



P-ACT News

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From the Desk of the Executive Director

By promoting and protecting human rights we can make the HIV response more effective. Widespread access to ARV drugs as well as to care and support remains a major global health and human rights issue for millions in need. Nonetheless, the numbers of those accessing services is rising. It is heartening to note that countries are beginning to take seriously the goal of meeting their universal access targets for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. But still there is a long way to go. The challenges facing the response to AIDS are aggravated by the current global economic crisis.

To ensure enforcement of human rights it is crucial to

develop strategies to combat stigma and social exclusion associated with HIV. Through awareness generation in the community, civil society, mass media, service providers and initiatives like HIV work place policies we should envisage to build a stigma free society. By pledging that People Living with HIV receive treatment, care and support, empowering them to stand on their feet and protecting them from discrimination and sexual violence, we can build a better tomorrow.

*A. R. Nanda
Executive Director
Population Foundation of India*

Message from the Project Director

We cannot work on HIV in isolation. A multi- sectoral and multi- stakeholder response is needed to mainstream HIV. We need to look into development programs to reduce vulnerability and address the consequences of HIV. For this, community mobilization and empowerment of PLHIV are very important.

The national consultation conducted in December, 2009 provided a forum for discussions on critical issues related

to empowerment of PLHIV. It brought together players from different fields like law, social security and health care with direct interface with the People Living with HIV from 14 states of India. The learnings from the National Consultation would help us in our way forward.

*Dr Mary Verghese
Project Director
Population Foundation of India*



Children's Day celebration at Positive Living Centre, Tuensang

CHILDREN'S DAY CELEBRATION

On 14th November 2009, under the Access to Care and Treatment- ACT Program, Positive Living Centre in Tuensang, Nagaland celebrated Children's Day with 60 children infected and affected with HIV.

Program Updates

NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON “PROMOTING ACCESS TO CARE AND TREATMENT”

Population Foundation of India organized a National Consultation on “Promoting Access to Care and Treatment” from 9 - 11 December, 2009 at Vishwa Yuvak Kendra in New Delhi. The consultation provided an opportunity to hear the positive voices from the field. The state level expositions conducted in 2008 and 2009 culminated into the National Consultation. Around 350 representatives from PLHIV networks from 14 states, where Population Foundation of India and its partner agencies operate participated in the event. Along with them, representatives from NACO and SACS, bilateral and multilateral agencies, civil society, media and experts from the field of HIV also participated in the event.

The national consultation provided a platform for people involved in the program to share their experiences with a broad range of stakeholders and learn from each other. The implementing partners shared their experience of managing a community based peer model. PLHIV had direct interface with government and other stakeholders for livelihood options and availing social security schemes.



Release of documentary films by Ms Aradhana Johri (third from the left), Joint Secretary, Department of AIDS Control, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Ms Aradhana Johri, Joint Secretary, Department of AIDS Control, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, was the Chief Guest and Mr Patrice Coeur-Bizot, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in India was the Guest of Honour. Two documentary films “With Your Head Held High” and “Something New in My Life” were released by the Chief Guest, Ms Aradhana Johri in the national consultation.

The consultation started with a beautiful song by the Network of Naga People Living with HIV (NNP+) representing 11 districts of Nagaland. In her inaugural address, Ms Aradhana Johri, said “We are proud of our unique public/private partnership programme under the Global Fund. Our care and treatment programmes running for the past four years have turned the infection once



Participants from NNP+ performing at the National Consultation

considered a death warrant to a chronically manageable disease.” The Guest of Honour, Mr Patrice Coeur-Bizot highlighted human rights perspective to ensure universal access to care and treatment. He mentioned that the country’s program should aim to be “equitable, sustainable, affordable, accessible and comprehensive.” Mr Taufiqur Rahman, Regional Team Leader of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) announced approval by The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria for continuing the treatment, care and support program for another 6 years. Mr KK Abraham, General Secretary of the Indian Network for People Living with HIV (INP+) pointed out that District Level Networks for People Living with HIV are ‘key’ to the success of treatment, care and support program.

