



# ANNUAL REPORT

2013-2014



ART, CULTURE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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### **INTRODUCTION**

“BLOSSOM” is a non profit organization which engages in and constantly commits itself to develop activities towards the welfare of the weaker sections of society, especially women and children. BLOSSOM was founded in 1993 as a social development organization. In recent years, it has broadened its outreach to people affected by social stigmas such as HIV/AIDS and TB.

BLOSSOM develops communities by building partnership strategies with community based organizations and stakeholders from the society. BLOSSOM also has a participating approach to development. Beneficiaries are involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects.

The intervention strategies of BLOSSOM focus on providing opportunities to various cross sections of the community. Blossom endeavors particularly to empower women culturally, economically and socially. In order to make a positive impact on the community it serves, BLOSSOM has overcome many setbacks and challenges at each stage of its work. The success of Blossom is due to its dedicated staff whom is successfully ensuring that the organization responds to the needs of the community.

Besides achieving its goals and objectives through education and community programs, BLOSSOM also uses creative energy to reach out to the community. Art is used as a tool to teach and educate communities about culturally sensitive and stigmatized issues. Through visual performances and information booths, BLOSSOM educates about diseases and social problems in an unconventional and successful fashion.

Currently, BLOSSOM undertakes projects that vary from welfare programs to others aimed at raising awareness about the socially sensitive issue of TB in Virudhunagar and Madurai Districts as well as all over Tamil Nadu.

## ***Vision***

"Blossoming of power in every individual to reinforce Community Development".

## ***Mission***

“To facilitate a process where marginalized groups can become self sufficient in improving their health, environmental, economic and social needs through working in partnership with other development actors in the spirit of art, culture and community”.

## **About us**

Blossom, is a non-governmental organization, run by dedicated board members and well-trained staff rendering services to economically, socially disadvantaged and marginalized communities in the southern part of India. Since 1993, many social activities are carried out by our organization. We are involved in various community development programs for the improvement of the afflicted communities.

Our services focus on social, economic and cultural empowerment of underprivileged women, children and individuals living with HIV/AIDS and/or TB.

The organization always recognized and pays sincere thanks to the various Government Departments in India for their valuable support towards the beneficiaries of the programs undertaken by Blossom. Thank to this wonderful support we are able to run our programs in a very effective, timely and continuous manner.



### **The Director's Desk 2013-2014**

We are happy to reach Blossom's 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary. Blossom had a very successful year and we are one step closer to "give a voice to the voiceless." We are working towards our goal of building self-sufficiency among marginalized groups by meeting their health, environmental and social needs. We have oriented our efforts towards those who are often unheard by society; namely women, children and people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS or TB.

### ***Blossom Trust Updates***

Our organization is blossoming. This year was one of our busiest years yet with many results and achievements. We continued to strengthen the following existing projects: Campaign for Education, Prevention & Treatment of TB CEPT - II, Prevention of Parent To Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS (PPTCT), Blossom Creche, Buds Network and Mahalir Thittam. We also continued to care for the orphaned children in the Dayspring Home and made improvements to the Blossom Farm. We have shifted our Blossom Branch office in Kancheepuram district from Guduvanchery to Irumbuliyur.

### ***Personal Accomplishments***

I attended the UNITAID Board meeting in Geneva in December and was also a special invitee at the World TB Day at the House of Parliament in London, UK. As a representative of the Delegations of developing countries NGO, I also attended a Board Retreat of the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria.

I would like to sincerely thank all our benefactors and sponsors, our board of Trustees, and all our dedicated staff and volunteers. I very much look forward to the 2014-2015 year where Blossom will continue to empower the marginalized groups of society.

The Director,  
Blossom Trust,

Virudhunagar,  
South India.

