



National AIDS Control Organisation
India's Voice against AIDS
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India
www.naco.gov.in



सकलक

Status of National AIDS Response



NACO

NEWS

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MESSAGE FROM THE DESK OF PATRON



Dear Readers,

I hope you are doing well.

Like several parts of the world, India too has been battling the COVID-19 pandemic with its full might. In spite of the challenging situation, India has ensured that the healthcare system is ramped up to meet the need of the hour.

India in its fight against COVID-19 has initiated its #LargestVaccinationDrive in January 2021. India has vaccinated more than 360 million and continues to inoculate various population groups in a phased manner. Currently, vaccination is the only key weapon to limit the transmission and reduce the risk of mortality. I urge all who have not yet been vaccinated to get your shot of vaccine at the earliest. Also, I want to urge the PLHIV community to get vaccinated.

National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) has been relentless in its effort to ensure that the People Living with HIV in India and the High Risk Groups have the un-interrupted access to services under the ambit of National AIDS Control Programme during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in India.

The budget for annual action plans of all the states and UTs is approved for the current financial year 2021-22 and appropriate fund allocation has been made. The first instalment of the allocated budget amount has already been released by NACO to State AIDS Control Societies for undertaking the activities as per the approved plans.

I sincerely appreciate the efforts of staff associated with National AIDS Control Programme via various service centers like the ARTCs, ICTCs, Blood Banks, Suraksha Clinics and also TI NGOs., who have walked an extra-mile to ensure uninterrupted access to HIV related services.

Uninterrupted access to ARV treatment for PLHIV and OST for Injecting Drug Users was ensured during the period of COVID lockdown. Under the GFATM C19 RM grant, support was garnered for key populations and PLHIV for emergency relief. Under directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, food and rations were also made available for over 4 lakh sex workers whose livelihood was disrupted due to COVID from October 2020 to March 2021.

NACO has always stood with the community and even during the difficult times it stood undeterred. NACO is committed for the betterment of PLHIV and vulnerable populations in the future too.

I wish you all good health. Stay safe.



Alok Saxena
Additional Secretary & Director General (NACO)
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare,
Government of India

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

'NACO News', a quarterly news bulletin has been a physical magazine highlighting the activities, events, key programmes and interventions under the National AIDS Control Programme at both National and State level. To pace with the changing times and evolving technological advancements, NACO hereby goes the digital way in the form of e-Newsletter.



The e-Newsletter will be a monthly digital publication from NACO. Going digital means having more scope for interactive approach and wider reach. The e-Newsletter platform will showcase not only the efforts and achievements of NACO and SACS in the programme but will also build an interactive rapport with the readers across the country and beyond.

Having the e-newsletter will also give an opportunity to NACO for sharing the interventions, success stories, best practices at the global forums. This will enhance the Knowledge Sharing pursuit of NACO and provide a platform for cross-learning. Also the reach of the bulletin will not be limited by national boundaries and will aide in garnering international audience and varied stakeholders as well.

All of us must ensure to maximize reach of this new initiative by forwarding to maximum people for grand success.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Naresh Goel'.

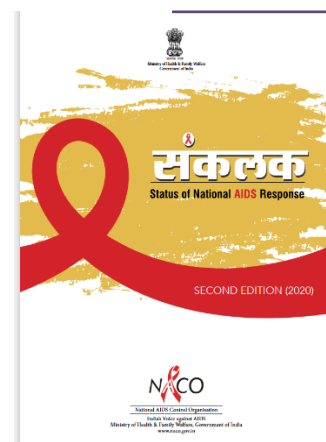
**Dr. Naresh Goel,
DDG (IEC &MS), NACO
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare,
Government of India**

