

## eMpowered Outreach Workers, Improved Services for PLHIV

eMpower is a tablet-based app being developed by India HIV/AIDS Alliance in collaboration with IBM and the Global Fund. This tool will help facilitate client management and ensure successful client follow-up in our Vihaan programme. eMpower will provide our nearly 2,000 Vihaan outreach workers (ORWs) with improved access to client data to help them target their outreach more effectively and enable improved better quality of life for PLHIV. The system will also strengthen data capture and reporting in the programme.

In August, workshops were held in Hyderabad and Bangalore to do user testing of the app. Representatives from Vihaan Sub-Recipients in Karnataka and Telangana, along with ORWs and project coordinators from four Care & Support Centres (CSCs) participated in the workshops. The participants' response to the app was encouraging. They noted that the tablets will help ORWs prioritize based on the urgency of client's needs. They also commented that they are happy to have less paperwork! Participants gave some useful feedback to improve the software and user experience. The IBM team shared how rewarding it has been for them to develop a technology to improve PLHIV wellbeing. After incorporating this feedback, pilot testing of the app will begin in six Indian states in September and will subsequently be scaled-up across the country.



## Onam Unites All in Kerala

Onam, a harvest festival, is the biggest and the most important festival of Kerala. Celebrating this holiday in a unique way, Vihaan CSCs and Help Desks in Kerala used this opportunity to build advocacy and mobilize the PLHIV community. Along with fellow community members and other stakeholders, the CSCs and Help Desks enthusiastically organized a range of events, including flower rangoli, to raise awareness about HIV in women and children. Prominent guests at the event included the local Member of Parliament and Member of the Legislative Assembly as well as District Authorities and the ART Centre team. Prior to the event, awareness outreach was done, and funds were mobilized from the local community and other philanthropists.



(The MP from Kasargod, Kerala, inaugurating the event, and other glimpses of Vihaan Onam activities.)

## From Hopelessness to Health: CSCs Change Lives

At the age of 18, Thiya Babina (*name changed to maintain confidentiality*) was married. Within a year, she delivered a baby boy. When the child was around eight months old, her husband left her and was then considered missing. Only later when he did not return, the family learnt that he had joined a militant group. A short illness led her to be tested for HIV; she was positive. After getting this news, Babina left her in-laws' house and, along with her son, moved back to her parents.

To earn a living and support her child, she borrowed from a local moneylender and opened a small shop near her house. In time, she developed a relationship with the moneylender, and they started living together as his second wife, leaving her family's home. However, soon the man came to know of her HIV status and deserted her, and her ex-husband's parents took away her son. Babina was ill, overwhelmed and almost lost hope.

After hearing about Vihaan services from one of her friends, Babina visited the CSC in Imphal to seek shelter. The Discrimination Response Team (DRT) there referred her to the Swadhar Home in Canchipur so that she had a place to stay for the short term. The CSC team also provided her counselling, and there was a tremendous improvement in her health. The DRT started speaking directly with her parents and eventually convinced them to take her back. She returned home five months later and reopened her shop. Today, she is twenty-four years old and living independently in rented accommodation. She is living a healthy life and is able to take care of herself. The CSC remains in constant touch with her and are glad to see the positive change in her life.

## Vihaan Updates

**1,055,082** PLHIV registered and reached with care & support services  
**397,262** PLHIV and family members linked with social protection schemes  
**220,564** Lost-to-Follow-Up PLHIV tracked and returned to ART services  
**588,574** PLHIV screened for TB

(through August 2016)

