

NACO NEWS

A Newsletter of the
National AIDS Control Organisation

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Jul - Dec 2010



**World AIDS Day
Celebration**



**Voluntary Blood
Donation Becomes a
National Movement**



**National Folk Media
Workshop**



India Keeps its Date with the RRE

RRE's second innings concluded on December 1, 2010

Carla Bruni, Goodwill Ambassador for HIV/AIDS during her visit to a PPTCT Clinic at Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi

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Letters to the Editor



It is heartening to see a growing concern among government and policy makers with regard to addressing the vulnerability and rehabilitation of injecting drug users. The state of Sikkim too has a number of harm reduction programmes which help drug users and their families battle the addiction and its aftermath.

A close watch has to be kept, especially in poverty struck areas, where drug users resort to petty crime to sustain their habit. Sensitisation and training among those who work with these groups is the need of the hour. Being a professional who has been working closely with IDUs in the field of counselling and rehabilitation, I look forward to reading more articles like this in the future.

Milan Rai

Programme Manager
Targeted Intervention, IDU
Sikkim Rehabilitation and Detoxification Society



I have been involved in organising various blood donation camps at the YMCA and in Delhi University and have been propagating the dangers of unsafe needles and blood. I feel there is still very little awareness about the exact routes of HIV transmission.

Students are more than willing to associate themselves with a cause. Why should that cause not be HIV/AIDS? All they need is guidance and good direction.

Archana Kapoor

Jesus and Mary College
New Delhi

Welcoming NACO's New Secretary and Director General

Mr. Sayan Chatterjee has taken over as Secretary, Department of AIDS Control and Director General of NACO, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India from Mr. K. Chandramouli who has moved on as Secretary Health, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare in the Government of India.

Mr. Chatterjee, a 1976 batch Kerala cadre IAS officer, comes to NACO from the Sports Authority of India, where he was holding the position of Director General. He is a post graduate in Chemistry and brings with him a rich experience of governance at various levels.

Help us in our constant endeavour to make NACO Newsletter more participative by contributing case studies, field notes and experiences, news clips, forthcoming events etc.

For back issues and for information on HIV/AIDS, log on to:
www.naconline.org or mail mayanknaco@gmail.com

– Editor

Dear Reader,

It gives me great pleasure to reach you through this widely read NACO Newsletter. I am happy to join NACO at the time when efforts by my predecessors have started showing results. New HIV infections have come down by nearly 50 percent during the last 10 years as access to treatment, care and support was scaled up.

We have to take this good effort forward, sustain the momentum and work to create a healthy environment that facilitates expansion of services and achieves NACP-III targets.

This double issue of NACO News highlights activities carried out during the last few months. The success is attributed not just to NACO's planning, monitoring and support but to the collective efforts of donors, international partners, NGOs, communities, faith based organisations and volunteers who worked tirelessly to take the agenda of the National AIDS Control Organisation to the remotest corners of the country.

The second phase of the Red Ribbon Express concluded its year long journey. Our report gives you a peep into the scale and magnitude of this mass mobilisation campaign that went to the doorsteps of the people in villages and small towns. This was not just with HIV/AIDS or health messages, but with services for prevention, counselling, testing, STI treatment and general health checkups.

Observance of the World AIDS Day (WAD) on December 1 is not just a symbolic activity with marches, candle light vigils, seminars, talks and announcements. Indeed, it brings all stakeholders on a shared platform to reassess, reaffirm and renew the resolve to continue to break new grounds in our efforts for those living with HIV.

We have come a long way in ensuring availability of healthy safe blood and blood products in our modernised and upgraded Blood Banks. Silent warriors have worked tirelessly for decades to make voluntary Blood Donation movement a huge success. Our kudos to them!



Ms. Carla Bruni's visit to India with her husband, Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, was soothing especially for women, infected and affected by HIV. Her gentle and reassuring demeanour instilled hope and promise to many. We need more goodwill ambassadors like her who reinforce messages of hope and possibility to strengthen the work done at programme and policy levels.

