

HEALTH IN ACTION

Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet Newsletter

Spring 2021



In this edition:

Privilege and power

Plus: Gender and ethnicity in Guatemala, land rights in India and more...

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POVERTY
ACTION**

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the latest edition of your newsletter, Health in Action. My name is Teresa Fuentes, and I work as Health Poverty Action's National Administrator in Guatemala. In my role, I work alongside Indigenous Maya communities to ensure that women can overcome discrimination and marginalisation, and are able to access appropriate healthcare.



In this edition, we launch our 'Privilege and Power' appeal, looking at how unfair privilege and unhealthy power imbalances force people to live in poverty and suffer ill-health worldwide. We look at how global economic disparities, ethnic discrimination and gender inequality affect the communities that we work with. And we see how we're working with partners to address the impact on people's lives. We are asking supporters to contribute whatever they can and help to expose and challenge the inequality that denies so many the chance to live a healthy life.

Thank you for all your support – I hope you're inspired by reading about the vital work you are supporting.

Front cover: A traditional birth attendant in Guatemala

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Get involved!

Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet share resources and expertise so we can better support marginalised communities to enhance their health, livelihoods and wellbeing.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT – HEALTH FOR ALL IN A JUST WORLD

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Registered charities in England and Wales, numbers 290535 and 250456

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A photograph of three women standing in a rural setting. The woman on the left wears a red and black headwrap and a striped shirt. The woman in the middle wears a white top. The woman on the right wears a pink shirt. They are all looking towards the camera with serious expressions. The background shows a simple building and some outdoor items.

◀ We work with health workers in Sierra Leone to support marginalised rural communities

PRIVILEGE AND POWER

Our spring appeal focuses on how Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet work with communities to address the unfair privilege and unhealthy power dynamics that force many people to live in poverty and suffer ill-health.

We live in an extremely unequal world, where millions of people are denied the chance to enjoy a healthy life. Behind this inequality are privileged and powerful groups and institutions who choose to put profit and political interests before people. This inequality keeps families in poverty and ill-health. It denies communities their rights to their own land, denies women the chance to give birth in health centres – and even denies that it exists! We believe we need to challenge that denial and get to the root of poverty and disease.

Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet have worked closely alongside community leaders, activists and health workers across Africa, Asia and Latin America for many years now. We've built relationships and developed our understanding of the communities that we work with over several decades. Together, we've helped people from some of the most remote and marginalised communities in the world build healthier and richer lives.

Continues over ▶

GENDER, ETHNICITY AND ECONOMICS IN GUATEMALA

Our team in Guatemala is drawn from, and works with, predominantly Indigenous Maya communities. As a territory that was formerly colonised by Spain, Indigenous Maya communities face widespread social discrimination compared to people who are categorised as ‘mestizo’ due to having European ancestry.

Much of our work in the country focusses on supporting Indigenous Maya women and girls, who face deeply entrenched sexism in addition to ethnic marginalisation.

Theresa, our National Administrator in Guatemala, tells us:

“Indigenous Maya women face a lot of discrimination and violence. There is a lack of respect for their rights within their communities.”



Rosalinda, a K’iche’ Language Facilitator, shares her perspective: “Women are marginalised from the start. Within the home in rural communities women are raised to wash, cook, clean and marry. A woman pursuing education and a career is considered strange. These same women then face ethnic discrimination in professional settings.”



Silvia, a Mam Language Facilitator, agrees: “There are lots of barriers for women; few finish school and even fewer attend university. As a result, women have lower literacy rates, less employment opportunities and are more likely to be economically dependent on men.”



The macho culture that dominates within communities means that violence against women is common and family planning is discouraged”.

Continues from previous ▶

Whether supporting tribal communities in India to demand fair access to forest lands or helping survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Rwanda to establish cooperatives, we see how uneven power relations impact on people’s health, wellbeing and livelihoods every day.

We believe that, if we want to make the world healthier and build a future free from poverty, we need to ask difficult questions and confront the

big issues. This is why we address policy issues that are complex and sometimes controversial, like the ways that wealth is extracted from Africa or the fact that the ‘war on drugs’ has only made inequality – and health – worse. In the UK, we recently launched an education project highlighting how the legacy of colonialism causes so much of the ill-health and inequality we see globally today.

Ultimately, missing out on health isn’t inevitable. Neither is poverty.

Widespread corruption, ineffectiveness and distrust of authorities, including the police, means that perpetrators of violence against women are rarely brought to justice, with aggressors often threatening victims and their families.

Women also struggle to participate in political structures and corruption within the public sector means that jobs and contracts are often either given to political allies or sold to the highest bidder.

