



SAMRAKSHA ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

Samraksha: An Introduction

Samraksha is a development organization which has been working with different communities in Karnataka for many years. Samraksha values the strengths and potential of individuals and communities. It is committed to building on these strengths, so that they can deal with the impact of adversities on their lives.

Samraksha's Vision

Our vision is of a Society where every Individual has the capability to lead a life full of health, equality and dignity.

Samraksha's Mission

- Samraksha enables individuals and communities to be who they are and to move towards what they aspire to be.
- Samraksha cares for and supports people affected and living with HIV to enable them to have a quality of life, without pain and with dignity

Samraksha's current programmes largely focus on Koppal district, in north Karnataka and Uttara Kannada district in coastal Karnataka.

Over the years, Samraksha's focus has largely been on families affected by HIV and Samraksha continues to work with these families through various streams of interventions. In the past few years, there has been a special focus on children in these families. The learnings from this has helped Samraksha extend its work to children facing vulnerability in other contexts, leading the work in an exciting new direction, towards working with children and their families in vulnerable peri-urban communities.

Samraksha's Programmes

Care and Support for People living with HIV

The landscape of HIV care and support has changed significantly in the last two decades. Breakthroughs in medical science have led to the development of many combinations of drugs which can control the virus in the body and public health efforts have ensured that these medicines are also freely available in the government health systems. These drugs however need high levels of adherence. Frequent lapses in taking drugs can lead to people developing drug resistance and needing different and more potent combinations of drugs to manage the virus in the body.

The diagnosis of HIV is therefore still a traumatic experience for many families and this, as well as the different psychosocial and socio-economic crises which continue to plague HIV affected families means that people are reluctant to take the medicines – they either resist starting the medicines or at some point in time stop taking it. The crux of HIV care and support therefore is to ensure that people remain motivated to take treatment. That is what Samraksha is doing in the districts of Koppal and Uttara Kannada, in Karnataka.

Samraksha was able to bring back around 7085 people back into treatment over the last year. The care and support team was able to establish a relationship with these clients, give them a space to express their misgiving and problems which were stopping them from taking medicines, seek clarifications for their doubts and then reconnected to the system.

The care and support team offered a similar service to the people newly diagnosed with HIV, once again giving serving as a strong support system while initiating treatment. It has been established that this kind of support at the time of starting medication improves adherence to medication over the life time. For 443 people newly initiated on ART medicines, Samraksha was able to give this support and retain them in treatment over the first year.

For Rajappa, a 29 year old, the news of his HIV status, when he was expecting his first child was a big shock. The knowledge that he will now have to regularly take medicines for his condition made it worse. He resisted accepting his diagnosis and refused to start the treatment. He even hit out at the care and support team, refusing to talk to them, even threatening them. But a few months of sustained efforts to reach out to him respectfully and give him a chance to ask questions and understand his condition bore fruit. After some time, he gradually began to accept his diagnosis and also sought information on the efficacy of medicines. Eventually he has started taking his medications regularly.

Samraksha also provides an early screening service for people living with HIV for some conditions which are known to affect them more than other groups of people. Tuberculosis prevalence for instance remains high among people living with HIV and the care and support team, provide the first level of service, always actively screening for common symptoms and linking people for treatment. We were able to link 10 people to the state run tuberculosis programme for early treatment.

Similarly, Samraksha has established a strategic partnership with Indian Cancer Society for screening and early treatment of cervical cancer among women living with HIV.

Lakshnavva, a 35 year old widowed woman, was one of the women who benefited from this screening service. This helped in diagnosis her malignancy at an early stage. At first, she was devastated by the diagnosis, thinking the end was near. She did not have any immediate family to support her, except for a married daughter. But the Samraksha team was able to give her support and reassurance that with the right treatment, she could recover from this condition. She sought some support from her extended family and they were willing to help her, both materially and morally. With the support of ICS, Samraksha was able to ensure she received treatment at a tertiary super-specialty hospital in Bangalore, where she underwent surgical and medical interventions. The malignancy was addressed at the right stage and she continues to have regular check ups in Bangalore to make sure there is no relapse. " There are no words to express my thanks to Samraksha. You helped me get the correct treatment in Bangalore. That is why I am alive today, I am able to live for the sake of my daughter" she shared.

Resilience Building for HIV affected children

Samraksha's work in resilience building in HIV affected households continues to bear fruit. Samraksha has remained in touch with almost all of the 150 children who were involved in the intensive resilience building programme. Over the last four years. We were gratified to see that almost all of them are settling down in school/college or choosing a job which suits their needs and skillsets. They have thus been able to choose a direction for their life based on their own capacities. Even where they have not been able to clear their school examinations, they have not lost heart, but are persisting with education.

