

# Karuna Trust: Arunachal Pradesh

## Innovations in health care to the poor

**Site:** Itanagar

**Years supported:** Four

**Funding:** \$48,000

**Scope:** Running Primary Health Care centers via a public-private partnership

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### Rural Health Care in the Land of the Rising Sun

Arunachal Pradesh is the distant land of the dawn-lit mountains. It lies on the easternmost edge of India, nestled in the Himalayas. Arunachal is home to the semi-evergreen forests of the Bhrmaputra valley. It is also home to the 400-year-old Tawang monastery, the largest Buddhist monastery outside of Tibet, and the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama.

In spite of the beauty all around, life is hard for the people of Arunachal particularly when it comes to health care. People living in 37 villages of the Papum Pare district depend upon the Primary Health Center (PHC) at Mengio for all their health needs. The 'kuccha' road from Yazali to Mengio is often impassable during the monsoon and just two villages have a motorable road link to Mengio. Electricity is irregular and there are no phones. Getting to the Nyapong health sub-center from Mengio is a six-hour trek while the Kamrung health sub-center is a four-hour trek. On a good day, when there are no rains, floods, or landslides, it takes eight hours to travel the 105 miles from Mengio to Itanagar, the capital. Not many doctors want to live and work at Mengio.



That was until three years ago when the Karuna Trust stepped in to run the primary health centers in rural Arunachal Pradesh. The state Government, in order to improve its health facilities, decided to implement a pilot project in which one PHC in each district of the state was given over to be managed and operated through a selected Non Government Organization (NGO). Karuna Trust was chosen for 9 PHCs. The condition was that the Trust would have to raise 10% of the funds on its own and the State would provide the remaining 90%. All services are provided free of cost. However, if recommended by the PHC Management Committee and approved by the Government, user charges could be considered for the well-off sections of the population. All Primary Health centers run by Karuna Trust in Arunachal Pradesh have made steady progress during the previous year. Last year, they were asked to take over similar centers in Meghalaya and a few other states.

### Karuna Trust

The Karuna Trust was established in 1986 in response to the high incidence of leprosy in Yelandur taluk, Chamrajnagar district in Karnataka. As a result of its efforts, the incidence of leprosy has declined from 2.14 per thousand in 1986 to 0.28 per thousand in 2005. The scope of the Karuna Trust has since grown to include integrated rural development. The Karuna Trust believes in community based, people oriented, need based, culturally acceptable methods, using appropriate technology with minimum cost to the community.

IFA supports two of the nine primary health centers run by the Karuna Trust in Arunachal Pradesh: The Mengio center in Papum Pare district cares for 4386 people in 37 villages and the Jeying center in one of the most remote regions of the Upper Siang district cares for 3780 people in eight villages. A \$6,000 annual grant from IFA for each health center enables the Karuna Trust to tap into \$54,000 in matching State grants. In other words, a little bit of the money you give attracts nine times as much to provide basic services that would otherwise not exist for thousands of people.

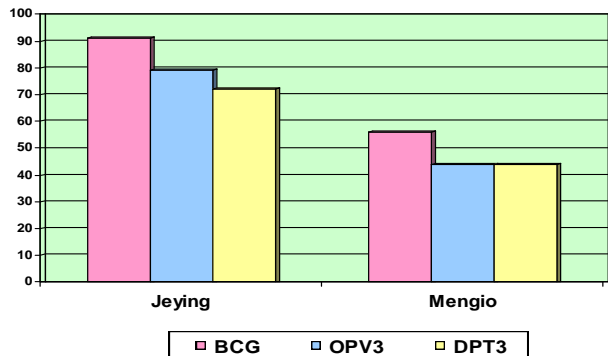
### Services Offered

In addition to free medicines and 24-hour emergency service, each health center offers outpatient services and inpatient, hospital-like facilities. Each center is also equipped with laboratory facilities for routine tests. All health centers implement and participate in the National Health programs and conduct regular outreach activities such as health camps, malaria control camps, immunization drives, and health education.



### Women and Childbirth

As a result of the outreach efforts the number of women seeking care has increased steadily to a point where it has begun to exceed the men. People's trust of health centers is best reflected by the rising percentage of women choosing institutional childbirth. In 2009, 58% of births in Mengio occurred at the health center.



**Immunization percentages during 2008-2009**  
 In-home hygiene and health education account for a major part of the outreach. Immunization is a priority despite the logistical challenges. Each health center now has a freezer along with a generator for the frequent power outages.



### Bamboo Hospitals

To deliver better immunization services in inaccessible villages, Karuna Trust collaborated with the community in constructing bamboo sub-centers. The Jeying health center supports the Adi Pasi sub-center, which was built by the community. The Mengio health center supports the Nyopang sub-center, which is a five-hour trek away.



### Training and Mela

Karuna Trust health centers also put in a significant amount of effort into awareness and training. Street plays, health check-ups, herbal and home medication along with exercise and diet modification are some of the topics of the ASHA programs that provide information, books, and first-aid kits.

### Malaria Success

The handling of the 2008-09 malaria outbreak is but one success story of these health centers. In '09 all the villages in Mengio were flooded during the monsoon. The health center distributed over 2000 malaria test kits. It recorded 1291 cases of malaria. NOT ONE malaria death occurred whereas four deaths were recorded in 2007-08 when only 589 cases were reported.

### Goals and Aspirations

Improving the quality of the care provided is the first priority for each health center. Reaching all the remote villages by opening more sub-centers and conducting more outreach activities is their second priority. Health and sanitation awareness, the importance of immunization, malaria control... theirs is an ambitious plan to provide each person with the tools to lead a healthy life. It happens as the result of the efforts of some very dedicated individuals. It begins with a little help from IFA. It is possible because you make it so.



-- Rahul Mehrotra