Supporting community action on AIDS in India

THE MAGIC BUS
A FLIPBOOK ON BASICS OF HIV/AIDS
International HIV/AIDS Alliance

The International HIV/AIDS Alliance is a global partnership of nationally-based organisations working to support community action on AIDS in developing countries. The national partners help local community groups and other non-government organisations to take action on AIDS, supported by technical expertise, policy work and fundraising carried out across the Alliance.

The vision of the Alliance is of a world in which people do not die of AIDS. This means a world where communities have brought HIV under control by preventing its transmission, and where they enjoy better health and higher quality of life through access to comprehensive HIV prevention, care, and support and treatment services.

India HIV/AIDS Alliance (or, Alliance India), established in 1999, comprises a Secretariat in New Delhi, five lead partner organisations (the Linking Organisations within the global Alliance) and their networks of over 100 community-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) across five states – Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Manipur, Maharashtra and Delhi. The Alliance’s project office in Hyderabad was formally launched in April 2008 as the fifth lead partner (or Linking Organisation) in India. Alliance India has also been working closely with a state partner organisation in Manipur. In 2007, the Alliance in India supported over 120 community-based projects through its NGO and CBO partners to prevent HIV infection; improve access to HIV treatment, care and support; and lessen the impact of HIV. The last including reducing stigma and discrimination, particularly among the most vulnerable and marginalised communities key to the epidemic – sex workers, men who have sex with men (MSM), injecting drug users (IDUs) and adults and children living with and/or affected by HIV.

Funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) was awarded to the Alliance in July 2007, whereby the partnership in India has been broadened to include two new project-based lead partner relationships with two external organisations and their networks of implementing NGO partners.


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The Magic Bus Story

Join teacher didi and her students as they tour the human body in the Magic school bus, a metaphor that has been used to tell a story to school children in the age group of 8-14 years. Using visuals and cartoons, it creates characters which children can easily identify with. Through their voice, it covers the basics of HIV infection and treatment in a simple language and style.

This time the Magic bus takes the children inside Sheru’s body, where they meet the RBCs and WBCs. These two guardians of the human body tell the children about the immune system, germs, HIV, AIDS, opportunistic infections and ART.

The facilitator can use this story to talk to the children using the flipbook illustrations. The facilitator should familiarise himself with the story and be aware of the points that will be raised or the questions that will be raised by the children. In all cases, the groups may not be only children and there may be adults present. In such cases, the facilitator needs to be aware that there are some points where he needs to focus on, especially for the adults or older children in the age group of 14-16 years.

These points relate to the following:

1. How HIV is transmitted, talking about unsafe sex and drug use.
2. Living with people who are positive: where the facilitator should talk about what adults need to take care of when the children in their care are positive.
3. Testing for HIV, where the facilitator needs to talk about risk perception with adults.
How to Use this Flipbook

Preparation
- Use this flipbook to talk and discuss about issues related to HIV/AIDS, immune system, detecting symptoms, testing, treatment and cure.
- Review the flipbook in advance to familiarise yourself with the contents and messages.
- Each page is accompanied by important messages that summarise the key points. Use the visuals to illustrate the points that you are talking about.
- Dramatise or play act to build excitement around the magic bus.

In the Field
- Build a rapport with the children and their parents.
- Seat them comfortably, in a semi-circle or facing you.
- Speak clearly, loudly and slowly. Use simple words, phrases and language. Check with the children if they can hear you.
- Explain each picture and allow enough time per picture to discuss the main points. Explain again if necessary.
- Engage the children in story telling. Ask them how they interpret the pictures. Do they remind them of something or somebody.
- Ask the children to repeat the key points to ensure they have understood the message/s.
- Encourage and prompt the children to ask questions, clarify doubts and express their thoughts.
- After every important message like how one can get infected by HIV, how it can spread, what is the treatment etc, repeat the message so that you are sure that it has been absorbed by everyone.
- Continue with games and activities to help the children better understand the key points.

Thank the children for paying attention, after the session.
1. Welcome to Jhalakumalaku School
2. Meeting Red Blood Cells (RBCs)
3. Making Friends with White Blood Cells (WBCs)
4. What is AIDS?
5. Sitting, Eating, Living with HIV Positive People is Okay
6. How does HIV enter the blood?
7. Detecting HIV
8. Opportunistic Infections
9. ART or Anti Retroviral Treatment: Ray of Hope
10. Magic Bus Returns to School
Activity Section
Welcome to Jhalakumalaku School

It is story time and the children are waiting expectantly for their teacher didi.

