

Report from the Dalits' AIDS Clinic, which HART currently supports and is committed to giving further support as priority.

It is located in Dharmapuri near Bangalore - non-Dalits can use it but the important thing is that the facilities are available for Dalit use - and that they are positively encouraged to use it.

HART paid for the construction of the building.

There is no fear of it becoming non-viable due to funding as it is specifically run and funded by the OM (Operation Mercy) a large, well-funded, social work organization of the Church and an essential part of their strategy in caring for the Dalits.

Over a third of the entire population of India is Dalit - and that a half of the below-poverty-line people in the world are in India.

David Thomas
HART

OMCC

Operation Mercy Charitable Company

*In partnership with All India Christian Council ❖ Dalit Freedom Network
Partnering to Bring Dalit Freedom and Transformation*

Dharmapuri Hospital Inauguration – August 2009

August 8, 2009, was a day of great celebration for the Health Initiatives team. With a sense of great pride and purpose, the team witnessed the inauguration of their first-ever HIV/AIDS hospital in Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu.



The OMCC Dharmapuri HIV/AIDS center began on December 1, 2000. The center offered clinic-based care, counseling and spiritual encouragement to its patients. However, the team knew that the scope of the work was small in comparison to the great need that existed in the Dharmapuri HIV/AIDS belt. Critically-ill patients could not be offered 24/7 inpatient care. Moreover, limited resources restricted clinic-based care three times in a week. All of these factors contributed to an endeavor to expand the center's facilities into a hospital that would have better medical infrastructure to meet the needs of HIV/AIDS patients in the area.

Inauguration Ceremony

Dr. Beryl D'souza, Director of the Health Initiatives stream and her mother, wife of Rev. Dr. Joseph D'souza, National Director of India Group of OM Ministries, Mrs. Miriam D'souza were present at the inauguration. Also present were Rev. J.S.Raja,



Associate Director of OMCC, Rev. Kumar Swamy, Senior OMCC leader and Rev. Alfy Franks, a Senior Trustee.

Nearly 400 people attended the inauguration ceremony, including 100 HIV/AIDS people and 50 eunuchs. Dr Beryl D'souza and Rev. J.S. Raja took turns to talk about the medical aspects behind the Health Initiatives stream while Rev. Kumarswamy shared the main objectives and vision of OMCC. Rev. Alfy Franks inaugurated the hospital building, while Mrs. Mirian D'souza prayed and dedicated it. A special lunch was organized, followed by cultural performances by the local children, young adults and eunuchs.



Hospital Building

The brand new Dharmapuri HIV/AIDS hospital will be open seven-days-a-week between 10:30am and 4:00 pm from September 2009 onwards. The hospital building is comprised of nine rooms. This includes separate wards for male and female inpatients, separate rooms for an in-house doctor and counselor, a pharmacy and a lab for testing. The hospital will also have a registration counter and a waiting hall for patients. A well is being dug to supply water to the building and the team plans on digging a borewell as well in the near future.



Team

The 16-member team includes a doctor and three counselors. All of the counselors are people living with HIV/AIDS.

Recent Activities

Through the months of June and July 2009, a total of 158 patients were treated at the Dharmapuri center. Of these, 78 were new patients. During the June and July 2009 medical camps, 109 patients were treated. On June 14, 2009, six people chose to be baptized at the Dharmapuri center because of the spiritual counsel and support they received from the Dharmapuri staff members. Since March 2009, the team has also started to work among eunuchs offering them counseling, medical care and spiritual hope. Although this work is still in its initial stages, the reception received from the eunuchs has been encouraging and the team is confident that the work will grow soon. Eunuchs have also shared their willingness to help with the work among HIV/AIDS patients.



Stories

Silambrasi is married and has two daughters. During her third pregnancy, a mandatory medical test revealed that she was HIV positive. Immediately, her husband, Nagaraj was advised to take an HIV test and tested positive, too. The couple was heartbroken with the news and sought counsel at the Dharmapuri HIV/AIDS center. The team members counseled the couple and told them how they could start Silambrasi on medication to ensure that the unborn child was not infected with the virus. Silambari and husband decided to abort their child, but they continue to receive unconditional love, medical care and nutrition supplements at the center.

Vadiammal's, (age 26), husband died of HIV/AIDS three years ago. She tested positive, too. The couple had no children. Fearing rejection, Vadiammal did not tell anyone that she had HIV/AIDS. She sought counsel at the Dharmapuri HIV/AIDS center and has been one of its regular patients since then. In 2008, Vadiammal remarried. Before the wedding, Vadiammal told her fiancé that she was HIV positive. Although her fiancé tested negative he agreed to marry her. Now Vadiammal is pregnant. The couple continues to seek counsel and medical aid at the center. Vadiammal is receiving special treatment at the local government-run hospital. She and her husband look forward to a healthy baby.

Upcoming Plans

The team plans to appoint another doctor, two nurses and a counselor in the near future. The team also plans to start a mobile clinic very soon.