Building on Strengths, Persisting through difficulties

Ashok is currently 18 years old. When he was in school, he showed no interest in studies and decided to opt out of writing 10 standard exams. Samraksha encouraged him to do explore his own interests and appreciated his skills. He apprenticed with plumbers and electricians and picked up many skills. Today he proudly declares, "I get jobs as an independent plumber and electrician and even hire a team for some projects," In order to have professional advancement in this role, he has decided to write his 10 standard exam as a open student.

Bhavna, a 18 year old girl says she had dreams of becoming a doctor. But due to her own ill health, there were huge gaps in her school education and she could not clear her 10 standard examination, failing in almost all subjects. Undeterred, she has been working hard to clear her supplementary exam, while also helping her mother in their flower business and learning tailoring. She has cleared many of her papers, and only needs to clear 2 more. "I will continue to write the exam, untill I pass. I have already revised all chapters once, I will prepare at home. I don't know if I can become a doctor, but I will do whatever I can," she shares.

Apart from education, what has been heartening is the way these participants have internalized some of the learnings from the resilience building programme and applying them in their own lives, whether it be in having a dream for themselves, understanding the value of relationships and making an effect to build and nurture relationships.

Participants' Reflections

What we learnt in Samraksha was very important. Having a goal for oneself, always remembering that goal and working towards it. It helps me to have a plan for my life, no matter what happens..... Ashwin, 21 year old participant

I had not been in touch with my extended family for a long time. I did not want to have anything to do with them. But now I have realized the importance of relationships. I am reaching out and talking to them and building a relationship..... Sunil, a 19 year old participant

Today, I am working as a counsellor. This sensitivity towards people, the ability to understand their situation, I learnt this from Samraksha..... Praveen, a 22 year old participant

Parents have also shared about the impact Samraksha's work has had on the children and appreciated the fact that we are still connected with the children.

Family Voices

Whatever you did with them, it has helped them. I can see that. Our children are not like other children. They care about us and support us..... Basamma, Mother of Mahesh and Mukesh, part of the programme

Please continue to visit and talk to him. Other than you, there has been nobody to guide him.....Parvati, Mother of Sunil

This programme over the last five years fulfilled a crucial need in the lives of young people living in HIV affected households, giving them inputs to build confidence, life skills and capacity to overcome adversities. It also helped Samraksha identify a major need for many children growing up in families facing different kinds of vulnerabilities. This programme thus led Samraksha in a new direction,

Resilience Building and Mental health Promotion with Children in Peri-urban areas

Samraksha has now started working with children living in peri-urban communities. A significant proportion of them face serious vulnerabilities within families including neglect, domestic violence, parental loss or serious illness in the family. Even in the absence of these issues, there are factors contributing to vulnerability in this population including widespread economic deprivation. Samraksha works with these children and families to help them gain both skills and environmental support in order to mitigate the impact of these issues. This is very important because it has been well established now that adversities faced in childhood have a life long impact, creating various physical and mental health issues in adulthood and hampering adjustment to family and professional life.

Samraksha started this programme in 2022 and entered into a partnership with 8 higher primary government schools serving children in these areas. This year, the partnership expanded to 11 schools and we reached 463 children and their families through this programme.

Psychosocial Development of Children

Through this programme, we engage with children through multiple structured group activities as well as one to one interactions with each child and family. All of this contributes to the growth and development of the child. It gives children a wider exposure to subjects, promoting curiosity and questioning. It also promotes skills like creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and interpersonal communication and also builds capacity for emotional regulation and helps children develop empathy and understand of other people.

Children have spoken about how this programme has helped them develop different skills – anger management, problem solving and thinking of alternatives to problems, making actionable plans for their lives.

Whether it be exams or anything in our future, we have learnt how to plan for it and how to take action for it..... Gyanamma, 12 year old participant, after activities for goal setting.

I have learnt that if you say something in anger, the relationship is broken for ever. So I have learnt that it is important to manage your anger..... Yeshwant, 12 year old participant.

I have learnt the value of listening to others and trying to understand them.....

I was able to complete the graduation programme in my school. It is because of the opportunities I got in these group sessions..... Hanumanthi, 12 year old participant

Addressing High levels of absenteeism and dropping out of school

Another important benefit from this programme has been that at the family level, Samraksha has been able to motivate and encourage parents to continue sending their children to school. In many of these communities, there is a huge gap between school enrollment and school attendance and the drop out rate among children, specially when switching from primary school to high school is high. Many of this is rooted in attitudes towards education, as well as perceived risks in school, particularly for adolescent girls. This year, Samraksha has worked with families to highlight the importance of school

for childrens' overall development and 90 % of the participants who passed out of higher primary school this year have enrolled in high school .