Teacher didi is going to teach science to her children today and she is going to talk about the human body.

The children are very excited as they chatter in the classroom. Teacher didi comes in and they all crowd around her.

“What are we doing today? Where are we going?” they all ask.

“Calm down, calm down. Today we are going to tour the human body and especially learn about one thing.”

“What is that?” they all ask teacher didi.

“We are going to see how a human body defends itself against germs which attack it”, says teacher didi. “Today all of you will learn about it and come back and share it with the class.”

The children are all excited. And off they go in the Magic bus standing in the courtyard. The Magic bus can cruise anywhere in the world.
Children crowd around their teacher *didi*

Children board the Magic bus to tour the human body
Meeting Red Blood Cells (RBCs)

“Now children, let us close our eyes and begin our journey,” says teacher didi. The children close their eyes and the bus starts moving. Soon they are zooming off and then they hear a rumble which sounds like they are entering a tunnel. The bus stops and didi asks them to open their eyes.

Lo! The magic school bus has taken the children and their teacher inside Sheru’s body.

Sheru is a young man who works in the farm.

What a fascinating place! “Do not disturb the sleeping cells and stay together in groups,” teacher didi cautions the children.

Yipee! They are off. Raja, a sharp and inquisitive student along with his friends, gets off the bus fascinated by a red river. Gosh! It looks like the colour of blood.

Teacher didi says, “It is indeed blood.”

The children jump into the red river, and climb onto what looks like a circular boat.

“Ouch”, Raja and his friends look around for the source of noise. They hear it from under them. “Hey take care, you are too many for me. Wait, I will call my friends to come and take you.” Surprised, they see the boat talking to them. The boat calls out to her friends and soon they join her. The children get on to one boat each and sail away. “We are the Red Blood Cells (RBCs); we give the colour red to blood and carry oxygen in Sheru’s body.”

Important Points

- Red blood cells carry oxygen for the human body.
RBCs (boats) carry the children
Making Friends with White Blood Cells (WBCs)

“Oh! That is great, so where are you taking us?”

“To meet some of our brothers. Oh! Here they are. Hello!! We have brought some visitors to meet you. These are our brothers, the white blood cells (WBCs).” The children look at the huge round balls before them. Some of them seem to be fighting with what look like aliens.

“Hey, what is happening?” ask the children. “Making sure that kids like you do not get sick or hurt,” RBC replies. “We are called the Immune System: RBCs, WBCs, bone marrow, skin and thymus – we protect Sheru and keep him healthy.”

“What should one do to stay healthy?” asks another child.

“Stay clean, eat proper food, wash our hands before each meal, cover our mouth when we cough or sneeze and dispose garbage in proper dustbins.”

“Yes, and if one does not follow these instructions, viruses and bacteria will enter the body.”

Important Points

- Red blood cells, white blood cells, bone marrow, skin and thymus together form the Immune System, protecting the human body and keeping it healthy.
- To stay healthy, we must stay clean, eat proper food, wash our hands before each meal, cover our mouth when we cough or sneeze and dispose garbage in proper dustbins.
To stay healthy one should ...

RBCs introduce the children to WBCs
What is AIDS?

“Oh, yes we learnt about viruses and bacteria on our last trip. Were those the viruses what you were fighting against sometime back?”

“That is our job. We keep Sheru healthy. We fight against all these germs that come inside and upset Sheru,” say the WBCs proudly.

“But sometimes, the germs become too powerful for us.”

“So at this point, it will be important that we learn about AIDS or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome.”

“What is AIDS?” the children look at the great big WBC that has joined their conversation. “AIDS is a disease that can make you very sick, but it cannot spread easily”.

“How does it come to you?”

“AIDS is caused by a virus called HIV, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus and it enters your body through someone else’s blood or bodily fluids, and then you become HIV Positive.”

“How does that happen?” ask the children.

“It can be transmitted only in four ways: from an infected mother to her baby, by using used/infected needles, from getting infected blood and from unsafe sex,” tell the RBCs.