Looking at global experiences, we do know that creating awareness and sensitisation about HIV/AIDS is an ongoing process. The multimedia campaign in the North-East used music and sports to reach target groups. Other states must draw lessons and identify similar campaigns.

Setting up systems via protocols and guidelines must be part of an efficient health administration. Recent attempts at the National Workshop on Folk Media and HIV in New Delhi aims to standardise resource materials that are at the core of all performing arts initiatives undertaken in rural India. This will add quality control checks to dissemination efforts. The cooperation of the states in creating a wealth of scripts, folk songs and creative content will provide vital information to people in innovative and accurate forms.

I take this opportunity to thank you for your support and look forward to working with you to make a difference in the lives of those affected and infected with HIV/AIDS. We have to better the recently released HIV estimates and I am sure, we will.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sayan Chatterjee', written over a faint circular stamp.

Sayan Chatterjee
Secretary, Department of AIDS Control and
Director General, NACO
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Government of India



India Keeps its Date with the RRE

RRE's second innings concluded on December 1, 2010 having united the country in an effort to make it HIV-free.

Delegates from MoHFW, NACO and UNICEF at the closing ceremony of the Red Ribbon Express event on Dec 1, 2010.

India's most visible HIV campaign, the Red Ribbon Express's (RRE) second year-long yatra officially came to a close on World AIDS Day in the capital at a glittering function. Having travelled through 22 states, halting at 152 pre-determined halt stations, covering a distance of 27,000 km, this mammoth train journey was at the centre of one of the world's largest HIV/AIDS campaigns. It helped reach as many as 80 lakh people, of which about 36,000 opted to go in for voluntary counselling and testing for HIV.

Coinciding the completion of the year-long sojourn of the train with the World AIDS Day, a symbolic relevance was created. This showed the commitment of all stakeholders in bringing down new infections and making treatment, care and support accessible to those infected and affected by HIV.

The Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Sh. Ghulam Nabi Azad, at the closing ceremony of the RRE at Safdarjung Hospital on December 1, 2010 underscored the need for the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) to focus more on States with low prevalence, but with high vulnerability to HIV. He said, "2011 is a

significant year for all those working in the area of HIV/AIDS. India has achieved a major drop in the number of new HIV infections. We need to build on this progress and campaigns like RRE play a crucial part in sensitising people and helping them adopt healthy behaviours, mobilising them to share their knowledge with others."

The Minister congratulated the Health Ministry, NACO, partners and thousands of field workers who had worked tirelessly in turning the tide against HIV. The Minister said adequate steps would be taken by the Centre and through State Governments to further scale up efforts to expand the reach of NACP-III. He reiterated that the government would continue its efforts in making the response to AIDS sustainable.

According to latest estimates, the number of new annual HIV infections has declined by more than 50 percent over the past decade. In India, it has dropped from 2.7 lakh to approximately 1.2 lakh new infections in 2009. Adult HIV prevalence at the national level has also dropped from an estimated 0.41 percent in the year 2000 to 0.31 percent in 2009. The estimated number of people infected with HIV is 23.9 lakh.

Mr. Dinesh Trivedi, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare said, "RRE was a great way to reach the rural masses." Mr. S. Gandhi Selvan, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare said, "The RRE campaign showed the government's commitment to the cause of HIV/AIDS."

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Health and Family

Welfare, and former Secretary & DG, NACO, Mr. K. Chandramouli said the Government had already scaled up counselling and testing centres to over 5,300 centres from medical colleges to 24-hour primary health centres (PHCs). Also, 540 link anti-retroviral treatment (ART) centres at the district and sub-district level hospitals were providing services to more than 20,000 PLHIV.

People Who Made RRE a Success



Aradhana Johri
Additional Secretary, NACO

"A mega campaign like RRE needs detailed planning, involving expertise of multiple agencies and commitment of countless individuals. The impact of the campaign has been overwhelming. After completing two rounds of journeying across the length and breadth of the country, it has motivated the Government of India to use this model for promoting other programmes. The RRE is a trendsetter."

Making the RRE Dream a Reality

The RRE team comprised people dedicated to not just the tasks assigned to them but to the cause and the entire concept that was behind it. While some of them had been there in Phase I too, many were new recruits who quickly learned the ropes and gave more than their 100 percent.