The families of Tasneem and Anushree were very reluctant to seek admission in High school for their daughters because they felt that they were being drawn into undesirable company and relationships in school. But Samraksha helped the families understand the value of school, and how it can benefit the children and also shield them from negative influences. Eventually, both of them have enrolled in high school.

This is a typical example of what happens in many of these vulnerable communities, where social pressures sometimes force parents to discontinue education of girls. Samraksha was able to reach out to these families at the right time, and help them make decisions, which could support their children. In the words of the Block Resource Centre Representative, *Samraksha is able to work with the families and make sure children enroll and come to school regularly. This is very important."*

Responding to Families facing stress, improving the environment for children

Many of the families we work with are dealing with many difficulties in their lives – socio-economic stress, marital strife, illness in the family or death of significant members. That is why Samraksha has rooted this programme with each child and family, reaching out and trying to support all of them in times of difficulties.

Sharada and Priya are sisters, aged 10 and 12 who recently lost their father. Their mother was struggling to cope with life, managing her own grief and the sudden loss of the breadwinner in the family. At times, she was negative towards the children, feeling they were not concerned about her and were always demanding things of her. Samraksha was able to develop a strong therapeutic relationship with both the mother and the children, giving them a space to express their own emotions and gradually see ways in which they could cope and become more supportive of each other. Now she feels much more confident about managing her family and also expressed that the children are very understanding of her situation.

Serious stressors in the family can and often do affect the relationship between carers and children and hampers the carers' ability to guide and support the children. This then becomes a spiral of adversities in the children's lives. However timely support and family based interventions, which Samraksha was able to provide, can mitigate this impact.

Acknowledgement from Other Stakeholders

The value of this programme is being recognized and articulated in different forums by the children themselves, the family members as well as school and education department authorities.

Along with education, children need all these activities, which Samraksha is doing. It helps them understand, do and remember things in different ways. I am happy that the children are getting this chance..... Block Education Officer of Koppal, during the Graudation Cermony of 7 standard children in Kotgargere School

My daughter has told me about your training. She says it is teaching her how to be in her life..... Mother of Ruksana Begum, a participant

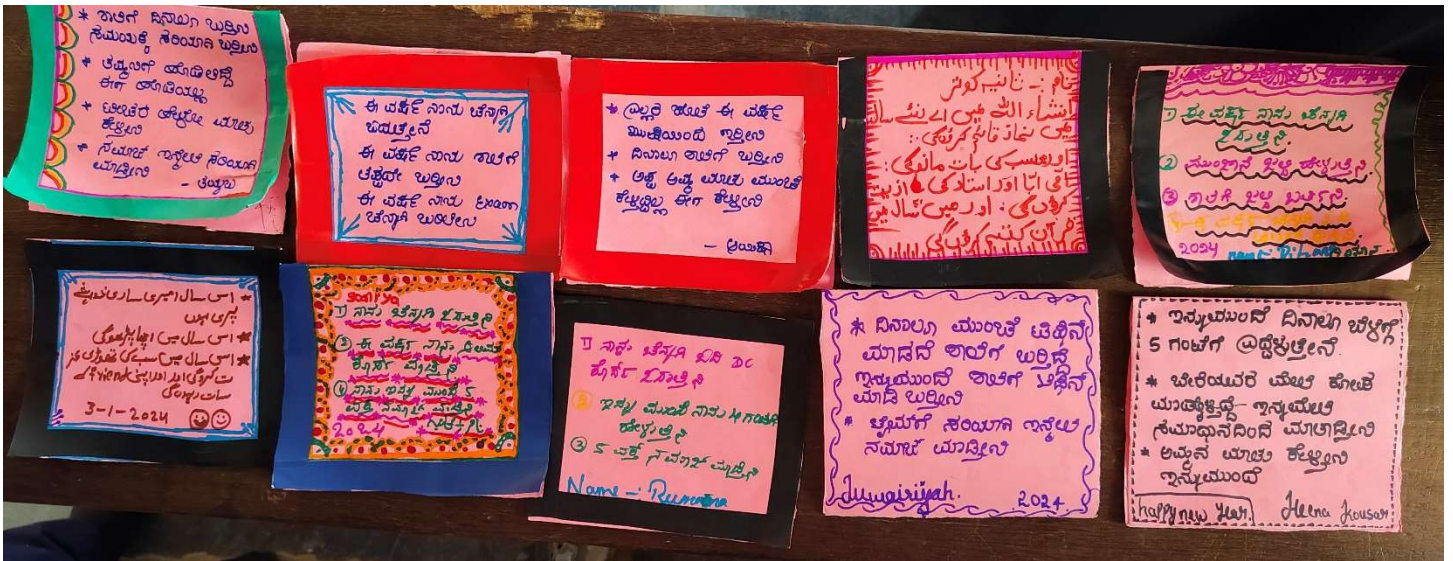
We are so happy you are working with children in our school, we can see the impact on children..... Teacher in Paltan Gali Higher Primary School



