

2. Background

Though many awareness programs have been launched, HIV/AIDS is still a taboo in Nepal. HIV infected people face stigma and discrimination everyday in one way or the other. Among the most discriminated are the children who have no one to speak for them. Infected and affected children are expelled from public schools once their status was disclosed and are restricted from receiving education in school due to fear of contracting the disease. Most of these children come from poor families, having lost one or both parents, do not have proper care, access to healthy food, medicine or proper clothing. Even the parents are worried as to what will happen to their children after their death. The children neither have education nor any means of survival.

Sensing the urgency to address the problem in May of 2007 Punarbal Plus, a non government organization opened a school "Punarbal Shikashya Sadan" which provided education to all but its priorities are the children infected/affected with HIV and orphans who are deprived of education. The school started with 31 students and now has 65 children.

Though it was difficult to bring infected and non-infected children under one roof, with continuous awareness program slowly the non infected children too started to come to Punarbal School. This scheme is the stepping stone for the organization as well as for the society.

3. School Activities

3.1 Course of study

The students are currently studying eight subjects. These include Science, General Knowledge, Nepali, Symphony, Learning English, Math, Health Physical Education, and Social Studies. On November 15, 2010, the students took Second Terminal Examination.

Only 45 students were able to give their exam. Five children could not attend due to health issues. Two children started ARV and other three 's skin infection and fever. Their result is below.

Class	Total students		Distinction	Ist Division	IInd Division	IIIRD Division	Fail Below 40 %
	Present	Absent					
One	12	--	2	8	1	--	1
U.K.G	9	--	2	4	1	--	2
L.K.G	13	5	5	4	2	--	2
Nursery	11	--	3	3	2	--	5
Total	45	5	12	19	6	--	10

school was closed for a 22 days for winter vacation from 1st January to 22nd January 2011. 1. They insist the teachers to give them holiday homework. This is one of the biggest changes that the school has noticed since its establishment. The children in the beginning were reluctant to study and wanted to play all the time. But now they prefer studying as well as learnt the value of education in a very short period.

3.2 Extra-curricular activities

All the students practice dance thrice a week. The students performed during parents' day and at the end of every term which increased their self-confidence as well as their stamina.

Students also participated in spelling contests and quiz contests every month. The winning team is given prize to boost up their morale. Children love these kinds of activities. It helps the children to become inquisitive, attentive and increase their general knowledge.

3.3 Nutritional and Bus Services

Children are getting nutritious food in the school. Changes could be seen among the children. The non infected children are now healthy. CD4 counts of most of the infected children have almost tripled.

Bus service has been stopped temporarily since November 2009 due to following reasons.

4. Problems/ Issues with the Project

Since past November 23 children who are residing in one of the care and support center could not return to school. The center has moved to a new place which is almost 20kms far and the children have to walk 3km to reach to bus stop. The road leading to the center is still under construction. The authorities of care and support center regrets for not being able to send their children. They said it is difficult for the infected children to walk six kilometers every day. Besides, due to high traffic jam during early hours made it difficult to collect the children from their new residence.

However, the care and support authorities have not yet formally informed the school that the children would not be attending. It is distressing for the school as its effort to integrate these children to other schools has been shattered. The school misses the children as most of these children were really hard working and loved to come to school. The school hopes that in near future the center would make an effort to send the children once again. Therefore, at present there are only 42 children in school.

5. Related activities to the project

5.1 One week handy craft training

Punarbhal Plus organize one week felt Items training (a kind of materials which is used for making different handy Graft goods such as bag, key ring etc) in 29th Oct, 2010 to 4th Nov, 2010. In this training 12 single HIV positive women were participated. They came from different organizations. After they knew that they have HIV, those women & their children are discriminated from their own home & society. After their husband dead, again they were discriminated & abandoned. They have lots of problems to sustain their life. There organization helped them to come out from different social problems. We offered them to take participant in this Felt training, when we explained about this training & we realized them how important our human life. The passes of the time defiantly we'll reach our goal to be proud.



Women are suffering very completed life in our society; they can't afford minimum essential daily things even their medicine. Social organization helped them to come out from their problems.

Punarbhal Plus is also one of the organizations which is also working in the field of HIV/AIDS. Punarbhal Plus decided to organize Felt training to generate their income source. In the starting time they had very curiosity about the training. In this basic Felt training single women success to make 15 different items bags, key rings etc. These items are very liked by the tourists. Our native people also like these felt items. If we are able to show our felt items in front of the market. These single women will get a chance to live their life more easily. These handmade products were display on 1st Dec 2010, the world AIDS day & human rights day.



