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A New Lease of Life

“I was ashamed that I could not afford medicines for my child because I spent my saving on drugs”, says Ranjit (name changed). Ranjit was a drug addict who fought all odds to leave this habit. This newsletter brings to you stories of Ranjit from Bathinda, Punjab & Dhanbantin, a *sakhi* from Bhatapara, Chhattisgarh who made it a personal mission to work towards maternal and child safety.

As a youth, Ranjit helped his father in the field, but under the influence of his friends he became an addict. He injected drugs by sharing needles with his friends. Post marriage and even after having a child, Ranjit could not give up this habit. His family life suffered. He was ashamed of being unable to support his family. Ranjit approached ACF to discuss his problem. After understanding Ranjit’s history, he was suggested to undergo

HIV test. Ranjit was aware that one of the ways to get infected is through shared needles. Even before the test report, he was heartbroken by the thought of being infected just out of sheer negligence. He feared betraying his family. Waiting for the report changed Ranjit’s life. He promised he would leave drugs and concentrate on developing his career.



A health camp in progress



A session on HIV awareness



Dhanbantin at work



To his relief, the test was negative. He vowed to beat drugs. Post counselling, he became a peer educator to help drug effected users. He shared his story and motivated others to at least not share needles. Ranjit soon got a job in a Transport Company. He was also encouraged to apply for a job abroad and fulfill his dream. As luck would have it, Ranjit was given work permit in New Zealand. One firm decision changed Ranjit's life for ever.

Personal Mission: Save Lives

For *sakhi* Dhanbantin Gedere of Khairtal village, Bhatapara, mother & child care is of prime importance. Dhanbantin was trained as a *sakhi* (village health functionary) by ACF. It is her personal

mission to ensure zero maternal & child death in her village. She was surprised to understand that by a few basic steps, lives of children & women could be saved. In one instance, Dhanbantin got to know of women in her village who had delivered a severely underweight child. Dhanbantin rushed to her house and took the necessary steps as taught in the training. She advised the mother to feed the child correctly and gave tips to keep the child clean and protect from infection. With regular supervision & tips given by the *sakhi*, the child soon recovered. With numerous success stories to her credit, Dhanbantin has marked a special place for herself in her village. People seek her advice for not only health, but other issues as well.