Feedback from some of the key people who worked behind the scenes to make RRE a grand success:



Mayank Agrawal
Joint Director (IEC)
NACO

"The RRE emerged as a powerful advocacy tool that is now being recognised globally too. The fact that we could follow-up the train's first foray into the Indian hinterland (2007-08) with an encore in Phase II (2009-10) was a great feat."



Bilal Naqati
Technical Officer (Youth), NACO

Key Responsibilities: Coordination and liaisoning with the Railways, UNICEF and other key partners.

"It was a daily challenge to monitor the train from Delhi. It was a unique experience to work with multiple partners, each of who added value to the journey."



Daman Ahuja
National Consultant (RRE)
NACO

Key Responsibilities: Coordination with the States and Districts.

"The success of the RRE lies in the micro planning done at the state and field levels."



Mohnish Kumar
Train Manager
NACO

Key Responsibilities: He travelled with the train over the year and managed the train and platform activities.

"We worked like a team. It was like a symphony in an orchestra that had to have all the chords and strings in place before good music could be played."



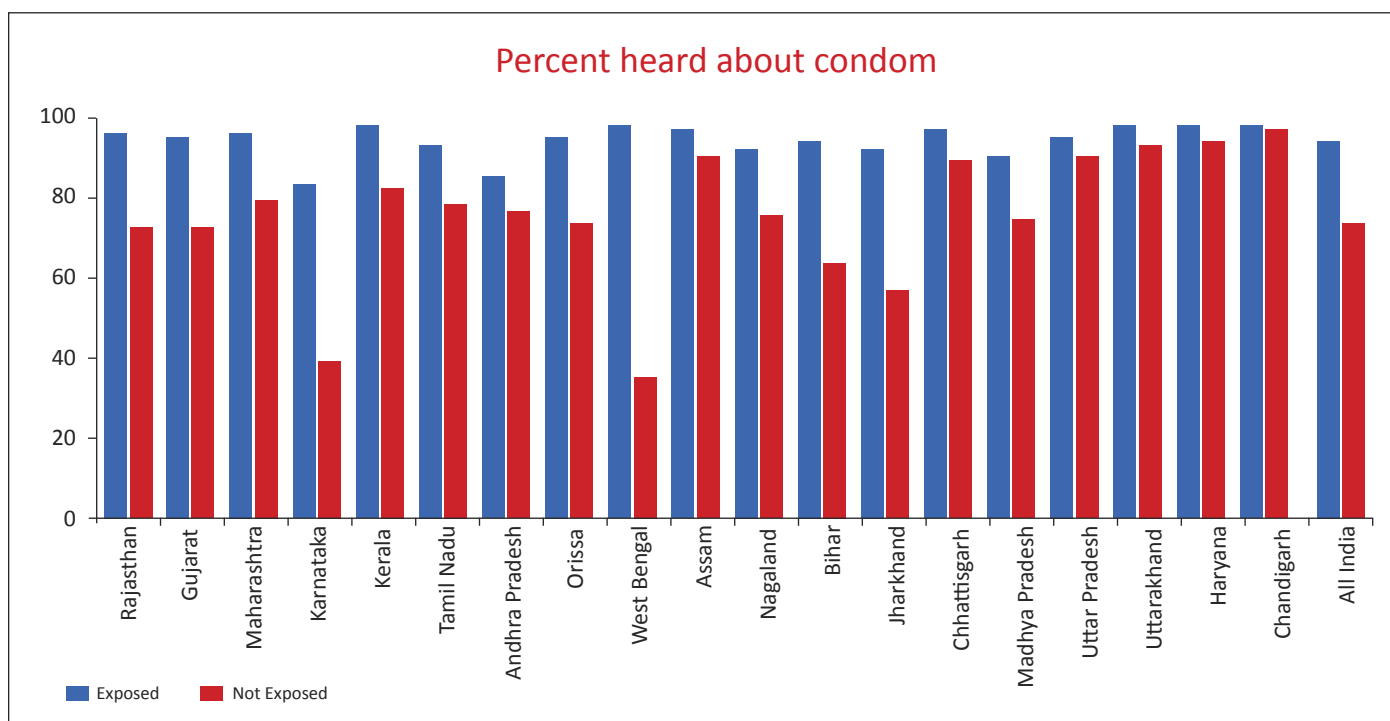
Impact of the Red Ribbon Express

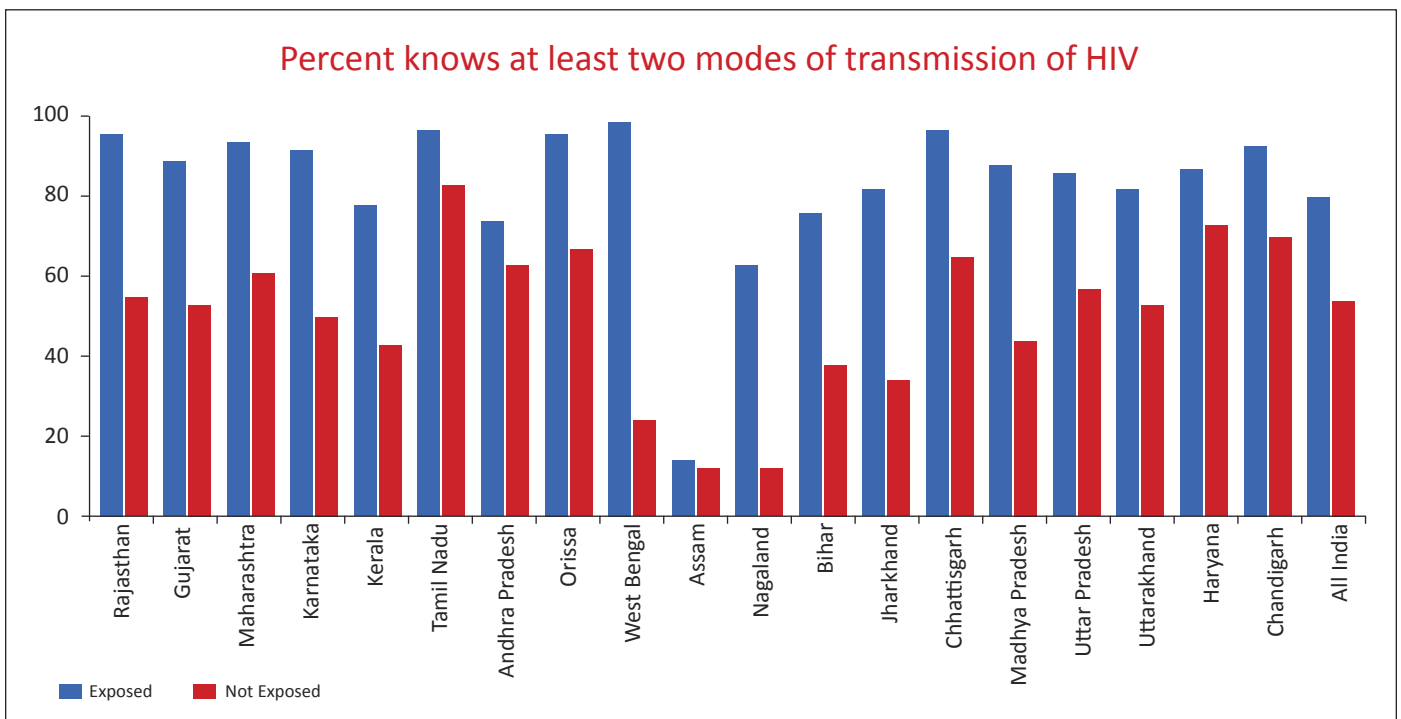
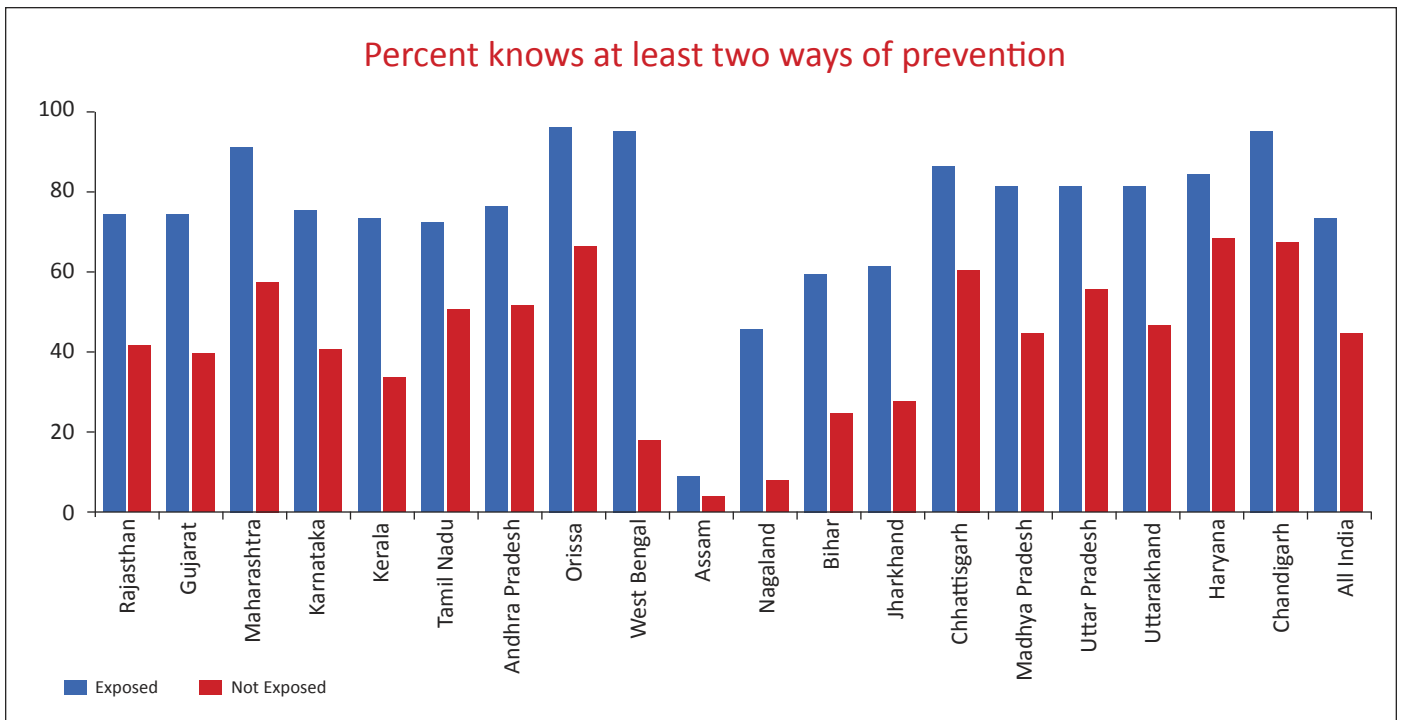
A robust monitoring and evaluation system was established to assess the impact of the Red Ribbon Express. Rapid Assessments and Impact Evaluation studies were used to measure response of the Target Audience.

