

This booklet presents an action plan that can be adapted by communities everywhere to protect themselves against COVID-19.

The plan was developed in Bhopal by two free clinics supported by British newspaper readers, including readers of the *Telegraph*.

The injuries suffered by Bhopal survivors makes them uniquely vulnerable to COVID-19.

With tens of thousands living in cramped, crowded housing, if nothing were done to protect them the virus could race through like a wildfire through a parched forest.

The booklet describes how our community-based programme works, its principles, aims and methods, the resources needed to operate it and results since its launch on April 2nd.

Mapping the vulnerable

Our map shows the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, from where deadly gases leaked on the night of 2nd-3rd December 1984.

A wind from the north rolled clouds of gas over areas south of the plant, killing thousands, injuring more than half a million, condemning


From Bhopal, with love.

many to a life of wrecked lungs, liver and kidney damage, immune disorders and cancers.

Those living north of the factory didn't escape.

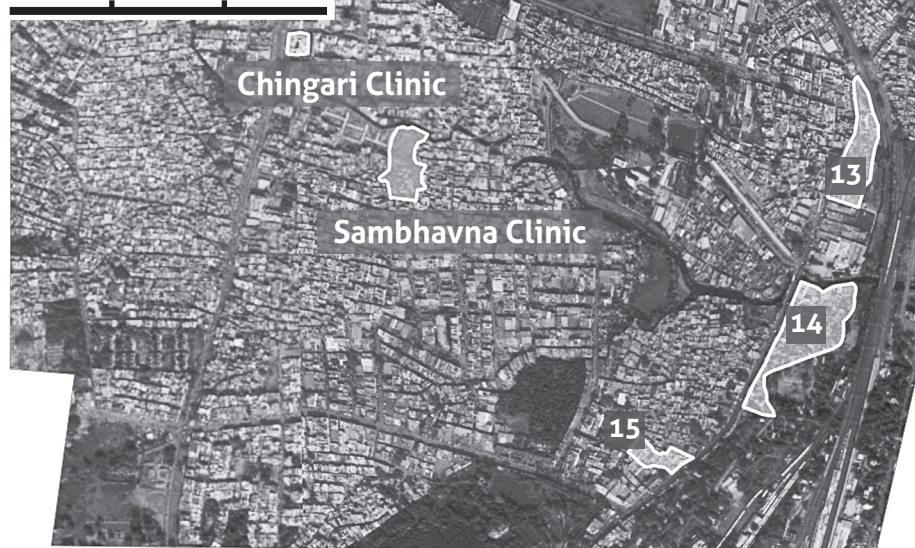
For years before the leak Carbide had routinely dumped thousands of tons of toxic waste into

1. New Arif Nagar
2. Annu Nagar
3. Shri Ram Nagar
4. Nawab Colony
5. Blue Moon Colony
6. Sunder Nagar
7. Gareeb Nagar
8. Shivshakti Nagar
9. Preet Nagar
10. Sunder Nagar LT
11. Odiya Basti
12. Shankar Nagar
13. Rajgarh Colony
14. Subhash Nagar
15. Kargil Colony

 Gas leaked here in 1984

 Toxic waste dumped here

0 200 400 yds



lake-sized 'solar evaporation ponds' lined with black polythene flimsy as dustbin-bags.

For years poisons known to cause cancers and birth defects had been flowing into the soil, wells, blood, wombs and breast milk, and wherever they were found so were birth defects and cancers.

Our clinics were set up to care for people whose illnesses will condemn them to almost certain death if they become infected with COVID-19.

Getting the community involved

When we opened the Sambhavna Clinic no one knew how many were sick, or how sick, so our first project was a door-to-door survey of the worst-affected areas. Our health workers visited every home in every lane and alley. We worked on the early

detection of cervical cancer, tuberculosis and anaemia, malaria control and the growing of herbs to treat common ailments. People were eager to help and involved friends.

We began training and soon had a large network of dedicated and experienced volunteers.

Preparing for the worst

On January 30th came news that the virus was in India. By March 2nd it was in Jaipur and Delhi. India's first COVID victim died on the 12th.

On March 16th Chingari, which treats damaged children, closed for all but urgent cases. On 18th Sambhavna's community teams set about installing hand-washing stations in areas where there was no piped water.

Our volunteer network mobilised to distribute throughout the city leaflets describing COVID-19's risks, dangers, precautions to be taken, and how to recognise, report and monitor symptoms.

The 21st saw Whatsapp groups open as online information and advice centres so people could report symptoms, or seek help. 50,000 signed up.

The groups are policed to exclude the inevitable flood of jokes, self-serving quacks and crackpot cures. They are a hydroxychloroquine-free zone.

In mid-March we began trialling a five-part plan to protect vulnerable communities near the abandoned Carbide site. After consultation with neighbourhood committees we chose 15 areas.

Each was home to numbers of volunteers who had worked with us for at least five years.

The plan and results so far

On March 22nd the virus was in Bhopal.

Our plan launched in full force on April 2nd. There had been no infections and no deaths in any of our fifteen communities.

Details of the action plan are given in the booklet. Its five parts are: a) clear accurate information; b) identify the vulnerable; c) care at home and at local help centres, food and transport for the needy; d) quarantine for people who test positive; e) medical care and treatment of those with COVID-19 disease.

In each of our fifteen communities big posters explain what's being done and

carry photos of the local volunteers doing it. Our plan is common sense based on best practice. But it is meticulously organised and there is magic in it. The magic is the people, the bond of trust between the volunteers and the people of the community they serve. Bhopal health workers were interviewed for a 29th April study for the WHO which reported: 'Community-led action, facilitated and enabled by local actors, will be the mainstay of the humanitarian response to COVID-19.'

