

Society for Poor People Development

The Children living with HIV in physical and mental trauma.

Background Information

The New Demon HIV/AIDS

We the Society for Poor People Development (SPPD) have been working among the community of People living with HIV/AIDS. We work in the state of Tamilnadu in India. Apart from the interventions for the community of people living with HIV/ AIDS, our activities. include, Empowerment of Children Women and Youth and disaster relief and rehabilitation of victims. We want to share that in the villages here living with HIV/AIDS is traumatic. Now here in our country, yet India another untouchable caste has been added to the social system. The people living with HIV/AIDS and their family members certainly form part of the community of **untouchables**.

The trend of treating them as untouchables is reducing at least in the urban areas, the new type of untouchability has **crept in to the system, wherein the** people living with HIV/AIDS are subjected to a variety of ill treatments.

The sufferings and miseries undergone by persons living with HIV/AIDS are attributed to the **family curse and the sin committed in the previous birth** for the dreaded diseases like HIV/AIDS.

Mostly **they** used to be lodged in locked rooms like wild animals. There were many incidents of lynching of innocent strangers who happen to stray in to some villages accidentally due to the fear of their carrying the virus of HIV and spreading the disease. Such was the degree of ignorance about HIV/AIDS.

Things started improving with the active support of many NGOs and some Government interventions. The life expectancy period of those living with HIV/AIDS in our state has started increasing with the sensitization campaigns and widespread availability of ART(Anti Retroviral Therapy).

Trichy has one of the largest populations of people living with HIV/AIDS in the entire state with around 6000 men, women and children as per the official records. And those who don't

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come in to official records for fear of **social stigma and boycott** suffer in silence by undergoing the physical and mental pain and agony

Current Scenario

Deaths & Nightmares

As over the years, the government and the NGO managed HIV/AIDS counselling centres, care centres etc have been closed down. But because of the large population and extreme poverty, the number of victims of this dreaded disorder has only been on the rise.

We are used to hear the chilling stories filled with hallucinations from the members in monthly RED RIBBON meetings. The community members not only live with HIV/AIDS but they also live with the ever lasting fear psychosis of losing their lives at any moment. And fear of not only losing their own lives and leaving their dear ones, the children in particular also is haunting indeed.

Many of them have shared that while they spend mostly sleepless nights. And even during the period of very few hours of sleep they have, they see “**Yamah**”, the God of death as per the Hindu mythology. They would say he comes riding on the buffalo with the rope called the “**Passa kayiru**” roughly translates in to the Rope of Passion in the local language.

Now we have been witnessing a different but a more saddening phenomenon, in the monthly meetings for the HIV community members. The one with whom we would have been sharing a lot, only in the last month’s meeting won’t be found this month. Similarly on many occasions, they would have come as couples the previous month. But the following month, only either the wife or husband would attend the meeting. This is because, the demon AIDS would have swallowed one of the spouses. A few months back in the most sorrowful happening, we had lost five of our members in a single month.

In the last five years, deaths caused by the opportunistic disease of T.B(Tuberculosis) has been increasing to alarming levels. **The deaths are caused mainly due to fast dwindling immunity, in turn caused by very poor nutrition that in turn is caused by poverty.** It is a vicious cycle indeed. Almost 95% of the deaths of people living with HIV due to T.B here are from the very poor marginalized sections here.

Children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS- The Most vulnerable

Though the plight of women is very pathetic too we are forced to focus on children right now as the priority for want of funds. The parents of most of the children of the community of persons living with HIV/AIDS the condition of their children both infected and others becomes more and more pathetic and vulnerable.

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With the earning capacity of most of the HIV infected parents being almost nil, the life of the children in these families become extremely miserable. They are not able to get even one square meal a day. The children under ART therapy suffer even more, during class hours they remain completely dizzy and are unable to participate in the class room activities.

The children tend to remain sleepy and there have been many incidents of children under ART therapy suddenly collapsing in the class rooms. This is because, the ART medication takes a heavy toll of the physical and the mental wellbeing of the children. Lack of nutrition weakens them badly and their resistance to cope with the opportunistic infections dwindle to dangerous levels. Similarly, the condition of non infected children of the parents living with HIV/AIDS is equally very miserable as it correlates only with the ability of their parents. The social stigma attached to the children in the school and elsewhere is very bad.

In our district Trichirapalli alone according to official government records out of the population of one hundred thousand children,(non HIV infected normal) under the age of 5, there are around 14500 are malnourished. When this is the condition of normal children, one can imagine the plight of the both **infected children and children of infected parents**.

There are an more than 500 children living with HIV in our working areas in Tamilnadu including the districts of Trichirapalli and Chennai. Right now with our very limited resources, we support around 50 children infected by HIV and those affected by the increasing economic inability of HIV infected parents in providing nutritious food. And we are finding it too hard to support the current strength of children.

The help towards fulfilling the nutritional needs through monthly **Nutritional Kit package** for each child either infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, will be greatly appreciated. This is the need of the hour and this help will go a long way in improving the quality of life of these hapless kids.

Short and Long term Impacts and Indicators

With the higher CD count and the resultant ability to cope with opportunistic diseases will help them to be attentive in the class rooms and their life expectancy also will increase. The parents of the children living with HIV, also being infected they will be able focus on their own health being relieved of the anxiety about their children. Reduction of external signs of health of 500 children with HIV will also reduce the social stigma attached to the condition in school and outside.

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Estimated Cost for 3 years

Monthly Nutritional Supplement Kit

Cost per child

S.No	Particulars	Indian Rupees	US Dollars
1.	Health Drink (Horlicks)	Rs 230	\$ 3 USD
2.	Green peas 1 Kilo gram	Rs 75	\$ 1 USD
3.	Pigeon peas 1 Kilo gram	Rs 141	\$ 2 USD
4.	Milk (7.5 litres)	Rs 195	\$ 3 USD
5.	Egg (30 Nos.)	Rs 90	\$ 2 USD
6.	Dates	Rs 60	\$ 1 USD
Cost of Nutritional Kit per child per month		Rs 791	\$ 12 USD

Cost of Nutritional Kit per child per month = \$ 12 USD * 500 children * 12 months * 3 years

= Rs 1,40,40,000 /-

Budget amount for three years = \$ 2,16,000 USD (Rs 1,40,40,000 /-)