In the consultation, various sessions were held on crucial issues related to HIV. The session on “Universal Access to Treatment, Care and Support” was chaired by Dr Damodar Bachani, Deputy Director General, NACO. Panelists were Dr Rajesh Gopal, Gujarat State AIDS Control Society, Dr Ashok Rau, Freedom Foundation, Dr Priyo Kumar, Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, Manipur and Ms Saroja Puthran, Karnataka Network of People Living with HIV (KNP+) . The session highlighted important efforts made by Gujarat State AIDS Control Society (GSACS) in scaling up access to treatment, care and support in Gujarat. Dr Rajesh Gopal, GSACS spoke about the state government initiative to start the Jatan Project, supported through a grant of Rs 1.8 crore, which provides travelling allowance for PLHIV to the nearest ART centre. He further added that all PLHIV families who are below poverty line are included in Antyodaya Anna Yojana and that widow pension to those living below the poverty line entails a payment of Rs 500 a month and Rs 60 a month per child up to 18 years of age (for two children) by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment. Out of 713 eligible PLHIV, 254 have already availed this benefit. He informed that the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Gujarat, has declared support of Rs 500 a month for PLHIV for sustained nutritional support. Gujarat was the first state to have a Link ART Centre (LAC) to bridge the gap arising out of lost to follow-up. He recommended strengthening public private partnership, improving quality of counseling and strengthening functional linkages through an effective referral system. Dr Priyo Kumar opined that lack of access to information and treatment in Manipur is a major problem. He informed that JN Hospital has an HIV-friendly atmosphere and have achieved good results through an efficient system by sensitizing clinical staff. He mentioned that drug abuse is a vital problem in Manipur and it is important to have adequate preparation to deal with it. Initiatives like making Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST) and needle exchange, having recovery centres with trained manpower to handle Injecting Drug Users are ways through which HIV could be combated in Manipur.

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The session on “Universal Access to Treatment, Care and Support” chaired by Dr Damodar Bachani, Deputy Director General, NACO

Session on “Community Based Care and Role of Networks” was chaired by Dr Anjali Gopalan, NAZ Foundation. The panelists were Mr Umesh Chawla, India HIV/AIDS Alliance, Ms Kavita Chandok,

International Training and Education Centre for Health (I-TECH), Mr VS Gurumani, Project Concern International (PCI), Dr Sanghamitra Iyengar, Samuha Samraksha and Ms U Kasthuri, District Level Network, Ariyalur. The session highlighted different aspects of communities being engaged in caring, rehabilitating and normalising the lives of those infected and affected by HIV. It also brought out some powerful stories from the exemplary work being done by the Positive Networks both in creating awareness and helping positive people lead a life of hope and dignity. Mr Umesh Chawla mentioned that one of the key learnings of the CHAHA programme was that children and women who are affected by HIV and AIDS are unlikely to come to you. Rather, service providers have to identify and reach them. Ms Kavita Chandok highlighted the importance of Home Based Care in the context of a resource limited developing nation as it is a less expensive form of providing care and support to infected and affected people. Dr Anjali Gopalan in her concluding remarks reinforced the need for communities to respond and more importantly, to reach out to those who did not get community support, especially children. She said that multi-pronged strategies would be needed to bring the neglected into the support network.

On the second day, an important session on “Role of Law in Promoting and Protecting Rights of PLHIV” was chaired by Dr Alka Narang, UNDP. Ms Shivangi Rai, Lawyers Collective, Mr J Niranjana, TANSACS and Ms Kousalya, PWN+ were the panelists. This session highlighted a number of testimonials from PLHIV. J Niranjana explained that Legal Aid Clinic for PLHIV is a mechanism for PLHIV to get professional assistance for legal and non legal problems related to their rights and for fighting stigma and discrimination. The clinics are established in district hospitals and ART centres to enable PLHIV easy access to social, legal and non legal services and facilitates livelihood opportunities for PLHIV. So far, in the five districts of Namakkal, Dindigul, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Cuddalore 401 legal petitions have been registered. Of this, 194 were settled and 207 are pending. Of the non legal petitions, 1647 cases have been registered, 736 settled and 911 pending. Ms Shivangi Rai spoke about discrimination that PLHIV face like in employment, education and armed forces. She mentioned that urgent remedies that can be implemented include state-writ petitions in the High Court or Supreme Court; against private entities especially at the workplace and the need for an anti-discriminatory statute. The focus of the session was to draw attention to gaps in the legal framework and to create sensitivity, awareness about the basic human rights of PLHIV. Dr Alka Narang mentioned it is imperative that PLHIV know their rights and have an environment where they can ask and demand legal services. She emphasized that it has to be a collective effort of the community, NGO, civil society, SACS, NACO, Government and the media that can help create a fair and just society.

The session on “Social Security Schemes and Health Insurance” was chaired by Dr Indrani Gupta, Institute of Economic Growth (IEG). The panelists were Dr Anit Mukherjee, The National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), Dr Nishant Jain, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Ms Debapriya Sen, PSI and Mr Jagdish Saini, DLN, Jalore. The session discussed at length the need for having a strong social and insurance sector that could cater to the needs of those infected with HIV. Dr Nishant Jain enlightened on Rashtriya Swasthya Beema Yojana which is available in 21 states in India. Initially there were only two insurance companies that were offering the scheme and now there are 11 companies. Eighty one million cards have been distributed and 32 million people enrolled. Twenty states have signed a MOU with the central government/states. Each of the states implement it through different government departments, so while in one state it could be through the Health Ministry in another it could be through the Labour Ministry.