After this training Punarbhal's two single women got a chance to be a commercial in this felt items business. They are enjoying with this new business & satisfied too. Our well wisher & supporters support us in our next steps. We hope we'll get more feedback for this training.

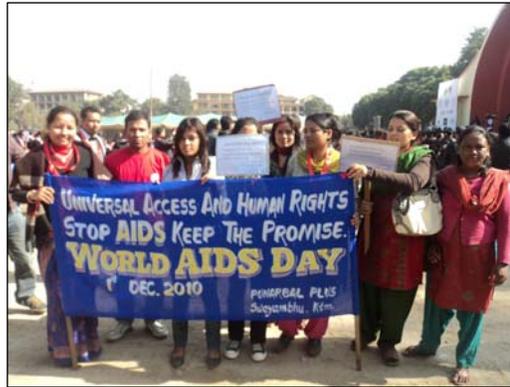
Guest visit the demonstrate Goods



5.2 Participation in Rally on World Aids Day Dec 1, 2010

On the occasion of the 23rd World AIDS Day program in Nepal, Punarbal plus had a good time. **"Stop AIDS! Keep the promise and take the lead"** is slogan of Government of Nepal. United Nations too had another slogan **"universal access and Human rights."**

The Rally started with Ministry of Health and ended in "Khula Manch" at Ratna Park In Kathmandu. In the main program held in Kathmandu under the leadership of National Center for AIDS and STD Control, Sudeep Bhattarai from Keta Keti Ashram spoke on behalf of CABA in Nepal and also presented a message letter to the chief guests, Honorable speaker of the House Mr. Subhash Chandra Nembang. The letter focuses on the basic rights any child deserves, irrespective of his/her status and calls for fulfilling these rights.



The Speaker of the House and the chief guest Mr. Subhash Chandra Nembang address the rights of PLHA and promises to help from the government level.

Famous Actress Karishma manandhar was selected as ambassadors of HIV/AIDS for the year 2011. Staffs and Board members of Punarbal Plus were participated in the Rally. Many other NGOs and INGOs were also participated in the Rally. Everybody had one voice, "Together we should stop AIDS. Punarbal plus's slogan "Learn skills and become independent."



"To live independently"

Most of the PLHA are depending upon supporter. So if they have skill they will live and live their kids. We don't have to wait donor. Most of the visitors are very interested with Punarbal's work. That is the lesson learnt for them who are depending only for supporters.

5.3 Interaction Program on "School and Children with HIV/AIDS in Nepal"

On 9th Dec 2010 Punarbal Plus organized an interaction program **"School & Children with HIV/ AIDS in Nepal"** (A public Discourse). Policy makers, some of the people responsible for implementing the policies and members of the community expelled because of their HIV status came together to take part in the event.

The chief guest was **Mr. Shyamsundar Mishra from the HIV/AIDS and STD control board**. Other guests included Secretary for the **National Association for people living with HIV/AIDS in Nepal (NAPN)** **Mr. Basanta Chetri**, Chief of the **District Education Office in Kathmandu** **Mr Gayane Yadhav**, and **Mr Guru Prasad Mainali**, a representative for the **District Education Office in Lalitpur**.

The programme's MC was **Mr. Mahesh Kumar Shrestha** (board member of Punarbal Plus) An audience of more than 45 people attended the event and were invited to participate.

The main objectives of the event were presented by **Apsara Karki** principal of Punarbal Shikshya Sadan. The event provided an opportunity for the Nepalese government, society, NGOs and INGOs to decide how to solve the emerging HIV/AIDS stigma and discriminations in Nepal.



One of the main objectives of the participating parties was to develop an inclusion strategy for people living with HIV/AIDS, allowing them to reconnect with and cease to be excluded from their families, schools, hospitals and offices and to be able to use public places without fear of discrimination and insult.

The parties agreed that people who have disclosed their HIV status should be accepted in their communities and society at large. The issue of children HIV/AIDS infected, affected by it receiving an adequate education was also raised and it was agreed that much more needs to be done to tackle this issue. Girls are often at a particular disadvantage, often being required to drop out of education to care for sick relatives.

It has been more than twenty years since the UN Convention on the rights of the child, of which Nepal is a signatory, agreed that all children have a fundamental right to education.