SANKALAK 2020

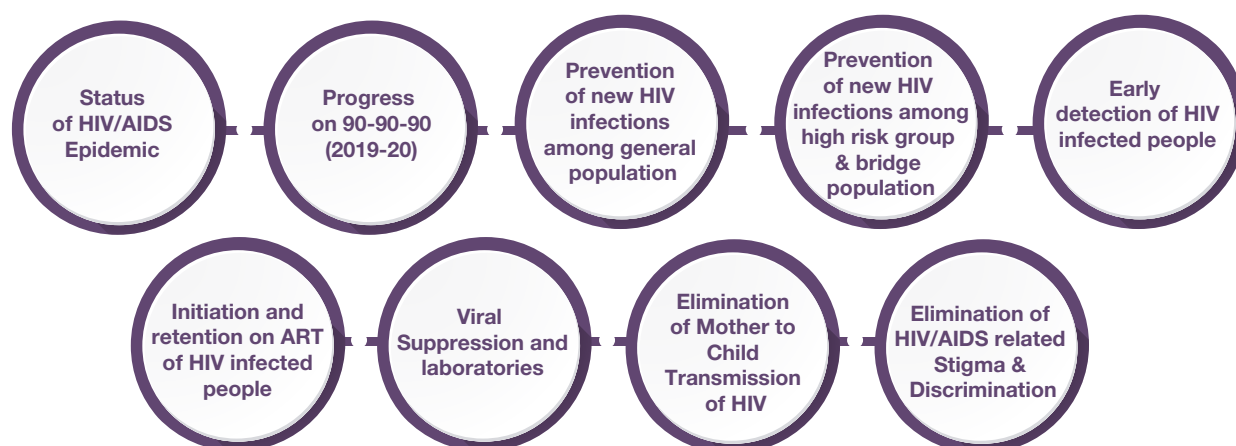
'Status of National AIDS Response'

'Sankalak' is a data-driven flagship publication of National AIDS Control Programme to report country's progress on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.3 of ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030. NACO published the first edition of 'Sankalak' in the year 2017. The second edition of 'Sankalak' was published in year 2020.

The chapters in 'Sankalak' include narratives on the epidemic, 90-90-90 progress & programme response using tables & infographics appropriately. National & State-UTs fact sheets support the narratives. For each fact sheet, data is provided in nine domains, as depicted below:



Data Domains in 'Sankalak' Factsheets



This publication highlights the significant progress achieved in the programme and also aid in identification of critical challenges in programme which need special focus.

The current edition is the second edition in the series of 'Sankalak' publications and is available on NACO's website (<http://www.naco.gov.in/monitoring-through-sims>).

COVID-19 Vaccine for all; Vaccination Drive for People Living with HIV

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India issued the co-morbidity certificate for prioritizing individuals for COVID-19 vaccination which included 'Primary immunodeficiency Disease/HIV infection' (certificate placed along-side for reference).

NACO issued communications to all States and UTs advising them to ensure that all People Living with HIV (irrespective of CD4 count and Viral Load) should undergo the complete schedule of the COVID-19 vaccination for protecting themselves against COVID-19 and to restrict the spread of virus to their contacts including relatives, companions and co-workers.

For more details, may please refer to the following web-link:

https://www.mohfw.gov.in/covid_vaccination/vaccination/important-information.html

Annexure (B): Certificate to identify individuals with co-morbidities that enhance the risk of mortality in COVID-19 disease for priority vaccination (To be filled by a Registered Medical Practitioner)

Name of beneficiary: _____
 Age: _____ Gender: _____
 Address: _____
 Mobile phone number: _____
 Identification document: _____

I, Dr. _____, working as _____, have reviewed the above named individual and certify that he/she has the below mentioned conditions based on the records presented to me. A copy of the records on which this certificate is based is attached.

Presence of ANY ONE of the following criteria will prioritize the individual for vaccination

Sl No	Criteria	Yes/No
1	Heart Failure with hospital admission in past one year	
2	Post Cardiac Transplant/Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD)	
3	Significant Left ventricular systolic dysfunction (LVEF <40%)	
4	Moderate or Severe Valvular Heart Disease	
5	Congenital heart disease with severe PAH or Idiopathic PAH	
6	Coronary Artery Disease with past CABG/PTCA/MI AND Hypertension/Diabetes on treatment	
7	Angina AND Hypertension/Diabetes on treatment	
8	CT/MRI documented stroke AND Hypertension/Diabetes on treatment	
9	Pulmonary artery hypertension AND Hypertension/Diabetes on treatment	
10	Diabetes (> 10 years OR with complications) AND Hypertension on treatment	
11	Kidney/ Liver/ Hematopoietic stem cell transplant Recipient/ On wait-list	
12	End Stage Kidney Disease on haemodialysis/ CAPD	
13	Current prolonged use of oral corticosteroids/ immunosuppressant medications	
14	Decompensated cirrhosis	
15	Severe respiratory disease with hospitalizations in last two years FEV1 <50%	
16	Lymphoma/ Leukemia/ Myeloma	
17	Diagnosis of any solid cancer on or after 1st July 2020 Currently on any cancer therapy	
18	Sickle Cell Disease/ Bone marrow failure/ Aplastic Anemia/ Thalassemia Major	
19	Primary Immunodeficiency Diseases/ HIV infection	
20	Persons with disabilities due to Intellectual disabilities/ Muscular Dystrophy/ Acid attack with involvement of respiratory system/ Persons with disabilities having high support needs/ Multiple disabilities including deaf-blindness	

I am aware that providing false information is an offence.

