

Arogya Agam – Give a Future Indian Kids Living with HIV - Project Report,
February 2019



Radha asked “Did my father die of Aids.... will I die too?”

So far we have counselled numerous children like Radha, many of whom have similar concerns. We are in contact with 864 children living with HIV out of the 1044 on our records. We provide various types of support such as arranging government benefits or providing direct assistance. A few children have been assisted to go back to school or college. On occasions young women are pressured to marry when they don't want to and recently we have helped to stop three unwelcomed marriages.



Amhuda - “Thank you for helping me stay at college rather than having to marry a much older man”

We work through six HIV positive women's associations whose volunteers are vital for the work. We have identified 127 children who either should have started treatment or have discontinued it, we don't know why but they are mostly boys. These children are at increased risk and are a priority, in the past month we have persuaded 20 of them to re-start their treatment. One of these is Arun, aged seven.

When Arun's mother died his father sent him to live with his aunt and denied that anyone had HIV. Arun became sick and was diagnosed with HIV, but still everyone was in denial. One day his aunt took him to the health centre with a letter from his father saying that he didn't want any treatment for Arun, or for anyone to come to the house. Our volunteer spotted them and took them to meet the chief doctor. The Doctor was very busy but he knew and respected the volunteer so took time to explain all about the disease and the treatment. Arun is on regular treatment now.



Thanks to our volunteer, Arun is on regular treatment now!

Children and guardians are counselled individually and in groups. Even though most guardians of children aged 10-13 think their wards do not know what disease they have, we find that most do know or suspect. It is clear though that they are not well informed. They ask questions like

- "How did I get this disease?"
- "What are these tablets and how long must I take them?"
- "When will this disease go away?"
- "Why do I have to have these blood tests?"

Recently we followed up a group of 11 children whose guardians we had trained and who had promised to discuss HIV with their wards, eight of them had done so. All but the two youngest children knew they had HIV. Nearly all knew that the tablets were to kill or control HIV virus and most knew that the tablets had to be taken lifelong. Training guardians is essential and it works!



Children are counselled individually or in groups

Many of the older children are coming up to marriageable age, girls in particular since they marry younger. We are studying how best to advise and counsel them. We followed up 34 married HIV positive girls who were all infected at birth. Most had married between the ages of 19 and 22, the spouses a few years older. 14 of the spouses were HIV negative and 20 were positive. 33 of the young women became pregnant - no babies born with HIV and no spouses were newly infected because the young wives were all on treatment which prevents HIV transmission. We can assure young people that living with HIV is not a bar to marriage or to having healthy children.

We consulted 25 young people living with HIV aged between 17 and 22. The majority felt that it was best to marry other HIV positive people although recent studies show that with correct treatment this is not really necessary. They were very clear that disclosure of HIV status before marriage was a must

Please note that children and adults in photos are not necessarily affected by HIV.

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A final word from Marudhan



"Thank you for getting me back in school, thank you for giving me a future"

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