He mentioned that in future the scheme would also harmonize with existing micro health insurance schemes and use smart cards for other purposes. Ms Debapriya Sen spoke about the PSI Connect project based on building partnership models and strengthening systems in public private partnership in HIV/AIDS/TB. The project strategy involves working with the insurance sector to identify and explore key opportunities to better serve the needs of PLHIV. With the result of a partnership between Star Health and Karnataka Network of People Living with HIV (KNP+), the first HIV Health Insurance Policy was launched in Karnataka in 2008. Presently, the Star Netplus Policy has covered over 2,500 PLHIV in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. After multiple modifications the policy at present has no age limit, the group size and premium has been reduced and hospitalization coverage included.

PLHIV were at the centre stage of the national consultation. It also provided an opportunity for PLHIV to exhibit their talents. The national consultation provided an opportunity where they could forget their worries for few days and relax with their friends. PLHIV from 14 states came together as a family, shared their experiences, inspired and learned from each other. Through singing, dancing and other cultural events they made the consultation lively.

WORLD AIDS DAY

On World AIDS Day, Population Foundation of India, Maharashtra State Unit released printed IEC materials (posters, greeting cards and a booklet containing songs and poems) developed by PLHIV members. Dr. Kudalkar, Project Director, MDACS and Dr. Maulik ART consultant MDACS were invited as Chief Guests and Mr. Anil Dalvi, Board Member of Network of Maharashtra People Living with HIV (NMP+) were the honorable guests in the event.



Poster developed by PLHIV

ADVOCACY WORKSHOP FOR PRI

Population Foundation of India conducts advocacy meetings with the health and non health departments of the Government for mainstreaming HIV. An advocacy meeting was organized in Ganjam, Orissa on 4th November, 2009 in the Conference hall of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Chhtrapur, Ganjam. The participants were Government officials, members of Panchayati Raj Institutions and members of PLHIV networks. Mr. V.Kartik Pandiya (IAS), the District Magistrate and Collector of Ganjam inaugurated the workshop.

Mr. Pandhiya shared the need for such advocacy efforts and asked DLN members to approach directly for any kind of support. Mr. Dharanidhar Behera, President of the Zilla Parishad, informed that the issue of stigma and discrimination would be addressed from now on in the Gram Sabha meetings. He requested network members to participate in monthly Gram Sabha meetings. Dr. Umakanta Tripathy, Consultant (C&ST) OSACS encouraged the participants to come forward and spread awareness about HIV.

This workshop facilitated PRI and Community Based Organizations to work together in raising awareness about HIV and promoting access to services. It was decided to conduct advocacy meetings at subdivision levels. Important stakeholders like CBOs, SHGs, Parent

Teacher's Association and Health Committees to be invited in such meetings.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY, STRENGTHENING NETWORKS

Madhya Pradesh Regional Unit of Population Foundation of India organized a two day state level exposition in Bhopal focusing on empowering community and strengthening networks of PLHIV. The event was organized on 16-17 November, 2009, in close collaboration with MPSACS. Around 100 PLHIV from across 22 districts of Madhya Pradesh participated in the event. Mr. S R Mohanty, Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department, was the Chief Guest. Mr. Mohanty stressed on the power of mass media to spread awareness about HIV.

Mr Omesh Mundra, Project Director, and Mr Rakesh Munshi, Additional Project Director represented MPSACS. Various Government and Non-government organizations, multilateral and bilateral agencies and Community Based Organizations participated in the event. The exposition facilitated discussion on ways to enhance access to services, treatment literacy, treatment adherence and promote positive living. Dr. Namita Parashar, SMO, Jabalpur ART Center devoted a session on 'Importance of ART'. Experts from

departments of Women and Child Development, Social Justice and Empowerment, NREGA, NABARD and Mahila Chetna Manch participated in the event. They informed PLHIV about available social security schemes and livelihood options.

One of the achievements of this exposition was that the Food and Civil Supplies Corporation has agreed to provide Below Poverty Line (BPL) card to all PLHIV. NABARD has consented to tie up with Madhya Pradesh Network of People Living with HIV (MPNP+) to provide technical and financial support for Income Generation Activities.

An informative play called "Ummeed Abhi Baaki Hai Mere Dost" was organized by PFI. The play highlighted challenges & discrimination that an individual faces when he/she becomes aware of his/her HIV positive status.



Participants performing in the play "Ummeed Abhi Baki Hai Mere Dost" at the Madhya Pradesh state level exposition



The Imphal East District Level Network has started a **Green Mile Biotech** Project with the support from Horticulture Department of Manipur. Here the members of DLN have started tomato plantation. The Green House has been provided free of cost by the Horticulture Department of Manipur. This is a result of advocacy efforts by members of Imphal East DLN.

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