Name of RMP: _____
 Medical Council registration number of RMP: _____
 Date of issuing the certificate: _____
 Place of issue: _____ (Signature of RMP)

Status of NACP on Key Indicators – FY 2020-21

SI- Programme Monitoring & evaluation : Status of National AIDS Control Programme - Phase IV (Ext.) during the FY 2020-21
 Strategic Information - Programme monitoring and Evaluation reports the progress towards the stated targets and goals periodically to the various National and International Forums. The Status on key indicators during the FY 2020-21 is presented below. The same will be updated periodically as appropriate.

State/ Uts	High risk group & bridge population covered through Target Interventions & Link Worker Scheme	STI/RTI patients managed at Designated STI/RTI Clinic	HIV testing among vulnerable Population (excluding Pregnant Women)	HIV positive results among vulnerable Population (excluding Pregnant Women)	HIV testing among pregnant women	HIV positive results among Pregnant Women	% of HIV positive mothers initiated on lifelong ART	% of exposed babies initiated on ARV prophylaxis	New registration of PLHIV at ART Centre	PLHIV Initiated on ART	PLHIV on ART (Cumulative)*	HIV-TB cross referrals	Viral load tests conducted	
														NA
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	NA	1,493	17,305	12	4,959	1	0.00	NA	17	15	127	537	NA	
Andhra Pradesh	3,77,709	4,57,431	7,18,200	10,174	7,16,826	579	98.79	98.75	10,259	9,952	1,95,626	95,689	1,06,792	
Arunachal Pradesh	57,226	27,938	20,594	29	14,617	7	77.78	83.33	28	28	189	2,480	60	
Assam	53,671	76,509	1,96,165	1,152	4,72,302	125	107.04	93.85	1136	923	8,185	30,504	1,866	
Bihar	1,68,820	2,50,660	5,49,470	6,407	18,17,356	337	85.41	80.90	6018	5,763	64,317	1,02,615	32,819	
Chandigarh	69,931	25,692	52,259	280	18,437	14	170.59	89.66	358	325	6,478	2,804	2,861	
Chhattisgarh	1,64,378	1,78,129	3,32,825	1,851	4,62,822	147	106.25	94.40	1801	1,667	16,543	34,102	8,258	
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NA	2,080	28,876	60	16,904	1	0.00	100.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	1,424	NA
Delhi	5,65,816	2,77,154	3,38,689	3,445	2,99,708	130	91.50	96.61	3149	2,690	35,831	48,086	20,552	
Goa	40,598	39,163	42,157	171	21,356	9	76.92	93.33	1,777	162	3,027	2,119	2,872	
Gujarat	7,15,311	3,17,659	10,23,807	5,054	12,85,859	439	97.64	96.72	5,381	5,000	76,054	1,59,045	67,605	