Understanding Social Networks and exploring circles of social support



Creative Expression



Goal Setting: Participants writing out their goals in life and making a systematic, step by step plan for attaining them



Being curious and understanding their own world

Samraksha 30th Anniversary

It has been 30 years since the eventful journey of Samraksha began. What has made this journey rich and meaningful has been all the people who have made up Samraksha's team over the years, bringing their own commitment, efforts and insights into the work. To mark the occasion of our 30 anniversary, Samraksha organized get togethers in Bangalore, Koppal and Karwar and around 250 of our team members over the years participated in these events to reminisce about their time in Samraksha and the values and practices they learnt there which they cherish to this day.

Samraksha has been a witness to my life from the beginning. It has thought me both professional skills and life skills..... Parvathi, who worked as counselor and program co Ordinator in Samraksha's care and support programme in Koppal

Samraksha is not just an organization, but a full university to learn many things. Dr. Anna Rao, long time medical consultant for Samraksha's continuum of care services in Koppal

Samraksha taught me to work with honesty and integrity. It taught me to work in difficult circumstances. When I faced such circumstances in life I was able to handle it..... Ganesh Nador, who was the programme co-ordinator for the HIV prevention and community empowerment programme in Uttara Kannada

I learnt the value of inclusiveness and equality in Samraksha. Anand Shetty, who was an accountant for Samraksha's programmes in Uttara Kannada

Samraksha work culture changed me from an impulsive person to more of a listener, from a reactive person to a responder, from a medical person to a humane one..... Dr. Hemamalini, who was part of Samraksha's Reproductive and Sexual Health Programme



The Samraksha family coming together to celebrate 30 years



A note of thanks to our donors

We would like to thank all our donors who have made this work possible.- TTK Prestige, Haribhai Desai Foundation , International HIV/AIDS Alliance and Maharashtra Network of Positive People, who have supported us in the last year.

We would also like to thank Indian Cancer Society and Kaarkinos Healthcare Limited for partnering with us to offer special services for vulnerable women. We would like to thank City Hospital, Koppal for supporting these services.

Our special thanks to all individuals who have extended support to our work – Ms. Carol Perreira, Ms. Joyce Tan, Mr. Kumar Iyengar, Ms. Shanta Dhanraj, Ms. Maitreyi Ganesh and Ms. Gayathri Ganesh. Your recognition of our work gives us a lot of encouragement and we really appreciate your gestures of support.

Financial Information : A Snapshot

Income and Expenditure Statement 2023-2024		
Income	2023-24	Percentage of Total
Grant Received	10698449	95.78
Donation/Prog support	405000	3.63
Fixed Deposit interest	52863	0.57
Others	13731	0.02
Total	11170043	
Expenditure		
Programme Expenses	10172975	91.07
Admin Expenses	865938	7.75
Excess of income over Expenditure	131130	1.18
Total	11170043	

Balance Sheet		
Assets	29659	0.19
Cash in hand	0	
Cash at Bank	15115520	94.31
Loans and Advances	883076	5.50
TOTAL	16028255	
Liabilities		
Corpus Fund	1000	0.01
General Fund	6936527	43.27
Capital Fund	29659	0.19
Donor Fund	8717744	54.39
Current liabilities	343325	2.14
TOTAL	16028255	

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Samraksha's vision is a society where every individual can lead a life full of health, equality and dignity. The current areas of work are Koppal and Uttara Kannada districts in Karnataka.

Samraksha believes in the strength and potential of individuals and communities. It works with them, specially the most vulnerable groups like children to strengthen their ability to overcome difficulties. Samraksha is also committed to ensuring care and support for people affected by HIV, to ensure that they have a good quality of life, and are able to live with dignity and without pain.

Samraksha also helps individuals and communities actualize their potential: to be who they are and move towards what they aspire to be.