## **Buds Network**

The Buds network was designed by Blossom as an after-school program to provide social and educational support for disadvantaged children. The program began in 2007 as part of the Palmyrah Workers Development society (PWDS) Alliance Care and Support Project with the aim to support HIV positive children and reduce self stigmatization. Since then, Buds has strengthened and expanded to become a network of children's clubs and education centers that includes all disadvantaged children within the community. It focuses on both academic education and life skills development. Many of the children who attend the Buds centers come from families living in poverty, where in some cases children are exposed to alcohol abuse and forced child labour in poor conditions. The Buds centers increase children's motivation to learn, provide academic support and counsel to both parents and teachers in order to ensure that children are able to receive an education.

The Buds centers also implement the innovative Re 1 scheme. This capacity building initiative aims to provide children with financial skills by instilling the habit of saving. Within the scheme, children are encouraged to save Rs.1 each day by the program facilitator; the money is then used by children to purchase educational materials.

Currently, 560 children aged from five to thirteen years old benefit from the programs in 13 centers in the Virudhunagar, Madurai and Kanchipuram districts of Tamil Nadu.

## **Blossom Crèche**



The crèche is in operation in Pandian Nagar, a suburb of Virudhunagar and there are currently 30 children aged between 2 and 5 years old. As women's economic and cultural power increases, so do their opportunities to find work. However, one obstacle that still prevents women from working is childcare. Blossom understood

this need and developed a Crèche (childcare center) in 2003. The facility is operated by a trained teacher and an assistant.

All the children are fed a free nutritious lunch and are provided with monthly medical check-ups. Parent-teacher meetings provide much needed feedback for the wellbeing of the children and the development of the community. The crèche continues to be supported by the Tamil Nadu Social Welfare Board in Chennai.

### **Poomalai Women's Collective**

Blossom created Poomalai, an umbrella federation of women's Self Help Groups (SHGs) for financial education and support to the community. This federation remains the managerial and catalytic force behind the progress and development of women empowerment. With the numbers of enrollment increasing annually, we now have more than 1000 groups in the Poomalai Federation.

Poomalai projects are divided in two sectors: Microcredit and ROSE Marketing. Microcredit helps impoverished rural and urban women gain access to small loans to invest in an income generating activity. Weekly meetings are organized and members save on average Rs. 25/- per week. The savings are deposited into the bank and then divided up as loans to the members. After operating for six months, and if certain requirements are met, the SHGs become eligible to apply for a bank loan after which the funds can be lent to their members who need it the most. Blossom is pursuing its participatory role in securing bulk loans from major corporations such as RMK, Delhi and ICICI Bank in Madurai. Once people have benefited from the Microcredit project, project ROSE (Rural Opportunity for Social Emancipation for Women) helps them establish a sustainable business. Currently, BLOSSOM has a tie-up with ICICI bank to provide loans in this scheme.

### **ROSE – Rural Opportunities for Social Emancipation**

The goal of ROSE is to reinforce and strengthen the economic development undertaken in the Poomalai Women's Collective through fair trade and rural marketing. The rural marketing division works under the principle of U2R (Urban to Rural). This is where household needs will be secured at fair prices for the local people in remote areas. Once people have benefited from a Microcredit project in Poomalai, project ROSE helps them establish a sustainable business. ROSE searches for leaders in the local markets who are willing to train the women to become rural

agents. These newly trained female rural leaders support the local people in making their projects financially sustainable.

The ROSE fair trading division is the active marketing link between Poomalai and potential buyers. Self-help groups have raised awareness about the goods available for sale. Products such as phenol, handbags and fabrics have been valued and promoted. So far ROSE has identified 96 rural agents and social entrepreneurship is becoming a key economic strategy in the communities. This year ROSE has registered with a network of small business units called India trade.com. This greatly improves the communities' chances of gaining contracts to start large scale production within their businesses.

### **Rainbow TB Forum**



To provide a voice and a platform for the rights of TB patients, Blossom created a community based organization (CBO) named “Rainbow TB Forum”. The Forum began when a group of young students who were part of Blossom’s CEPT project were discriminated against by government hospitals when being tested for TB. The original group of 7 members mobilized with other TB patients and there are now over 600 members across the state. Although it has become an independent network with its own legal identity, Blossom continues to promote and nurture the Forum.