Haryana	29,655	1,31,267	4,72,075	2,920	4,64,884	238	38.11	92.19	2,511	2,325	17,698	66,057	5,262	
Himachal Pradesh	32,827	56,233	1,49,239	336	1,01,251	25	100.00	95.83	334	307	4,606	16,066	1,805	
Jammu & Kashmir	0*	1,277	1,25,301	210	1,56,388	15	100.00	100.00	206	187	2,925	8,143	655	
Jharkhand	67,050	63,958	1,95,160	1,039	6,65,771	94	90.00	92.59	1,371	1,278	12,320	45,344	6,582	
Karnataka	7,13,636	6,44,292	16,32,197	9,511	11,53,131	558	97.32	91.19	9,459	8,939	1,78,673	1,29,037	89,430	
Kerala	4,06,617	1,59,149	4,10,718	772	4,30,187	16	94.64	95.74	761	642	15,963	26,998	11,194	
Ladakh	NA	1,598	9	9	1,465	0	0	0	-	-	15	228	NA	
Madhya Pradesh	4,14,635	5,83,343	7,93,231	3,446	14,60,582	325	99.60	99.21	3,576	3,270	30,349	1,40,122	24,948	
Maharashtra	21,95,026	10,29,986	28,43,782	11,519	20,07,409	710	91.93	91.64	11,974	11,304	2,88,115	2,97,486	2,07,396	
Manipur	68,859	52,059	45,418	561	25,450	51	91.41	94.74	714	667	13,946	1,890	7,995	
Meghalaya	2,996	13,515	36,029	626	60,737	131	64.71	85.41	679	582	3,152	3,061	1,393	
Mizoram	37,958	31,059	53,463	1,904	17,486	155	82.97	96.31	1,866	1,845	11,752	3,651	7,031	
Nagaland	45,775	49,192	77,027	1,100	16,466	159	55.84	94.50	1,180	1,076	10,447	4,452	6,651	
Odisha	1,87,406	2,09,639	7,48,192	2,021	6,79,152	186	90.60	93.14	1,958	1,835	21,756	1,02,605	6,676	
Puducherry	13,985	22,206	69,968	118	27,992	2	60.00	100.00	61	59	1,252	2,292	875	
Punjab	1,94,912	1,82,018	6,42,467	6,654	3,75,167	379	87.42	94.32	6,873	6,645	44,141	57,613	27,977	
Rajasthan	1,70,560	2,33,467	10,39,566	4,182	13,81,426	337	101.82	94.23	4,404	4,247	48,176	1,33,589	32,958	
Sikkim	2,525	5,436	18,143	30	6,114	3	100.00	75.00	27	26	226	1,121	105	
Tamil Nadu	3,85,906	3,93,853	23,80,620	5,071	12,31,677	324	100.12	95.44	5,329	4,826	1,24,640	1,82,434	80,420	
Telangana	3,32,152	2,70,563	4,53,944	6,787	6,62,427	454	99.55	76.55	7,125	6,875	1,12,083	75,522	38,312	
Tripura	63,918	36,456	80,222	497	39,771	21	100.00	90.00	495	493	2,125	5,313	745	
Uttar Pradesh	2,87,071	6,59,773	9,81,214	8,363	46,20,181	533	98.80	80.62	8,751	8,234	91,968	3,56,038	57,477	
Uttarakhand	1,05,241	1,35,723	1,18,294	552	1,74,330	43	77.55	75.76	593	439	4,459	18,131	2,394	
West Bengal	1,88,879	1,79,228	12,99,191	3,108	13,32,455	240	100.27	95.53	3,186	2,824	46,994	88,693	28,351	
India	81,61,048	68,02,036	1,80,32,238	99,971	2,22,44,467	6,768	93.53	91.49	1,01,757	95,451	14,94,143	22,45,294	8,90,317	