"The happiness of selfless service is more than other happiness," says volunteer Raïsa. "In each other we find strength and joy of friendship. Yes, we're poor, but by working together we achieve unimaginable things."

Extraordinary, isn't it, that in this cynical age, someone can say that, and mean it?

Love may not cure, but always heals

This is being written late on the evening of June 16th. Today the city's COVID-count was 2,283.

73 are dead. Our plan is in its 93rd day. Sampling day after day found not a single infection in any of our 15 communities. Until a few hours ago.

The phone rang. News from Bhopal.

A man from Shivshakti Nagar went to Delhi to meet his brother and brought the virus back. He's in quarantine being nursed according to plan.

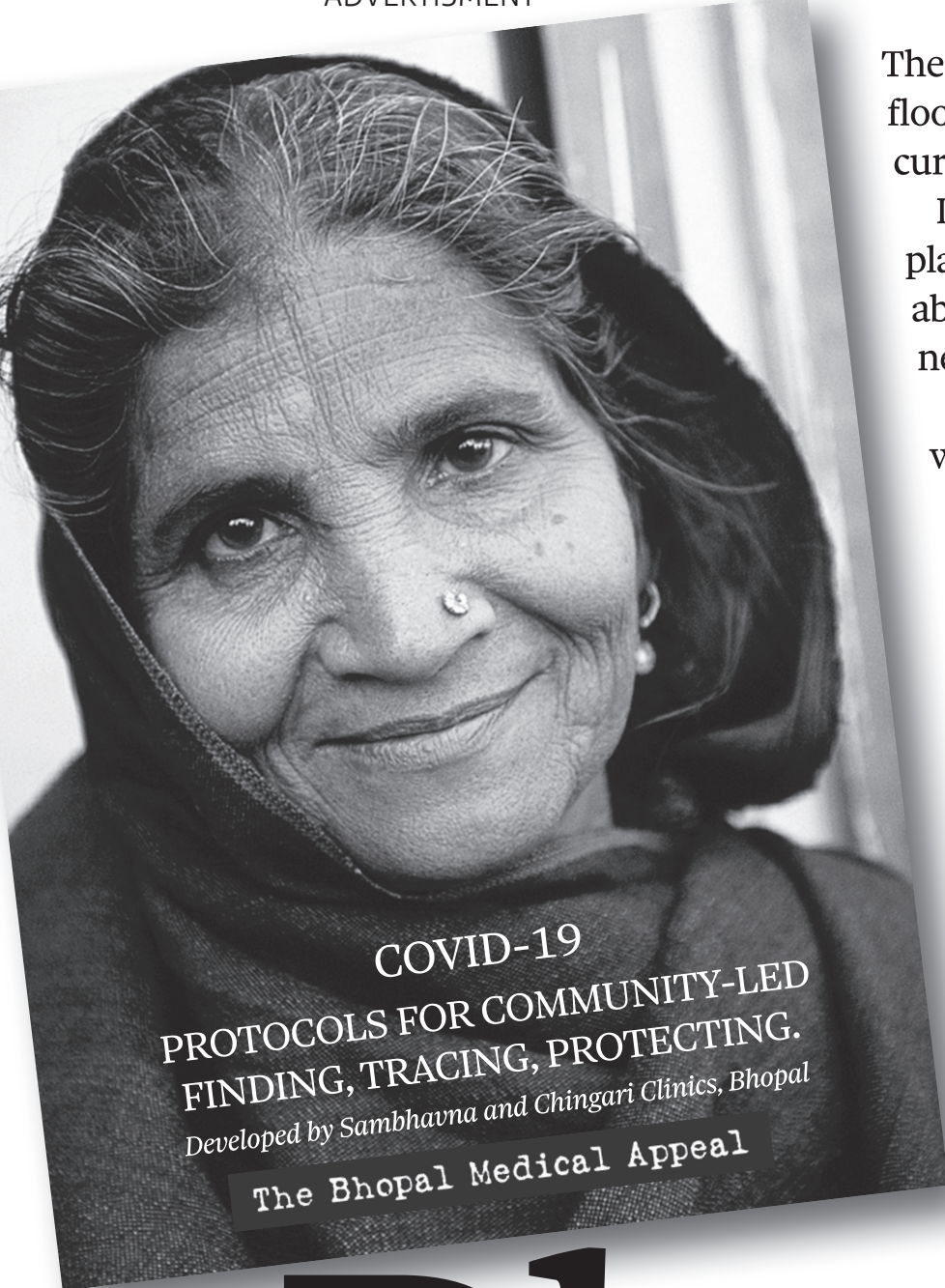
A shared danger brings out feelings of mutual care, a yearning to help. A world that seemed cruel sees a great upwelling of decency and kindness.

Thank you for your long support of our work in Bhopal. We hope the plan in the booklet—it has been called a shoe-string and shoe-leather effort—may help in your own fight against the virus.

Your free booklet is at www.bhopal.org/covid. If you want to make a donation we shan't argue. There is no coupon, no unnecessary trip out for you.

If you'd rather speak to one of us, or have any questions, please ring 0800 316 5577 and say hello to Nicky. Thank you.

The Bhopal Medical Appeal



COVID-19
PROTOCOLS FOR COMMUNITY-LED
FINDING, TRACING, PROTECTING.
Developed by Sambhavna and Chingari Clinics, Bhopal
The Bhopal Medical Appeal