The committee then moved on to discuss the effects of migration between India and Nepal on HIV infection rates. The border between India and Nepal for Nepalese and Indian nationals is relatively “open” with relatively few restrictions for the Nepalese migrant workers who travel to and from India. These migrant workers are often away from home for extended periods and the temptations of India’s big cities can be too much to resist. In India prostitution in the towns and cities that attract migrant workers is common and easy to access. There is no testing facility at the boarder for migrants between the two countries and in Nepal certain subjects, even between man and wife are still very much taboo. Few men know to or choose to use methods of contraception that could prevent infection; few Nepalese women have the choice or can even raise the subject in conversation. It has also been known for men to hide their status from their wives even when they do know, meaning she is not able to seek treatment or prevent pregnancy/mother to child infection.

It is mostly though not exclusively women who are disempowered by the lack of facilities, the lack of education and the continued lack of openness in society. They

cannot protect themselves when both society and infrastructure fail to provide them with a means to do so.

Nepal is facing an escalating HIV epidemic which will only accelerate if more facilities are not put in place and social barriers overcome.

The UNAIDS report estimates that at least 75,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS in Nepal. In comparison however the Nepal Government's cumulative data (men, women and children living with HIV) reports that 16,500 are infected. This disparity means that 58,000 are unaccounted for and that they are knowingly and unknowingly increasing the rate of infection.

The secretary of the **National Association for People living with HIV/AIDS in Nepal (NAPN)** Mr Basanta Chetri explained the current situation regarding HIV/AIDS in Nepal and that HIV infection rather than decreasing or stabilizing is actually increasing. Infected mothers are giving birth to 15-16 children a month. People get married without first knowing their HIV status, meaning that people who are infected with HIV are getting married to people who are not infected.

Communities are expelling infected people, forcing them to migrate. In their new community fear of the situation being repeated, a basic human desire to "fit in" and because the ability to generate financial income is closely linked to social inclusion, they make a new identity, find a new partner and the infection process continues.



HIV/AIDS infected and affected children are not getting care and support that they need. Only a small percentage is receiving any support and discrimination is widespread in the very places from which that care should be coming from, their communities, and education establishments and even from healthcare providers. The rate of mother to child infection is also something that needs to be addressed. In the west, with proper healthcare the chances of a woman who knows her HIV status giving birth to a HIV positive child are less than 1%, in Nepal it goes without saying that this rate is almost the reverse. It is also clear that rates of infection are increasing across the board.

We need to provide people who are living with HIV the opportunity to be educated, gain qualifications and work, most importantly this should be within their own community.

We need to support communities to educate children infected, affected by HIV/AIDS in their own communities rather than having those children further distressed by uprooting them from their familiar surroundings to institutions half way across the country. The

best place for those orphaned by AIDS should be within their extended family and children should not be forced out of education to take care of their sick parents and/or take on the responsibility for the family's financial income.

By addressing the issues raised we can begin to stabilise the rate of infection and with this holistic approach gradually the rates of infection will begin to decrease. However if the current lack of intervention continues, numbers could increase exponentially.

Punarbhal Plus is only one school in Nepal that has a policy of providing education without discrimination, it provides a template for the type of establishment that should but currently doesn't exist in every district. NAPN has expressed its support for the Punarbhal programme.

The event's chief guest, **Mr. Shyamsundar Mishra** from the **HIV/AIDS and STD control board** presented his view that he was excited by the proposals not least because people living with HIV are now very aware of their rights. Two or three years ago this was not the case, which shows that the message is getting out, there now needs to be more action. A five year plan 2011-16 has been drawn up to meet the needs infected people, including better access to healthcare, nutrition, education and to decrease the instances of discrimination that people suffer because of their HIV status.



Chief education officer Mr. Gayane Yadhav said that if the public and private schools in the Kathmadu district continue to expel, refuse admission to and discriminate against children because of their HIV status it would result in penalties for the offending institutions. He was however philosophical in that although he can address the problem of discrimination within education, the problem of society expelling or discriminating against people living with HIV/AIDS is beyond his control.

During this conference all participating parties were unanimous in their agreement that Society is going to change gradually and that these problems will decrease because of education and increasing awareness.

The vote of thanks was given by the chair person of **Punarbhal Plus Mr.**



Mohan Bahadur Khadka giving thanks to all participating speakers, media and television and **reminding those present that all sectors need to give their support so that we can move** forward with eradicating the problem of HIV and its effects on society in Nepal.

5.4 Human Rights Day

On 10th Dec 2010, Human Development Association of Nepal organized 62nd human rights day by doing several activities like awareness program, rally, display, ect. Punarbal Plus was actively participated in these program and in awareness program Punarbal Shikshya Sadan children's perform their dance.