Note: * Inclusive of 1.06 lakh PLHIV on ART in private sector; # data not reported.
 In A & N Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu and Ladakh - there is no Target Intervention and Viral Load facility. In Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu & Ladakh - there is no ART centre. In Ladakh - there is one Link ART center; in Ladakh - there is no Designated STI/RTI Clinic

State-Wise Status on 90-90-90

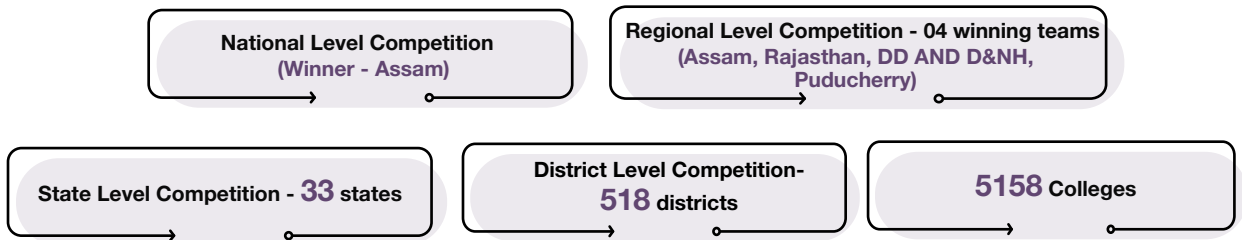
India/State/UT	First 90 (%)			Second 90 (%)			Third 90 (%)		
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
India	72	76	78	82	84	83	72	84	85
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	33	29	30	69	89	87			
Andhra Pradesh	78	83	86	75	76	75	60	80	81
Arunachal Pradesh	37	42	38	63	63	69	58	73	74
Assam	45	51	54	77	76	72	77	87	88
Bihar	54	58	59	79	83	84	67	81	85
Chandigarh	>=95	>=95	>=95	81	88	88	65	91	93
Chhattisgarh	46	50	51	76	77	76	70	85	86
Delhi	70	75	74	77	75	73	75	87	88
Goa	78	81	82	84	85	84	79	86	86
Gujarat	79	85	87	87	86	84	72	86	85
Haryana	38	49	54	72	79	73	51	63	82
Himachal Pradesh	69	73	77	87	89	86	56	81	84
J&K and Ladakh	59	67	67	77	74	77	76	84	90
Jharkhand	62	62	65	80	88	84	74	83	83
Karnataka	76	81	84	83	85	83	68	79	81
Kerala	64	65	66	96	98	97	83	89	91
Madhya Pradesh	57	66	68	77	77	74	73	81	81
Maharashtra	84	89	90	84	83	82	74	87	87
Manipur	54	52	54	86	92	92	86	92	93
Meghalaya	31	33	39	72	78	73	89	90	92
Mizoram	57	61	67	80	83	85	82	92	90
Nagaland	60	55	59	65	83	78	73	80	87
Odisha	45	50	53	86	85	84	76	84	87
Puducherry	43	38	37	67	78	78	66	86	86
Punjab	67	80	88	83	80	77	70	83	84
Rajasthan	81	88	92	87	86	84	59	82	83
Sikkim	62	69	73	89	87	84	86	87	89
Tamil Nadu	88	91	93	84	86	85	74	85	85
Telangana	75	69	67	91	>=95	>=95	66	78	80
Tripura	70	77	79	88	89	89	70	80	85
Uttar Pradesh	60	65	68	82	84	84	78	88	87
Uttarakhand	49	56	59	78	76	71	62	86	86
West Bengal	65	70	71	89	87	85	80	89	90

State/UT-wise progress on 90-90-90 (2018, 2019 and 2020)

Youth Engagement During COVID-19: Red Ribbon Club Quiz Competition



On the occasion of National Youth Day on 12th January 2021, **National Level Red Ribbon Quiz Competition** was organized in online mode. The purpose of this activity was to engage and mobilize youth registered with the RRCs at college level to initiate an open dialogue about issues related to HIV. This shall prompt mindfulness among youth and furthermore help in battling the significant boundaries of stigma against People Living with HIV.



Highlights:

- The Hon'ble Union Health Minister, Dr. Harsh Vardhan felicitated the winners of 'The Grand Finale of the National Level Red Ribbon Quiz Competition'.
- The event was virtually organized and webcasted live on a dedicated server link and on different social media platforms and channels (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) of NACO.
- The virtual modality of the event attracted a large number of participations from across the country.



Building Partnerships and Strengthening HIV Response: Joint Working Group (JWG) Meeting Between NACO & Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRT&H)

Under Mainstreaming and Partnership efforts, National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) convened a Joint Working group meeting with Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRT&H) under the chairpersonship of Dr. Naresh Goel, Deputy Director General (IEC& MS), NACO on 2nd February, 2021. The objective of the meeting was to strengthen partnership between NACO and MoRT&H and evolve workable strategies for prevention and extending services related to HIV/AIDS primarily among truckers, transport and highway workers and associated populations. The meeting was attended by officials from the MoRT&H, National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and NACO.

The key decisions included:

- a) Issuing directives to State Transport departments for carrying out awareness activities among staff;



- b) Incorporation of HIV sessions in training institutes of transport departments;
- c) Promotion of IEC materials at bus depots, transport hubs and Toll-plazas;
- d) Provision of services under the National AIDS Control Programme to be made available to the truckers and associated populations at highways.

The participants were apprised of the recent initiatives and services provided under the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP).

