



Mariamamma Mariamma a 31 year old lady is the daughter of a farmer from a small village in Andhra Pradesh, India. She has three sisters and one brother. She and her brother were fortunate to have higher education while the other children studied up to the 7th class only. All the children are married.

She completed her graduation and got married to an Indian Railway employee who had studied till the 10th class. After one year of marriage she became pregnant and during ante natal check up she was tested for HIV and was found to be positive. Her husbands test also revealed that he was also HIV positive and her world was shattered. She and her husband went through intense family quarrels and she confronted her husband about his past sexual behaviour and after a lot of argument and tears, her husband revealed that he was positive even before their marriage, and confessed about his promiscuity and his habit of alcohol abuse and gambling. She felt cheated and thought of leaving him and staying independently as she was a graduate. She even thought of remarrying but realized that she could not take the chance of infecting another person. In the meantime her husband realized the enormity of his deceit and promised that he would henceforth be faithful to her. She gave birth to a girl child who fortunately tested negative bringing back a ray of hope to her and she decided to bring up her child at her parents place. The couple faced a lot of financial problems as he brought home only Rs 300/- per month as the rest of the salary went towards payments of debts. By pawning her jewelry, she cleared all the family debts.

Around this time she joined the "Railway Women's Empowerment and AIDS Prevention Society" (REAPS) as a peer counselor under UNODC Project I49. After joining REAPS as a counselor, she empowered herself with more information on HIV/AIDS, and the impact of substance abuse which she did not have earlier. She looked at life with renewed vigor and energy and from her earnings was able reclaim her jewelry from the pawn broker. She wants to be a role model to other positive people and help them in coping with their lives positively. As she imparts the preventive messages on Drug abuse and HIV/AIDS she experiences fulfillment. She does not want any other women to suffer her fate. By taking loan from a revolving fund she bought a buffalo which was given to her parents so that the income generated could be utilized for the welfare of her child.

She and her husband are on anti retroviral therapy and are using condom. Her husband has stopped using alcohol. She hopes to convince him to give up smoking in the near future. They are now leading a happier life and have no health problems. She hopes for a brighter future for her child.