JYOT FOUNDATION
FOR
TWINKLING LITTLE EYES**

**NEWSLETTER
2017**

Dear All,

It gives me immense pleasure to share the report of our Foundation for the first quarter of 2017. This is a report written by a young visitor to our foundation which I am sharing with you. It is a poignant narrative of the travails of slum dwellers seen through the eyes of a young girl.

Join us in this journey and support us in our initiative to create a world free of avoidable blindness.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Radhika Krishnan

Chief Executive Officer

The Aditya Jyot Foundation for Twinkling Little Eyes aims to help the needy through free eye camps and treatment for underprivileged communities in Mumbai - one of these is the Dharavi slum. The following article is based on a series of observations over the course of three weeks, made in an attempt to understand the workings of the Aditya Jyot Eye Hospital / Foundation and to demonstrate their need for increased/consistent monetary support.



The Aditya Jyot Clinic stationed right outside Dharavi: A slum resident getting his eye checked.

Immediately after this picture is taken, the patient's drunken brother barges in, demanding that the staff take good care of him. He is loud, unruly, and unwelcome. His brother is obviously embarrassed, quietly ushering him outside. The next patient has an eye that seems alarmingly red, even to the average non-medical person. Her face is streaked with lines of tiredness and age, and she is in dire need of surgery. Her companion states that they will only be able to gather medical expenses in 3 weeks, after they are able to go to their village and return. The doctor affirms that there is no way she can wait that long. She flips out her phone to communicate this conundrum to her boss, who demands that they refer the patient to the hospital anyway. Her boss knows that the Foundation probably does not have enough funds for this lady, but thinks that they can figure something out. A decision is made - the old lady agrees to go to the hospital the next day and get treated at a very low cost. But will she actually show up at Aditya Jyot tomorrow?



The streets of the Dharavi slum are more fragrant than the bustling metropolis that surrounds it. They are narrow, winding, and often cannot accommodate more than one or two people at a time. The social workers (pictured below) have finished surveying one entire block for a research project on the prevalence of eye disease in slum children. They had also previously visited each of the families in the community, asking them to bring their children to a camp on the precipice of

the slum. The foundation's eye camps are often conducted in a van equipped to conduct screenings, eye exams, etc. It takes a concerted effort to motivate families in Dharavi to participate in health camps like this one. More often than not, both parents in a family are working professionals - time is a scarcity for all. The health workers explain to them that by bringing medical services to their community they are saving them a greater burden (of time and money) that might arise in the future. Their efforts are not always successful. Families are too busy trying to make ends meet to avail of resources around them - even when they are free.



Aditya Jyot community health workers: from left to right; Anita Kamble, Vaishali Kamble & Mandakini Kamble.

Nandini (pictured below) was ecstatic to have her picture taken. She pulled out a red-and-white christmas hat and stood with a comical determination in front of the camera. She was one of many residents that visited the eye camp, set up earlier in the week to assess eye ailments among slum children. Her mother helped set up the camp in the open, rectangular nook that her modest residence is tucked away in. When I arrive at her doorstep, she opens a fold-out chair for me in the corner of the single room that she and her four children reside in, eagerly welcoming me into her home.



The health workers number each of the houses they have visited to keep track of them. The 'N' in 'GN' indicates that this is the Northern block of the slum.





Mrs. Hazrabee Khan (pictured above) tells me that she has given up. Her life is difficult, surely, but fighting for what she needs to make it better - a functional pair of eyes - is a seemingly endless process. After swinging from one hospital to the next, one inadequate follow-up to another, and surviving a series of financial hurdles, she is exhausted. The vision in her right eye has been deteriorating since she was first treated in a government hospital. They refused to retreat her following her post-operation complaints - plagued with hundreds of patients every day, they are not equipped to give her time, and choose to prioritize outside of her. The last hospital she visited asked her for Rs.1000 (roughly 14 USD) to fix her right eye - a price she could not afford. The Aditya Jyot workers are conducting a follow up (her eye condition was initially diagnosed at one of their camps) and proceed to refer her to the clinic for further consultation. When I ask her if I can take her picture she politely agrees. As she is leaving, she turns and asks me if the people at the Aditya Jyot clinic can help her, if they can give her the life she craves. I reassure her that they will do the best they can and the health workers will be her companions in her journey towards regaining vision.

I gave her the example of Baby Yasmin, who was brought to our Dharavi centre and was diagnosed with lazy eyes. She was advised surgery in both the eyes. The subsidized cost of surgery for one eye was raised by her parents whereas the cost for the other eye was raised by the contributions made by staff of AJFTLE. Today the child has excellent vision and the parents forever grateful