Sustainable Engagement: Master Trainers for VCT@work intervention

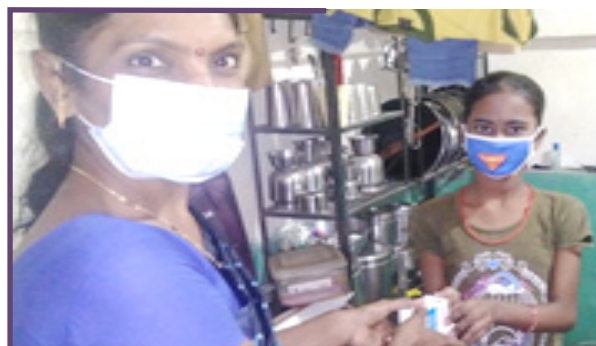
NACO through State AIDS Control Societies and in collaboration with International Labour Organization (ILO) has made several efforts to strengthen engagement of industries of public and private sector employer organizations to reinforce national response to HIV and AIDS in the world of work and to promote VCT@work: Voluntary, Confidential HIV Counselling and Testing for workers. Rajasthan State AIDS Control Society under the employer led intervention signed a MoU with BSL (Bhilwara Suitings) Ltd., Bhilwara, Rajasthan under the VCT@work intervention.



For the purpose of capacitating the manpower at BSL industries, a discussion with the HR department was convened to facilitate the training programme for the trainers at BSL Ltd. The trainers will further administer sessions to all the employees on HIV/AIDS awareness, specifically during the induction of employees and the same will be conducted at standard stretches consistently.

Walking the Extra Mile; Reaching, Medication, Supplies Out to Children Living with HIV and Vulnerable Populations during COVID-19

COVID-19 has had unprecedented impact on the lives of vulnerable populations across the country. Under such time, in collaboration with State AIDS Control Societies of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Telangana, ACCELERATE project ensured delivery of ART to Children Living with HIV (CLHIV) with support of partner organizations. Travel restrictions, COVID-19 related stigma and possibility of the disclosure of HIV status of their children were the key challenges that the Child Care Facilitators CCFs had to overcome by counselling the parents and caregivers. In order to overcome travel restrictions, the project team devised a roadmap according to the availability of public transport and facilitated the travel of ANMs, Anganwadi workers and VIHAAN employees.



ART centers played a key role in delivering the due list of ART refills at home. This was followed by a phone call to assess the COVID-19 situation in the family and neighborhood. Once the CCFs assessed and confirmed the home visit or pick up from a mutually convenient place is planned with the client, the project team verified the drug regimen in the white card and the details shared by the parents/caregivers. ART Medical Officers oriented the dosage of various regimens that were to be delivered at the earliest. Special plans were devised and executed to ensure smooth delivery of ART. After delivery of the ART, contact details of the CCF were shared for any future emergency support. In most cases, along with ART, ration supplies, sanitizers, masks, education materials were also provided under the project.



‘Choose to Challenge’; International Women’s Day 2021

Every year, 8th March is observed as International Women’s Day. State AIDS Control Societies observed the day and conducted outreach programme aimed at addressing the issues concerning women’s vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. From newspapers to television channels to the Internet, a variety of media platforms were tapped to generate awareness about HIV/AIDS.



Jharkhand State AIDS Control Society celebrated the International Women's Day in a joint effort with TRY and organized several activities for PLHIV, FSW and TG community members. An inspiring narrative session was delivered by the community mobilizers and influencers which majorly consisted

of FSW and TG community members. TG and MSM community members came forward to participate, and graced the occasion with a cultural dance performance. This instills a feeling of freedom in them and provides a platform to express themselves and their concerns.

A Step Towards AIDS Free World; AIDSCON 10 - The National Hybrid Conference

National Conference AIDSCON -10 was organized by Chandigarh State AIDS Control Society on 5th March, 2021. The theme for this year's conference was "Towards AIDS Free World – impact of COVID 19 on National AIDS Control Programme". For the last nine years, Chandigarh has been organizing this national conference. This year, AIDSCON was organized in hybrid virtual mode. More than 800 participants joined the convention virtually. Experts from the field of HIV/AIDS from partner organizations expressed their views to counter challenges that might arise in NACP due to the COVID-19 situation in the country.



The conference outlined the importance to reach beyond the target of 95:95:95. Early detection of positive cases, timely initiation of treatment and effective viral load monitoring were reiterated as key factors that drive the programme responses.

'We Are'; Campaign Through Urban Art Mural

Tamil Nadu SACS on the occasion of World AIDS Day 2020 came up with a unique initiative named 'We Are' campaign through Urban Art Mural. The frontage of Indira Nagar MRTS, Chennai, Tamil Nadu had become a canvas for a scenic representation to raise awareness on the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS.

