

PROGRESS REPORT

1. **TITLE OF THE PROJECT** : Operational Aid and Provision of Tri-therapy to HIV/AIDS children under Community Based Care & Support Programme in Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu, India.
2. **FUNDING PARTNER** : **Monaco Aid & Presence – MAP Monaco**
3. **IMPLEMENTING PARTNER** : **Multipurpose Activities for Sustainable Social Change (MASS) Trust**
54/58, 5th East Cross Street
Gopal Nagar Extension
East Y.M.R.Patty
Dindigul-624001
Tamilnadu, India
4. **REPORTING PERIOD** : September 2024 - November 2024

INTRODUCTION:

“To positively transform the lives of HIV/AIDS orphaned children through educational based programs”, MASS was started, in the year 2002, with five persons as its members among whom four are women. MASS Trust is a pro-life, non-profit and non-denominational social work organization. Our mission is to serve the physical, medical, educational, social needs of the HIV/AIDS orphans and abused children in India. There are 4 women in the Board of Trustees along with a man, who are all very committed in working towards self-reliant and self-sustainability of the HIV/AIDS orphans. Hence the prime concern of this organization is “Giving Life, Hope and Purpose to AIDS orphan and thus Giving AIDS Orphans A Living regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or faith.”

There are 152 children under our care, and we reach them through our Community Based Rehabilitation Programme. We work in all the following taluks of Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu state viz, Dindigul, Natham, Vendasandur, Guziliamparai, Oddanchatram, Palani, Aathur, Kodaikanal and Nilakottai. Since its emergence, MASS has successfully mobilized communities, spearheaded campaigns, and launched programs to highlight the needs of CLWHA on local, state, and national agendas. MASS also partners with National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) and Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society (TNSACS) to serve as the local partner who promotes health and well-being of children entrusted to us. Mainly we facilitate them to take the ART (Antiretroviral Therapy) medicines regularly. And we closely monitor them through our Trauma Counselling Programme. We also give educational materials as well

as scholarships in order to improve their educational life and which ensures that there is no drop-out. To achieve this goal, we also focus on evening tuition for the HIV/AIDS children too. Today, we are directly touching the lives of 200 HIV positive children through our range of care services programs. Every day, our team of 5 health outreach workers goes on the field to ensure ART is taken and to distribute food hampers to all the families that are supported.

Activities & strategies:

- To initiate activities that bring HIV positive children together towards learning and play
- To motivate them to go for trauma counselling and ART treatments in Government Hospital
- To provide educational support through sponsorship to the children in absolute need
- To visit those whose lives are infected/affected by the deadly disease or receive them at our office
- To assess needs of the children and the ability of the family
- To monitor any assistance required
- To offer counselling regarding access to services in the required departments
- To work in partnership with other agencies in the same field
- To seek funds locally and overseas agencies to expand the service
- To identify and prepare volunteers for providing support to individual families and groups of children
- To observe World AIDS Day in a special way in order to aware the society to safe guard themselves from falling victim and towards the acceptance of infected as well as affected population.

Key interventions:

- Through “Fly up to the Sky” initiative we help children from low-income families, tribal areas, remote villages and urban slums to access education
- Focus on Primary & Secondary Education to Children
- Regular health check-ups and nutritional support through Family Strengthening Programme
- Vocational education and skills training
- Music, sports, life skills education to promote socio-emotional well being
- Merit-based scholarships for school going children focused on holistic development
- To promote and protect human rights
- To provide psychosocial support
- To promote greater involvement of WLHA (Women Living with HIV/AIDS) at all levels of the decision-making process
- To promote social acceptance of CLWHA (Children Living with HIV/AIDS)

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN THIS REPORTING PERIOD:

FAMILY STRENGTHENING PROGRAMME (FSP)

A healthy child is the foundation of a thriving community. Therefore, MASS provides essential nutrition and awareness to children during the most critical phases of their lives through a Family Strengthening Programme. A hamper of dry rations is given to families and the affected children, as the ART (Antiretroviral Therapy) is heavy and leaves patients vulnerable to opportunistic illness mainly from air borne and water borne diseases. Through this initiative, we aim at creating greater capacities of these vulnerable families to attain economic and social empowerment and focus on a holistic sustainable development model that addresses the root causes of child abandonment. The Family Strengthening Programme helps to keep the biological families together and touches the lives of nearly 200 children across 92 locations. Hampers were given once a month, to each family enrolled.



