



Shelter, Nutrition, Healthcare, Education, and Emotional Support for HIV-infected Orphans

Project Rationale

In many remote rural regions of India, people have limited access to health care due to geographic distance and the high cost of service. We support Rural Development Trust (RDT), our local partner, in its commitment to improve health care and people's wellbeing at the grassroots level. We support educational and awareness campaigns about diseases and health problems, personal hygiene, and nutrition. We also facilitate primary healthcare and follow-up checks through a network of health workers. Since 1994, RDT has been working on HIV prevention and created a special division in the RDT Bathalapalli hospital for combating infectious diseases, such as HIV and TB.

According to UNICEF, there are over 220,000 children infected by HIV in India. It is estimated that every year over 50,000 children are born to mothers who are HIV-positive. 30% of these children are likely to be infected themselves. The state of Andhra Pradesh, where RDT operates, is among the states with higher number of cases in India.

In rural India, many children infected by HIV are orphaned, from one or both parents, and as consequence:

- They are exposed to abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- Due to stigma and discrimination, many orphans have no choice but to live on the street, and they survive begging at trains and bus stations
- Due to their poor living conditions, they are exposed to multiple infections and because of their impaired immune system, they may not survive past their teenage years
- Many of them also suffer from physical and sexual abuse and as consequence, many orphaned adolescent girls choose to either commit suicide or become prostitutes
- Orphans infected with HIV are often isolated, ignored, and ostracized, facing tremendous real-life challenges at a very early stage

Some years ago, there were no orphanages for orphaned HIV-infected children run by either the Government or other NGOs in the district of Anantapur. Moreover, HIV-infected children could

not enroll in schools. In 2013, RDT opened two orphanages, one for boys at Kanekal and the other one for girls at Bathalapalli.

We believe that children infected with HIV have the right to have access to education, healthy growth, and live with dignity. They should not lose their precious childhood.

Project Goal

The aim of this project is to rehabilitate orphaned HIV-infected children by providing them shelter, nutritional support, emotional and psychological care, proper education, and a congenial atmosphere that improves their quality of life and ensures that children reach their best potential.

There are many HIV-infected orphans in rural India who see their future threatened because of stigma and discrimination. Nutritional supplements and medical treatment, especially antiretroviral therapy, are essential for their survival.

Project Description

To address this problem, Vicente Ferrer Foundation USA (VFF USA) provides safety and security for children infected by HIV through residential orphanage centers that help improve their health care, self-confidence and awareness.

The beneficiaries of this project are 42 boys belonging to disadvantaged communities:

- 24% are less than 10 years old, 38% are in the age range of 11 to 13 and the other 38% are in the age range of 14 to 19
- 64% of children are pursuing their primary education and 36% their secondary education.
- 67% of students are studying in private institutions and 33% in government schools
- In 26% of the cases, the mother is the caretaker while the father is the caretaker for 31% of children. A majority of children (43%) are being taken care by their other relatives, such as grandfather, grandmother, uncle, aunt, etc.
- 79% of children are taking first line of antiretroviral therapy (ART) while 21% are in 2nd line ART. There is only one child who is not under ART
- 12% of children have been staying in the center from 2012, 14% from 2013, 2% from 2014, 2% from 2015, 19% from 2016, 14% from 2017, and 27% from 2018

The project provides the following resources at the RDT Kanekal Orphanage, during 12 months:

- Staying at the center
- Nutritional and health care support including ART
- Enrollment into Government/Private Schools near the Orphanage
- Training of children in curricular and co-curricular aspects
- Training in basic skills in computer
- Three meetings with guardians during project life cycle
- Visits to historical places within the district
- Orientation or refresher courses to teachers, counsellors, and manager
- Creating opportunities for vocational training and income generating activities
- Imparting ethical values for positive changes in behavioral communication

Impact

Our HIV-infected orphans program has a very positive impact on improving these children's life. It reduces morbidity through nutrition and medical support and ensure their timely enrolment and continuity of education.

To date, RDT has provided support to a total of 850 children in the Anantapur area. Through the years, they have witnessed how the program has increased children's life span, reduced school dropout and increased their levels of self-confidence.

Would you like to help? You can support our project directly on the web www.vffusa.org or contact us for more information at: info@vffusa.org or at (202) 798-5269.

Thank you for your generosity and kindness!



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