Regular monthly meetings are conducted in each district to raise TB awareness, form a social support network for TB patients and reduce self-stigmatization and isolation. The members of the organization also monitor the TB testing centers to make sure that there is no discrimination. The Forum is also an active member of PTCC.

### **Blossom Dayspring Home**

The Dayspring Home is an orphanage established in 2003. The children are either orphaned due to the death of family members caused by HIV/AIDS/TB, or

infected and rejected from their families due to the stigma surrounding the disease. The orphanage is currently home to 25 children; however this number fluctuates throughout the year depending on the circumstances in the community and around the districts. Blossom runs the project the day-to-day and provides for medical expenses, educational needs, 3 nutritious meals a day, clothes and social support.

This year four children left the home (Selvakumar, S.Mahalakshmi, David, Palani). We were happy to welcome 7 Children to the Dayspring Family this year.



### Volunteers

Over the last year, 16 volunteers have contributed to the organization by helping on the farm, donating items such as groceries and stationary and helping the children with their studies.

In March this year we were at a college in Virudhunagar and tried to recruit new volunteers and donors. We managed to collect more than a hundred names.

### Funding

Dayspring Home only needs \$7,500 per year to operate and relies on donations to support the children. Various fundraising initiatives are organized by Blossom to ensure the financial requirements of the home are met.

We have initiated the 'Sponsor a Child' program and the 'Meal a Day' scheme which shows potential donors how a small contribution can make a large difference in a child's life.

### **Blossom Organic Farm**

The Blossom Farm was established by an aid organization called Caritas Sweden in 2002 with the idea of creating a sustainable food income for the children of the Dayspring Home and the Blossom organization. The farm is located next to the Dayspring Home on 6 acres of land and is maintained by the Blossom Farm team who tends to the livestock and crops. We are always looking for volunteers to join our team.

### Thinking of the Environment

The farm is taking steps to be as eco-friendly and healthy as possible:

- Instead of using pesticides, we are now using manure from the livestock as fertilizer.
- The production of 'Vermi-Compost' where worms are used to fertilize and enrich the soil resulting in better yields on production.
- We use the manure in our bio-gas plant where it turns the waste of the livestock into gas to cook with. This is not only environmentally friendly but is also very cost effective.
- To save water, we use a drip irrigation system which collects rain water that is slowly released across the farm through a pipe system.
- The farm also contains a well which stores safe water for the children during the summer when the rains are scarce.
- We have a new organic fertilizer called Panchagavya using dung and urine from the cow on the farm. We mix this with ghee, curd and milk and leave it for around 15 days and we obtain fully organic fertilizer reusing the stool from the cow.

### A Nutritious Lifestyle

The farm aims to produce sufficient vegetables, fruit, milk and eggs for the children and sells any excess production to the local community for revenue.

The farm ensures that the children get an appropriate amount of food with three balanced meals a day.



### Project Axshya

Project Axshya is a civil society initiative with the goal of strengthening TB care and control in India. The project is a well-timed intervention that aligns with the Stop TB strategy and supports India's Tuberculosis Program to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The project began in 2010 with the support from the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) in the Virudhunagar District and REACH Chennai (Resource group for Education and Advocacy for Community Health) in Kancheepuram District, both of which are partners of the Global Fund Against TB and Malaria (GFATM). Through the GFATM-9 project, Blossom-organized cultural

programs were carried out to raise awareness and understanding. Staff Training was undertaken to ensure a more viable future for the project.