To assess the impact of RRE activities, a random household survey was conducted at 50 percent of the halt points in each state within a month of departure of the train. The key indicators assessed during the evaluation included knowledge about HIV transmission, prevention, condoms and services. Various other indicators including stigma

and discrimination were also studied during the survey. The sample was drawn from groups both exposed to the RRE compared to those not exposed.

The findings suggested that the comprehensive knowledge of three routes of HIV transmission, three methods of prevention, condom use, sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention and treatment, and other services such as integrated counselling and testing centre (ICTC), prevention of parent-to-child transmission (PPTCT) and ART was significantly higher among respondents exposed to the RRE



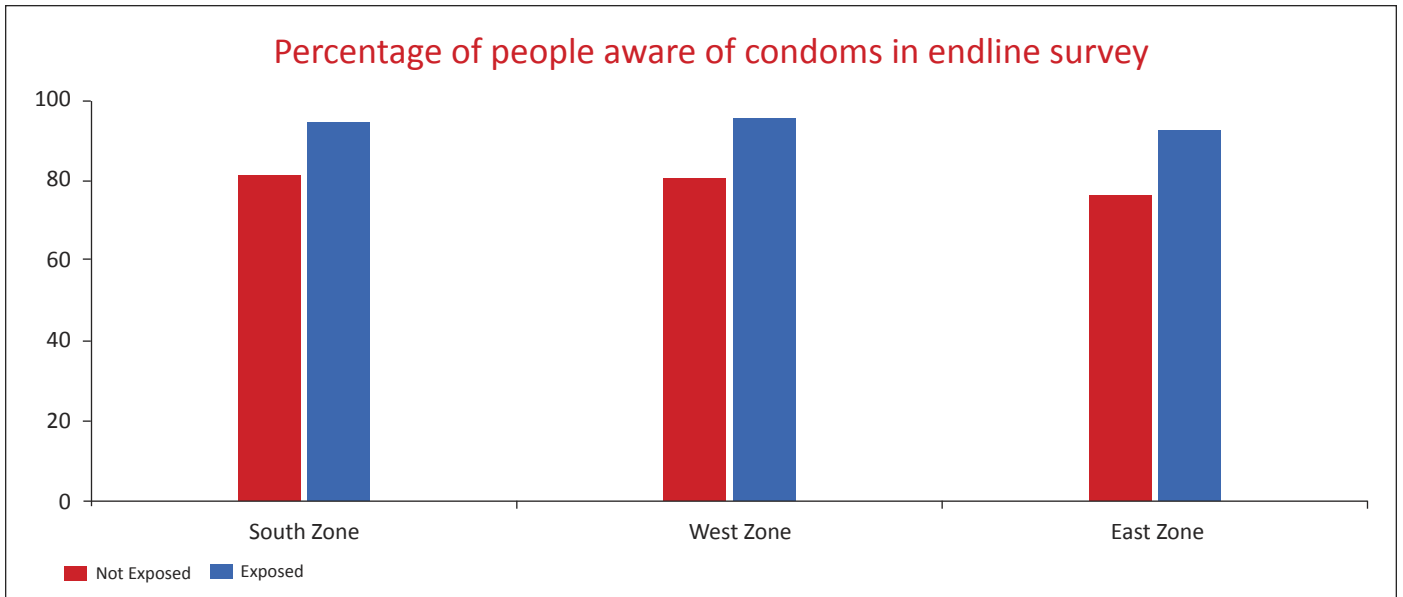


project as compared to those not exposed to the project as shown in the following graphs:

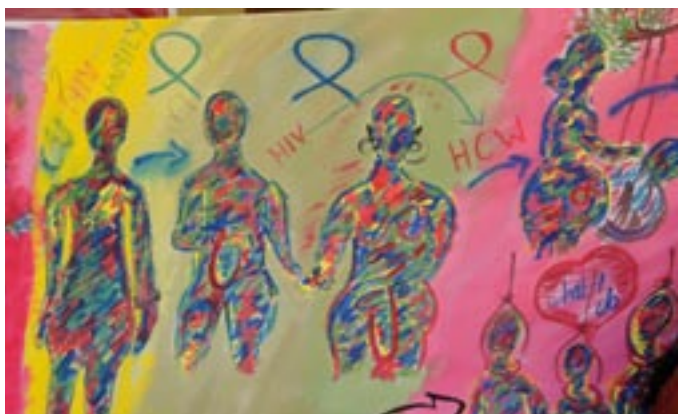
In addition to the rapid assessment, an Impact Evaluation of Red Ribbon Express was also undertaken in selected states. This evaluation was a population-based survey, using quantitative research methodology.

A staggered survey was conducted at baseline and endline among general population around the RRE halt stations to

measure the achievements of RRE. The baseline survey (BLS) was conducted one month prior to the arrival of the train and endline survey (ELS) was conducted two months after the departure of the train. During the impact evaluation, various indicators concerning knowledge of HIV prevention, related services, myths and misconceptions, and attitudes and perceptions of people about people living with HIV were studied. The data of the western zone, southern zone and eastern zone was obtained and analysed. The following findings show positive impact of the campaign.



