

Balasyoga: Support for children, strength for families

I could not send my son to school ever since my husband passed away due to HIV. After our association with Balasyoga started, my son is back to school and I received support to start a microenterprise.

— Sujatha



When HIV and AIDS strike a poor household, every aspect of a child's life is affected. If a parent falls ill, household income drops. As a result, children may miss vaccinations, eat fewer and less nutritious meals, and not get the medical care they need. Girls and boys are often thrust into the role of mother, father or both as they look after siblings, care for the sick or drop out of school to earn money. Children who have lost one or both parents to AIDS may be anxious and depressed, or experience discrimination due to the social stigma that still accompanies HIV and AIDS in many communities.

Balasyoga, (which means “active support to the child”) was started in 2007 to address the needs of children and their families affected by HIV in the Andhra Pradesh state in India, where HIV prevalence rates are among the highest in the country. Balasyoga understands that children's lives improve when their parents are healthy, productive and able to provide a stable home. Active in 11 districts, the program gives holistic support to these families by linking them to clinical care services, nutritional and educational support, social welfare services and income-generating activities. The program's primary goals are to improve the quality of life of children and adults infected or affected by HIV, reduce HIV infection in children, lower the number of child deaths due to AIDS and decrease the number of children orphaned by AIDS.

Family-centered case management is at the heart of the program. Family Case Managers reach out to children and families in their homes, connect families to a wide range of support and services and ensure that a family's individual needs are addressed in a timely and comprehensive way.

Health

The program provides community- and home-based primary health care and referrals to confidential HIV testing and counseling, antiretroviral therapy (ART) and prevention and treatment of opportunistic infections.

About FHI 360: FHI 360 is a nonprofit human development organization dedicated to improving lives in lasting ways by advancing integrated, locally driven solutions. Our staff includes experts in health, education, nutrition, environment, economic development, civil society, gender equality, youth, research, technology, communication and social marketing — creating a unique mix of capabilities to address today's interrelated development challenges. FHI 360 serves more than 60 countries and all U.S. states and territories.



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Psychosocial support

The program addresses emotional and social needs of children and their families, with age-appropriate and needs-based interventions, such as life-skills education and support groups, including for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Education

BalasaHyoga helps children get back in school and stay in school. It also links out-of-school youth and widows to vocational training programs.

Nutrition

Child nutrition is improved through nutritional assessments, growth monitoring, dietary counseling and therapeutic interventions.

Livelihoods

Household economic security is improved through kitchen gardens, savings and loan groups and income-generating projects, like livestock and seed banks.

Safety net

Families are linked to existing government social welfare and protection programs, such as pensions, government food programs and employment schemes, which improve the family's capacity to cope with crisis and become economically secure over the long term.

BalasaHyoga's strength lies in the fact that it leverages resources available within government systems, avoiding duplication of services and ensuring that the program is cost-effective and sustainable over the long term. Providers also share data, giving families access to services across government facilities and departments, such as health, education, women and child development. This comprehensive approach helps the program meet the complex and integrated needs of children and their families.

BalasaHyoga is led by a consortium that includes FHI 360, the Clinton Foundation's HIV/AIDS Initiative (now known as the Clinton Health Access Initiative) and CARE. The consortium partners with India's National AIDS Control Organization and the Andhra Pradesh State AIDS Control Society, with support from the Children's Investment Fund Foundation and the Elton John AIDS Foundation. The program is implemented at the community and facility level through collaboration with 21 nongovernmental organizations.

FHI 360 and BalasaHyoga consortium partners provide technical assistance and support to local implementing partners in recruitment and training, program implementation, data management and grant management. Regular visits to the community and households, conducted with local partners, provide hands-on support and responsiveness to changing needs.

Since it was launched in 2007, BalasaHyoga has reached more than **73,000** children, **90,000** adults and **48,000** families affected by HIV and AIDS, as well as nearly **1,100** pregnant women and their families.

BalasaHyoga is helping families affected by HIV and AIDS remain strong and resilient while their children have a renewed opportunity to achieve their highest potential.