



## CASE STUDY

# Empowering Children Through Dance

**Youth affected by HIV learn to live healthfully, participating in troupe**



Photo: CDDT

Through Dancing Feat's innovative dance forms, children who are HIV-positive or at risk of becoming positive learn valuable life skills to build their confidence and knowledge.

***“I know how to protect myself from HIV [and] not to act over-friendly with boys. Otherwise, they can take advantage of you [and] ask you for sex. I learned to not repeat the mistakes which others have committed, to protect myself,” said a girl participating in the Dancing Feat troupe.***

### Challenge

As many as 100,000 children in India are infected with HIV/AIDS, which not only threatens their health but can also debilitate their families, depriving them of parental love and protection. HIV-associated stigma and discrimination can lead to isolation and reduce their chances of receiving basic education. Children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS also undergo severe psychological stress.

### Initiative

The USAID-supported Dancing Feat project has involved more than 1,900 HIV/AIDS at-risk, infected and affected children in Mumbai. A local partner, Committed Communities Development Trust, taught the children dance as an innovative medium to provide counseling sessions, changing attitudes and behavior and building confidence among at-risk children. Shiamak Davar Institute of Performing Arts, a renowned modern dance institute in India, supported the project by choreographing dances for the children. Dance was used as a means to strengthen their concentration, motivate them to adopt healthy habits, teach them life skills and counsel them on topics such as adolescence and HIV/AIDS prevention. The project also provided supplementary nutrition to the children. Performing group dances accompanied by pulsating music on themes such as non-discrimination against HIV-positive people was a major achievement for these children.

### Results

The project provided at-risk children a unique platform to express themselves confidently. Children feel empowered, have better self-esteem and are better able to make informed decisions. The project exposed children to diverse ideas, improving opportunities for their future. Many of these children became catalysts or peer educators in their communities, educating others on substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and stigma reduction towards HIV-positive people.