RRE Inspired Art: Select images that were created during the RRE Campaign



Conference Discusses Ways of Eliminating Paediatric HIV

On the occasion of World AIDS Day, experts deliberated ways of stepping up awareness, strengthening the PPTCT programme and ensuring optimal delivery of care to CLHIV.

Union Health Minister Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad inaugurating the National Paediatric Conference in New Delhi.

A National Conference 'Towards Elimination of Paediatric HIV' was held in New Delhi from 1-3 December, 2010. This was the first of its kind organised by NACO for the benefit of national programme implementers and programme managers, focusing exclusively on paediatric care.

NACO partnered with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), UNICEF, WHO, UNAIDS, Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP) and Federation of Obstetrics & Gynaecology Society of India (FOGSI) to bring more than 400 participants including paediatricians, members of IAP and FOGSI, senior medical officers, medical officers of ART centres and officials from SACS to participate in the three-day deliberations.

A working group was constituted under the chairmanship of the Secretary & DG, NACO with members from WHO, UNICEF, IAP, FOGSI and NACO. A Scientific Committee was also formed to finalise the scientific programme of the conference. The organising secretary, Dr. B. B. Rewari, NPO (ART), NACO coordinated all activities related to scientific and organisational part of the conference.

The major objectives of the conference were to:

- Create a multidisciplinary forum for networking and sharing of information on new research and evidence-based programmes and policies relating to PPTCT and paediatric HIV.
- Provide opportunities to stakeholders involved in PPTCT and paediatric HIV care, support and treatment; take stock of programme implementation; evaluate recent scientific developments; record lessons learnt; and outline the way forward.
- Identify areas to facilitate stronger linkages between recent scientific development and current programme

implementation; share and learn from different stakeholders to mitigate impact of HIV/AIDS.

- Deliberate operational issues for optimal delivery of care to HIV infected children in India.
- Increase public awareness of continued impact of HIV, and need for and feasibility of elimination of paediatric HIV infection through media and advocacy.

A total of 133 abstracts were received from physicians, programme managers, officials of SACS and development institutions. The conference covered the themes of "Paradigm shift in mother-to-child transmission", "Keeping every child alive and healthy", "Care, support and treatment for children", "Strategies and approaches of paediatric HIV in India" and "Operational challenges in reaching the unreached".

Hon'ble Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad, while inaugurating the conference, drew attention to the Government's response towards the epidemic. He highlighted the focus areas in Care, Support and Treatment component of NACP, including the national paediatric AIDS initiatives, policy framework for children and AIDS, establishment of Regional Paediatric Centres (RPCs), Community Care Centres (CCCs) for children, Early Infant Diagnosis (EID) and Children Affected By AIDS (CABA). The Minister also reiterated the UNAIDS theme of "3 Zeros", i.e. Zero New HIV Infections, Zero Discrimination and Zero AIDS-related Deaths, and stressed on the Government's commitment to work towards the elimination of paediatric HIV.

■ Dr. B. B. Rewari
National Programme Officer (ART)
NACO



SACS Line Up an Impressive Series of Events to Mark WAD

India joins the global HIV community in expressing its commitment and dedication to fighting the AIDS epidemic which is already receding in the sub-continent.

Every year, the World AIDS Day (WAD) is celebrated the world over to raise awareness, fight prejudice and reach out to those living with HIV/AIDS. Around the world, well structured government programmes run parallel to equally organised networks of NGOs, CBOs, corporate groups, Positive People's organisations and a host of committed individuals to work for the cause of HIV/AIDS.

WAD then becomes a significant day to observe all that has been achieved as also tasks that remain unfinished on the agenda. For the year 2010, the theme was 'Universal Access and Human Rights', signalling a maturing of the epidemic, which in many countries has started to recede as awareness has led to prevention and better treatment opportunities for those infected with HIV.

Global leaders joined Margaret Chan, Director General, WHO when she said, "International and national investment in HIV treatment scale up have yielded concrete and measurable results. We cannot let this momentum wane. Now is the time to redouble our efforts, and save many more lives."