Important Points

- AIDS cannot spread easily but it can make you very sick.
- AIDS is caused by a virus called HIV, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus.
- AIDS can be transmitted in four ways:
  a) From an infected mother to baby
  b) Using used/infected needles
  c) Unsafe sex
  d) Getting infected blood
Germs become powerful and destroy the WBCs

WBCs protect our body

WBCs fight the viruses and germs

Healthy Sheru
Sitting, Eating, Living with HIV Positive People is Okay

“What can we do to help?” asked the children.

“Oh! very simple things. Take care. If someone is bleeding, do report to the elders in your school,” say the WBCs.

“Do you get AIDS by touching someone?” the children ask.

The RBCs line up and sing.

“No, no, you do not get AIDS, you get HIV. HIV in the body can lead to AIDS. And you cannot get it if you are touching anyone or hugging someone.

You cannot get it by eating with someone.

Yes, and neither can you get it by using the same toilets or bathrooms.

Do not worry about getting HIV by the biting of bugs or mosquitoes.”

Important Points

- One does not get AIDS, but HIV, the germ that gives AIDS.
- Touching someone, hugging someone, eating with someone or using the same toilets does not cause HIV.
- HIV does not enter the body through a mosquito bite.
HIV is not caused by playing with someone who is positive.

WBCs helping a little girl who is bleeding.
How does HIV enter the blood?

“What happens when the virus gets in the blood? Why do you not fight it WBC?” the children ask.

“We get taken over by these germs. We do not have the weapons to fight them,” replies the Big WBC.

“They become too powerful and too many for us and then they multiply”, pips in another.

“They make us weak; they prevent us from fighting more germs.”

“When we become weak, Sheru also becomes weak.”

“Why doesn’t Sheru take medicines that can help him to fight the germs?” asks Raja.

Important Points

- Sometimes the HIV germs are very powerful, and thereby weaken the WBCs, and prevent them to fight the other germs.
Virus enters the blood and destroys WBCs

No. of viruses increase

Human body becomes weak
Detecting HIV

“The germs enter so silently that Sheru does not come to know, and there are no medicines that will help in stopping these germs, once they are inside the body,” sigh the WBCs.

“They are not scared of anything and nothing can stop them once they attack us inside the body,” says another WBC.

“Yes, there are no ways in which they will let Sheru know about their presence either.”

“So how will you know and how will you take care?” ask the children.

“There is a test which can tell”, answer the WBCs. “It is called the ELISA test.”

“You will know only from the ELISA test that the HIV germ is inside the human body.”

“What will the doctor say once he knows that the germ is inside the body?” asked the children, looking concerned.

Important Points

♦ There are no medicines to stop the HIV germs once they enter the human body.

♦ The doctor conducts the ELISA test to determine whether the HIV germ has entered the human body or not.

♦ The test for HIV is done free of cost at all Government hospitals for both adults and children.
Man taking ELISA test at the ICTC

HIV destroys the WBC

Man going to work
Opportunistic Infections

The WBCs have now all lined up and the children curiously look up at the defenders and soldiers of the human body.

“Well we are not all that weak”, they thunder.

“We take care for as long as we can. Even as long as 10 years, we can fight these intruders.”

“But after that”, their faces fall, “the germs come in and attack Sheru.”

The children looked on in wonder. “So what happens then?” they ask.

“When we fall, various other germs apart from HIV also come in and attack Sheru. He becomes weaker day by day.”

“These are called Opportunistic Infections, chipped in the RBC who was listening at the side.”

Important Points

♦ The immune system of the human body can fight the germs for even as long as 10 years.

♦ Once the immune system weakens, other germs apart from HIV enter the human body and attack, which are called Opportunistic Infection.
Human body becomes weak

WBCs fighting germs

After 10 years, WBCs become weak

Germs (opportunistic infections) increase in number

Human body becomes weak
"Opportunistic infections are what the name means. When germs find that they have the opportunity to attack as we have become weak, they will come in and do just that.”

“So, Sheru gets sick by having loose motions, or jaundice, or TB or many such diseases carried by these germs,” say the WBCs.

“But don’t lose heart! Help is at hand. We have some medicines that can make us strong and keep these HIV germs from troubling us.

This is called ART – Anti Retroviral Treatment,” says a Big WBC.

“These are medicines that the doctor will tell Sheru when to start taking and they will help him in fighting with the HIV germs.”

Important Points

- ART consists of medicines that the doctor prescribes, which help in fighting the HIV germs.
- The doctor indicates the timing and duration of the medication, which should be followed.
ART drugs throwing out the HIV germs
Just then there was a shout and the children turned to see the RBCs running towards them in a group. “Help! Help!”, they were shouting to their friends.

