

Case study — Bangalore Hospice Trust

Kamala is the poor mother of three young children, suffering from cancer of the cervix. When the ailment had reached an advanced stage, her family doctor referred her to the Kidwai Cancer Hospital, Bangalore, where the authorities declined the possibility of any treatment. At that juncture, the **Bangalore Hospice Trust (BHT)** stepped in to treat her.

The Home Care Service team created by BHT has been looking after Kamala in her own home for nearly five months, providing her with help and succour, besides counselling her family on how to deal with the disease. When her condition worsens, and the pain becomes acute, they admit her at *Karunashraya*, the 50-bed hospice run by the BHT.

At *Karunashraya*, Kamala is given professional medical treatment. Though illiterate, Kamala has exhibited steely resolve in dealing with her condition. With an addicted-to-the-bottle husband, Kamala was naturally concerned about the studies and well-being of her children. BHT contacted another non-profit organisation, which helped enrol all three kids in a school. The organisation has committed to looking after them holistically. Now, Kamala bides her time, but her mind is at peace, knowing that her kids would be well cared for.



BHT introduced its Home Care Service in 1995, to improve the quality of life for terminally ill patients and their families, and has treated over 1,691 patients at home since. *Karunashraya*, set up in 1999, treated over 600 people in the year 2006-07. The number of patients cared for, to date, stands at over 4,486. Their palliative care includes psychological support to patients and counselling to their families, helping them deal with the trauma of the disease and the impending end.

All their efforts are directed to the alleviation of distressing symptoms in the terminal stages of cancer, thereby bringing much needed peace and giving a dignified end to life. Since a majority of the patients treated by the Home Care Service or at *Karunashraya*, are either very poor, or at best, from middle class families, the treatment is offered totally free, or at subsidised costs.

The Trust recognises that death is a severe stress factor and families of terminally ill patients need as much nurturing and support as the patient to cope with the trauma associated with the same. In its efforts to support innovative strategies for institutions providing specialised care to the disadvantaged, the Trust has, since 1999, supported BHT's endeavours of providing palliative care to terminally ill cancer patients, through their Home Care Service team and through their hospice *Karunashraya*.