Meeting Type	Virudhunagar	Kancheepuram
SHG Meeting	21	30
VHSC	9	-
VPRC	6	-
RVI	2	30
Fire Work	8	
NREGS	6	
CML	3	
VOW	2	
BCD	1	
AWW	1	
Grama Sugathara Thuthuvar	2	
Cooli Members	3	
Public People's house wife	1	
Sweeper's labour	1	



Referral of TB suspects for sputum collection has helped achieve early diagnosis and therefore leads to greater numbers of cured patients. Awareness meetings in high risk communities have targeted TB positive groups to help them change their lifestyle in order to fight the disease. Blossom is a member of the District HIV/TB advisory committee.

CHAI- Watrap	Total	Last Year (2013-2014)
Sputum Collection	917	372
Total Referral	252	40
Sputum Positive	97	30
Dots Taken	97	30
Treatment Completed	76	12
Migration	5	3
Death	1	NIL

### Live Telecast Cable TV

On World TB day, a live telecast program was arranged in Srivilliputhur on Tower TV channel. For this program, Dr.Paulsamy MBBS, DCH from Watrap



government hospital was chief guest. Eighty-five members of the community participated in the program, during which new information related to TB was given. The television show has given TB Clarifications to 50,000 community members.

The TV program benefited the community by increasing TB awareness and increasing hope in the fight against TB. Symptoms of TB and Prevention measures were explained to help build a stronger relation between the participants and their local doctor.

Our Director was a special invitee at the World TB Day at the House of Parliament in London, UK.

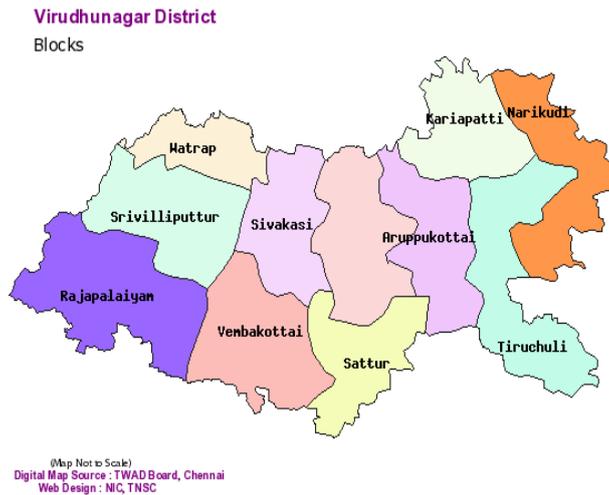
### Global Giving Campaign

There has also been a campaign with global giving to raise more global awareness and funds for the children with TB. Blossom will provide 1000 poor TB victim children with nutrients for 6 months during the DOTS Treatment period so they can fully recover from TB. Our aim is to save 1000 precious children living in Tamil Nadu. Please visit <http://www.globalgiving.org> and donate to this cause.



## **Campaign for Education, Prevention and Treatment for TB (CEPT) - II**

Blossom implements the Campaign for Education, Prevention & Treatment For TB (CEPT) Project in 11 unions of Virudhunagar district. Blossom has been involved in TB prevention and treatment activities for a decade and by linking with government hospitals has promoted DOTS. CEPT-II project has been implemented in 2 blocks of Kancheepuram District as well.



### **Aim:**

To create TB awareness, identify TB infection, facilitate continuous treatment and cure, and stop the spread of TB.

### **Activities:**

1. Creating awareness among people using Edu-clowns People's Theatre Campaigns, brochures, notices and exhibitions
2. Increasing awareness on Government treatment facilities among the community
3. Identifying and referring people with TB for treatment and facilitating access to existing services.
4. Providing DOTS for TB, provide Home Based Care, supervise ART and provide follow-up counseling with the help of DOTS Monitors.
5. Involving TB patients in intervention campaigns against TB.