“Come on, there is an emergency, Sheru has hurt himself, we need to help him.”

The children felt the red river flow suddenly in one direction and they clambered onto the RBCs.

“Come on we will leave you to your bus”, they said as they started sailing swiftly towards some light coming from an opening.

The children see their magic bus at the side; teacher didi and their friends were already in the bus and waving to them.

“Come fast, the bus is going”, shouted their friends.

Raja and his friends ran towards the bus as it was revving up its engine.

Faster and faster the bus went towards what looked like daylight.

The children closed their eyes as they felt themselves swept out of Sheru’s body.
Emergency situation

Bus spinning and coming out of the human body
Back in class, teacher didi was asking each group where they had been. Raja and his friends narrated their adventure with the RBCs and WBCs and what they had learnt about HIV/AIDS.

Here is a quiz that teacher didi has given her children on HIV. Can you help the children answer the riddles?

1. Do you know what HIV stands for? Fill in the letters from the ones given below:
   
   H______________________I______________________V______________________

   Human | Immediate | Veto | Help | Inner | Heart |
   Vicious | Healthy | Vector | Virus | Hurtful | Help |
   Immunodeficiency | Important | Illness | Vitamin | |

2. Do you know what the term AIDS stand for? Find the answers from the clues given below:

   A______________________I______________________D______________________S______________________

   Acquired | Antibody | Deadly | Auto | Status | Idle |
   Idea | Deficiency | Disease | Sickness | Drug | All |
   Syndrome | | | Immune | Symptom | Ice |
3. The facilitator draws this box on the board and asks the children to put in the names of the pictures that belong to the immune system in the box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What belongs</th>
<th>Does not belong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red Blood Cells</td>
<td>Intestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Blood Cells</td>
<td>Skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thymus</td>
<td>Lungs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidneys</td>
<td>Bone Marrow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Word search

Find the words in the box below that you came across in the story. Put the jumbled words together to make a sentence that gives you a message about HIV.

| AIDS through you controlled medicine primarily controlled blood HIV that through HIV taking hugging things bites is a know can by HIV doing You of, HIV with get sharing can be playing have test will who is by or by a exchange positive virus exchange enter HIV causes mosquito LISA you body fluids medicine HIV called only ART that someone do not or |

So what is the message we have about HIV?

- HIV is a virus that causes AIDS.
- HIV can enter only through exchange of body fluids, primarily blood.
- You do not get HIV through mosquito bites, by hugging or playing or sharing things with someone who is HIV positive.
- You will know that you have HIV by doing a test called ELISA.
- HIV can be controlled by taking ART medicine.
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About CHAHA

CHAHA project (meaning 'a wish' in Hindi), is extending care and support services to children living with and/or affected by HIV and AIDS, and their families especially women-headed households. With funding from Round 6 of the Global Fund to Fight Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), the India HIV/AIDS Alliance (as a civil society Principal Recipient), and its consortium of eight Sub-Recipients, is implementing this expanded child-centred home and community-based care and support project, in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Manipur. CHAHA is working closely with different stakeholders and Government Ministries to find ways to help keep children with their parents or extended families. Within a span of five years, the project aims to reach 64,000 children, in order to reduce HIV related morbidity/mortality in adults and children and address the impact of HIV on children.

Programme Context

- Focus mainly on children and families, especially women-headed households, who need access to care and support and treatment services.

- Development of a comprehensive package of care and support services for children living with and/or affected by HIV, including facilitating access to treatment services and related support.

- For long term sustainability, mainstreaming service availability for children through working with other departments/Ministries, e.g. Women & Child Development, Social Justice & Empowerment and Rural Development.

Approach & Continuum of Care and Support

With a rights-based approach, CHAHA empowers the community to identify their needs and then provide them with home-based care and support. This approach is based on the significance that Alliance attributes to a community-driven response to HIV, with the belief that family involvement and active engagement and leadership of the community is a pre-requisite for any HIV intervention. Building the capacity of the communities to access various government programmes to ensure sustainability of the interventions is an important element of this programme.

CHAHA provides a comprehensive package of services to address the needs of the children affected by HIV and their families that includes supplementary nutrition support, access to healthcare, education support, psychosocial support, and support for income generation programme and emergency household support.