An initiative by Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society (TANSACS) and St+art India Foundation along with Tidel Park, Asian Paints and Southern Railway, the Mural was initiated in an endeavour to highlight the issue of discrimination faced by People Living with HIV. The campaign named 'We Are' portrays elements which are also in line with last year's World AIDS Day 2020 theme,



"Global solidarity, Shared Responsibility " with an intention to sustain the momentum gained in the last two decades to reduce the new HIV infections and create an enabling environment for People Living with HIV/AIDS.

Urban Art Mural, initiated by TANSACS, sent across the message that de-stigmatizes the health

conditions of People Living with HIV by sharing optimistic stories of HIV/AIDS survivors, and also depicted their struggles and fight against HIV/AIDS. This initiative would also manifest a long-lasting impact on HIV/AIDS awareness among the floating population that commute on a

daily basis along the Rajiv Gandhi IT Express Highway corridor in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The underlying aim was to highlight the Urban Art as an effective response to global crises, and a tool to deliver messages of awareness, feelings of longing or loss and ideas of hope.

Meeting the Nutritional Needs of PLHIV & HRGs

COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected the lives of People Living with HIV. Adolescents, pregnant women, elderly clients and clients who have lost livelihood support are also amongst the most affected populations. Key populations of Female Sex Workers (FSW) & Trans Genders (TG) were found to be facing severe economic distress.

Mumbai District AIDS Control Society mobilized about 9135 dry ration kits under CSR support through advocacy with public & private sector organizations. These grocery kits of approx. 15 kg. each contained rice, wheat flour, jaggery / sugar, pulses, cooking oil, groundnut etc.

These ration kits were distributed through Anti Retroviral



Treatment centers to 2000 registered PLHIV taking lifelong treatment and were in dire need of nutritional support. 3555 kits were distributed among brothel based FSWs (2522) & TGs (1033) through TI NGOs.

Taking Care of Mental Health During COVID-19 – A Growing Concern in PLHIV

During the COVID-19 crisis in the country, the National Toll-Free AIDS Helpline – 1097 had recorded large number of distress calls from HIV positive clients on a daily basis. To effectively address the callers in distress and provide them psychosocial support, the counselors at the helpline hubs, were equipped with appropriate knowledge. Capacity building sessions were conducted for helpline counselors on mental health issues in virtual mode. NACO also utilized in-house resource to build the capacities of counselors.

NACO also collaborated with National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru for developing a capacity building module

on mental health issues for PLHIV. Experts from the Department of Psychiatry, NIMHANS took part in the virtual sessions and imparted knowledge to the helpline counselors on:

- > Mental health impact on PLHIV
- > Social Impact – Stigma
- > Vaccines and their efficacy
- > Interventions required from the helpline

The PLHIV reaching out to 1097 helpline for mental health issues like anxiety, stress, depression etc., were provided counseling services and were later linked to the Psychosocial support helpline run by NIMHANS – 080 – 46110007.

FAQs: PLHIV-COVID-19-Vaccine

Q. I am a PLHIV on ART. What is my eligibility criteria for COVID19 vaccination?

A. All PLHIV on ART are eligible for COVID-19 vaccine irrespective of their CD4 count or viral load. No pharmacological interactions have been reported between COVID-19 vaccines and antiretroviral medications which people living with HIV should continue to take after vaccination to maintain health¹.

Q. Are COVID19 vaccines tested on PLHIV?

A. Yes. Many of the COVID-19 vaccines studies have included a small number of people living with HIV in their trials¹. People with HIV were included in clinical trials of the two mRNA vaccines; at this time, the safety and efficacy in this specific subgroup have not been fully reported⁴.

Q. Being HIV positive, will I be given priority in vaccination?

A. Yes. The Government of India has included People living with HIV in the list of priority groups for COVID-19 vaccination.

Q. Are COVID19 vaccines safe for people living with HIV?

A. Yes. The current COVID-19 vaccines are considered safe for people living with HIV.

Q. Being HIV positive, will I become more at risk for COVID-19 disease, if I don't get vaccinated?

A. Current evidence shows that there may be an increase in the risk of developing severe disease from COVID-19 among people living with HIV¹. For people living with HIV, COVID-19 vaccines bring the same benefits as they bring to all individuals and communities— prevention of severe disease due to SARS-CoV-2 and potentially reduced transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus⁵.

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