## EDU-CLOWNS in Eradicating TB

- **Prevention** - Clowns Campaign disseminates messages on how to prevent TB infection and get cured
- **Publicity** - Edu-Clowns provides clear information and directions on how and where to get the Support Services offered by the Government for free and the follow-up services provided by Blossom



## **Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS (PPTCT)**

More than 2 million teenagers between the ages of 10 and 19 years are living with HIV, and many do not receive the care and support that they need to stay in good health and prevent transmission. The PPTCT program aims to prevent the prenatal transmission of HIV from an HIV infected pregnant mother to her newborn baby. The program entails counseling and testing of pregnant women in the ICTCs. Pregnant women who are found to be HIV positive are given a single dose of Nevirapine at the time of labor; their newborn babies also get a single dose of Nevirapine immediately after birth so as to prevent transmission of HIV from mother to child.

This is a project that Blossom has been working on since 2005 and is one of the most fundamental in tackling the future eradication of HIV/AIDS. The funding has continued through Investment Lease and Financial Services Corporate (IL&FS) in Chennai, under project RCC-II.

This is a specific program that provides a comprehensive, family-centered range of support, clinical services and public health initiatives with the central goal of preventing the transmission of HIV/AIDS from parents to their babies. Since 2004, we have tested 21576 ANC mothers, 2605 of which was accomplished last year alone.

### Care and Support Meetings

Specialist Blossom counselors conduct meetings with people living with HIV/AIDS for emotional and psychological support, as well as act to build support groups within the community.

### PPTCT Outreach Workers Support Services

A team of 6 trained Blossom staff in Virudhunagar provide additional support services to mothers during pregnancy, delivery and post-natal care.

<b>Particulars</b>	<b>2004-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>
No of ANC Mothers mobilized to hospital	27610	1922
No of ANC Mothers tested	21576	1769
No of mothers found HIV positive	107	9
No of spouses referred to hospital	186441	1500
No of spouses tested	12962	1350
No of spouses found HIV positive	50	10
No of institutional delivery	81	6
No of babies given Nevropin	69	6
No of cases referred to ART (+ve ANC, +ve Spouses, +ve PNC & Child)	712	25
No of babies referred to CPT(ART Centre)	-	6

### **District Resource Centre – TNVHA, Chennai**

The TNVHA (Tamil Nadu Voluntary Health Association) is an association of voluntary organizations working for health promotion in Tamil Nadu. Blossom acts as the Virudhunagar District Resource Center for the TNVHA by coordinating the District Facilitation Centers (DFCs) and facilitating the District Coordination Committee (DCC). There are currently 11 NGO members in Virudhunagar district who attended the AGBM (Annual General Board Meeting) held at Tuticorin in 2013.

### ***Our District Resource Center does the following:***

- Provides a platform for members to come together once a month where they share experiences.
  - Builds the capacity of its members through training.
  - Identifies issues and pooled resources for campaign lobbying and policy advocacy.
  - Provides relevant updated information to the member organizations.
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## **Board of Trustees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Position</b>
Mrs.T.Mercy Annapoorni	M.com., M.A. M.W.S	Managing Trustee
Mrs.G.Vatsala	Diploma in CDDM	Treasurer
Mrs.C.John Jasper	B.E., M.B.A	Trustee
Dr.M.J.I.Raj	M.S.W, M.A (Psychology), M.Ed.,M.Phil., Ph.d	Trustee
Mr.T.Aji Evans	M.com.,M.Ed.,	Trustee

## **Acknowledgments**

Blossom would like to express its sincere appreciation to the following organizations for their valuable contributions in Blossoms projects for 2013-14:

- Central Social Welfare Board, New Dehli
- District Collectorate, Virudhunagar
- Indian Development Foundation (IDF), Mumbai
- International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease
- Investment Lease and Financial Services Corporate (IL&FS)
- National TB Control Program of India
- REACH Global Fund, India
- Tamil Nadu Women Development Corporation Chennai
- TB Care and Control (TBCC)
- The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria (GFATM)

Blossom would also like to thank all its staff, volunteers, members, donators and partnerships with the local authorities whose dedication, contributions and ongoing support have ensured that Blossom has continued striving towards 'Blossoming power in every individual to reinforce community development!'

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