Furthermore, with prices for major export crops such as coffee and cardamom falling significantly in recent years, more and more men are now migrating to the US in search of work. This predominantly informal migration puts more pressure on women and families who are left behind, with them often becoming indebted to the 'coyotes' who smuggle migrants across the border.

K'iche' Language Facilitator Olga, explains: "Because



we come from the community and speak the same languages we are able to build trust, understand people's needs and support the community more effectively"

Consuelo, our Project Coordinator, adds: "By working with Ministry of Health staff we've been able to ensure that Indigenous Maya people receive respectful, culturally appropriate healthcare. Together, we've improved access to antenatal services for pregnant women and now see them engaging more readily with health facilities. Also, health workers now cooperate with Traditional Birth Attendants from Indigenous Maya communities. Maternal mortality rates are steadily decreasing."



Lastly, Administrative Assistant Clara, tells us: "We are truly grateful to all our supporters for helping us undertake this important work."



They are both caused by discrimination, racism, political choices and economic decisions. These dynamics are often defined by

people in power – and that means we can change them. By seeing health and poverty differently, we can build a better future for all.

Donate now:

Donate to our spring appeal and help people like those we work with in Guatemala find practical ways to build healthier, richer lives. Stand with communities as they feed their families, support their children and protect their rights.



www.healthpovertyaction.org



Health Poverty Action, 31-33 Bondway, London, SW8 1SJ



◀ Shanilal and Helena
Tudu with daughter

LANDING ON YOUR FEET IN INDIA

Spotlight on



All too often, people belonging to tribal communities around the world are deprived of access to their ancestral lands. Frequently, rich and powerful groups, institutions and individuals are able to claim ownership of land that rightfully belongs to others. In eastern India, alongside our local partners, we have been working with Tribal Rights Forums, so that people can be supported to protect their rights and defend their claims to ancestral land.

Shanilal Tudu and Helena Tudu live with their family of six in a small rural village in Jharkhand State, eastern India. The majority of families in their village belong to the Santhal tribal community and most depend on farming for their livelihoods.

Shanilal, with assistance from his eldest son, grows rice and other crops to feed their family and make a living. They own an acre of non-irrigated farming land and also own two acres of irrigated forest land. However, as they were unable to prove legal ownership of their

forest land, they couldn't develop nor cultivate the land properly.

In times of drought, they were unable to grow enough crops on their land and it became very difficult to support the family and the younger children's education.

Shanilal's village assembly selected him to join the Forest Rights Committee for his village. The Forest Rights Committee helps villagers defend their rights to forest land and resources, supporting them to submit legal claims to the authorities.

As a member of the Forest Rights Committee, he undertook training on the Forest Rights Act 2006. This act legally recognises the rights of tribal communities and traditional forest dwellers to live and work in their forests, and to protect and manage their lands.

Shanilal submitted a legal claim for his family's forest land under the Forest Rights Act in 2014 but saw no progress in his case. Our local team advised him that government officials had failed to process numerous claims across Jharkhand state during this period. Many people reported that those without political connections had been unable to make progress with their land claims.

With the support of the Forest Rights Committee and the village assembly, Shanilal resubmitted his claim; following up with regular enquiries to ensure progress. As a result, he finally received his land entitlement, enabling him to inhabit and cultivate the land.



▲ Helena Tudu shows land certificate

Our local team encouraged Shanilal to invest in dual crop cultivation on his forest land and coordinated with other community organisations so Shanilal could attend several agricultural training sessions.

Now, Shanilal is cultivating both rice and wheat on the forest land. He and his family also collect Kendu leaves from the forest to trade commercially. The family are able to produce a greater quantity and variety of crops, earn substantially more money and enjoy a better standard of living.

They are confident that they can now maintain their income even in times of drought. Shanilal is keen to share his knowledge of new agricultural techniques with other farmers in his village, so they too can improve their livelihoods.

Our team also advocated for the family with regard to other government initiatives. They've now been able to construct a new house under a government housing scheme and also benefit from food security schemes.

Shanilal tells us: "It has been possible only because of the support of the team. The way [they are] helping rural tribal people like us is praiseworthy. I am very happy and thank [them] for this support to my family and how we have improved our economic situation".

Your contributions mean we can continue to provide vital support to families and communities like Shanilal and Helena's. Please visit www.findyourfeet.org to donate today.

HEALTH FOR ALL: WHY IS MENTAL HEALTH OFTEN LEFT OUT?