TRAUMA COUNSELLING:

An estimated 50,000 children below the age of 15 years are infected with HIV/AIDS in India every year. The present response of care of children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS has little focus on long-term psycho-social support strategies and systems, including child-centered counseling skills. This important initiative helps children to cope with the emotions and challenges they experience when they discover they are infected with HIV, and related trauma from outside reactions and stigmatization. Thus, this counselling helps children make choices and decisions that will improve their quality of life. Most

children, especially teenagers, experience some kind of depression as a result of being positive. As such, trauma counselling is implemented more regularly. Each month, at least 20 to 25 children are given trauma counselling.

WORLD AIDS DAY OBSERVATION:

“Take the rights path: My health, my right!” This is the theme for World AIDS Day 2024, held on December 1st. It emphasizes the importance of health care access and the empowerment of positive individuals in managing their health. It underscores the need to address systemic inequalities that prevent vulnerable populations from receiving essential HIV prevention and treatment services. This year’s theme highlighted the role of human rights in ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background or circumstance, can exercise their right to health. By focusing on this rights-based approach, a rally was taken through the busy streets of Dindigul city, and that campaign sought to foster inclusivity, reduce stigma, and encourage global cooperation to eradicate AIDS as a public health threat.



After the rally, there was a seminar held in Government Head Quarters Hospital. The last part of the event was the question-and-answer session. Many participants enthusiastically volunteered to ask questions. This was highly encouraged by the chief guests. The host invited Ms. Karpagam, one of MASS’s health outreach workers, spoke.

Question and Answers Session:

How to make sure to choose a life partner who is free of HIV? Should we look for any symptoms?

It is advisable to get the tests done for oneself and their partner-to-be as an HIV -infected person who follows a healthy lifestyle will be leading a healthy life and may not show any visible symptoms if the infection has not developed into AIDS yet. So, one cannot completely depend on the symptoms but must take tests done by any nearby government hospital.

What are the initial symptoms of HIV?

Headache, fever, fatigue, flu, weight loss are a few symptoms. Women must get the tests done in case they observe any abnormal white discharges. A lack of symptoms can last from as long as 10 to 15 years and that is why it is important to get tested.

Can we donate blood to an HIV infected person?

Yes. Government healthcare is seriously implementing single usage and proper disposal of syringes. All the blood samples undergo proper tests before having them in use. So, any eligible donor can donate blood to an HIV infected person in need.

Can we share food and interact freely with a HIV infected person?

It is safe to share food, towels and interact with an HIV infected person. It is important to treat them as an equal and one must not discriminate them on any grounds.

Can HIV spread through oral sex? Through which bodily fluids does HIV spread?

It is possible if it involves the exchange of bodily fluids, as HIV can spread through bodily fluids like blood, semen, pre-seminal fluid, vagina fluids, and rectal flu.

Is it okay to touch and save a HIV patient during an accident?

It is advisable to use gloves or at least to wrap one's hands with polythene bags before helping the injured person.

Where can we get emergency pill to prevent STDs?

It is available in any Primary Health Center and Government Hospital.

Where can we get tested for AIDS?

One can get tested in any Integrated counselling and testing center (ICTC)

The last session was about the primary objective of the World AIDS Day awareness program. The session was to empower working laborers with knowledge about HIV/AIDS, dispel myths and misconceptions, and encourage proactive health practices. The program focused on the importance of prevention methods, and fostering a supportive and non-discriminatory environment.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMMES:

This initiative helps children from low-income families, tribal areas, remote villages and urban slums access education. 10 deserving students are enrolled, in different fields of study, including pharmacology like Durga in the photo below, and followed-up weekly by the health outreach workers.



CONCLUSION:

These are the activities carried out during the months of September, October and November 2024, as part of the Operational Aid and Provision of Tri-therapy under Community Based Care & Support programme.

M. Jesuraj Arphuthasamy
Director

SIGNATURE

MASS TRUST
54/58, 5th East Cross St.,
Gopal Nagar Extn.,
East Y.M.R. Patty,
DINDIGUL - 624 001.