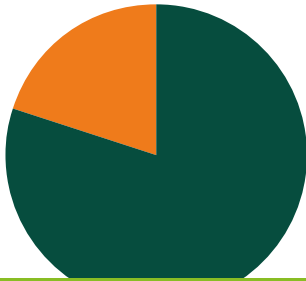
Having conducted our mental health appeal over the winter, we continue looking at how mental health is central to improving health worldwide. And how global economic disparities make this harder to achieve.

While half the world's population still lacks access to essential health services, we are even further away from achieving universal access to mental health treatment, care and support. Between 76% and 85% of people with severe mental health conditions in Global South countries receive no treatment at all for their conditions.

National health budgets in lower income countries often allocate less than 1% to mental health. In fact, most countries across the world fail to spend enough on mental health services. This results in far too few mental health workers, and a huge gap in community-based mental

healthcare – where people can be supported by a range of appropriate local services.

Lack of funding for mental health services is a major reason people have so few options for care and support in the Global South, if they have any at all. Policies pursued by governments like ours contribute to this lack of funding. The corporate tax dodging and extraction of wealth that governments in the Global North allow and facilitate result in many countries missing out on vast sums which could be spent on public services – including good quality mental healthcare.



BETWEEN 76% AND 85% OF PEOPLE WITH SEVERE MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS IN GLOBAL SOUTH COUNTRIES RECEIVE NO TREATMENT AT ALL FOR THEIR CONDITIONS

For those people living with mental health conditions who are able to receive treatment and care, they often have to pay upfront for services. Yet having to pay out-of-pocket for healthcare prevents many people from accessing treatment they may need, and is a major cause of poverty worldwide.

The good news is this picture is changing. Many mental health services providing care through Community Health Workers in the Global South have seen real success and show great potential for expansion.

At Health Poverty Action we know that communities are at the heart of achieving good mental health, and are proud to be working with local people and health workers to help people receive the care and support they need. We are also working with governments to integrate quality mental health treatment and care into existing health services. And we are speaking out on the root causes of poverty and inequality, because we know that the way our world is structured undermines mental health worldwide.

Mental health is crucial to the overall wellbeing of individuals, societies, and countries. With an enabling environment – where people living with mental health conditions come first, are protected from stigma and harm, and can thrive in community settings – we can help make good mental health and wellbeing a reality for millions, worldwide.



A GIFT IN YOUR WILL HELPS FAMILIES ACROSS AFRICA AND ASIA CONTINUE TO TAKE CHARGE OF THEIR OWN LIVES

Stand with the communities, campaigners and activists who've been taking a different approach to tackling poverty and hunger for over sixty years.

Find Your Feet was founded in 1960 and originally focussed on supporting Eastern European refugees. Today, because of our committed supporters, we are able to work with communities across Asia and Africa.

**To find out how even a small gift in your will
can make a huge difference, please contact
fyf@fyf.org.uk**



GET INVOLVED

There are many ways to support the work of Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet. Here are just a few ways, and you can find more on our websites at www.healthpovertyaction.org and www.findyourfeet.org.



Royal Parks Half Marathon

If you've been racking up the lockdown miles and fancy challenging yourself to the Royal Parks Half Marathon, we have limited places remaining to run this October. Entry costs just £35 with a minimum sponsorship target of £350 and we'll be here to support you every step of the way.

London Marathon

Looking for something bigger? Join Team HPA next April and take on the world-famous Virgin Money London Marathon. Registration costs £150 with a minimum sponsorship target of £2,000 and applications are open now!


Support while you shop



If you're sprucing up your garden this spring check out easyfundraising for a great way to raise money whilst you shop online. easyfundraising works with over 4,000 retailers, including home and garden brands, who donate to your chosen cause as a thank you for shopping with them. Simply sign up at easyfundraising.co.uk and select Health Poverty Action. Then each time you begin your shop at easyfundraising you'll be supporting our work, at no extra cost to you.

Get involved!

If you're interested in getting involved in any of these opportunities, please contact Kelly Douglas via email at k.douglas@healthpovertyaction.org



WHY ARE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE DENIED A FAIR CHANCE TO ENJOY THE HEALTHIEST LIFE POSSIBLE?

Let's get to the root of the problem and challenge the unfair privilege and abuse of power that denies so many the chance to enjoy a healthy life

Make a donation today

Privileged groups and powerful institutions are putting profit and political interests before people. The result is widespread inequality, poverty and disease.

Together with community leaders, health workers and activists we're exposing and challenging unfair privilege and unhealthy power dynamics. So we can deal with the exploitation that leaves communities in poverty, the sexism that keeps women from fulfilling their potential and the prejudice that denies people their human rights.

Please give to our spring appeal and stand with people across the world as they feed their families, support their children and protect their rights.



How to donate:

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