In India, with the active involvement of State AIDS Control Societies, all states put up a remarkable show bringing cities, towns and villages together on a common platform, taking up issues that were central to them and resolving to make the lives of those infected and affected by HIV better. Below is a snapshot of what India did to observe WAD.

Folk Campaign, Candlelight Vigils, SMS/E-mails Make WAD a Household Topic in Karnataka

Folk art forms, new information, education and communication (IEC) materials, candlelight vigils, endorsements by film stars and mass SMSing and e-mails drew attention to HIV on World AIDS Day. Partners and supporting organisations in Karnataka turned up in full strength to create advocacy before and during WAD. This was evident through outdoor media, electronic media, mass mobilisation events, government programmes and instant messaging via SMS and e-mails.

Health Secretary Government of Karnataka, Ramana Reddy; Mission Director, National Rural Health Mission, S. Selva Kumar; Commissioner of State H&FW, D. N. Nayak; and

Project Director, Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society, R. R. Jannu were part of a state level meeting to take stock and commemorate WAD. Mr. Ramana Reddy inaugurated an orientation programme for students. Elsewhere in the state, folk performances, exhibition stalls, help desks and counselling and testing vans were set up and launched.

More than 1000 students took part in the orientation session where they updated each other on knowledge of HIV/AIDS. Myths were clarified and correct information disseminated. Healthy discussion ensued with students outlining ways in which they could contribute constructively. Essay, slogan writing and poster competitions were held at the district level. At a brief ceremony, along with students, hospitals and PHCs were awarded for conducting maximum HIV positive deliveries.

Popular film actress Pooja Gandhi spoke about being safe from HIV. She told young people to make it a habit to indulge in safe sex and not hesitate in using condoms for their and their partner's safety. A candlelight vigil in the evening saw singer and actress Vasundhara Das motivating youngsters to join in the fight against AIDS.

New IEC materials were printed and distributed to the general population on testing, stigma and discrimination, and services. Short documentary films in Kannada and

English covered different aspects of HIV. Trained folk artists performed on HIV themes in Kamsale, Yakshagana, Dollukunita and Togalu Gombe. A signature campaign was also undertaken where more than 500 people signed on a white canvas, committing themselves to providing an equitable environment to those infected and affected by HIV.

Airtel, as the mobile partner, sent 15 million SMSs to subscribers on HIV awareness with celebrity messages and dialer/voice calls. Additionally, 6.5 million e-mail messages, 300 T-shirt and caps, and 5000 paper cups with HIV messages were distributed.

Sikkim Holds Candlelight Vigil in PHCs

Nearly 25 PHCs observed a night-long candlelight vigil and held a rally, "Light for Rights" the morning after, to mobilise support for people living with HIV (PLHIV). The mass rally which comprised PLHIV and their supporters, families, friends, neighbours and well wishers made a strong statement, endorsing PLHIV's right to education, speech and equal participation in all socio-economic-cultural activities.

Observing December 1 as "Universal Access and Human Rights" day, a red ribbon campaign was initiated by the



Candlelight vigil observed by Sikkim SACS.

representatives of Red Ribbon Clubs (RRCs) in all Government Departments. More than 1000 officials were seen sporting the red ribbon, demonstrating compassion and support to people infected and affected by HIV. A special stall was put up in the heart of town. Free ribbons, hand and hair bands with HIV messages were freely distributed. The entire city wore a festive look. A two-minute silence was observed to pray for those who died of AIDS related illnesses. The day concluded with the lighting of a 5-foot tall candle followed by a silent march through the city, led by Project Director, Sikkim SACS, and representatives from NGOs, RRCs, government departments, NYK, NSS volunteers, members of United Sikkim Sporting Club, students, media and various PLHIV networks.

Friendly Cricket Match: Antidote to Stigma in Madhya Pradesh

A 20-20 friendly cricket match was organised by the Madhya Pradesh Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (MPNP+) and supported by UNICEF. The competing teams were Minister's XI and Project Director's XI, captained by the Minister of State for Health of Madhya Pradesh, Sh. Mahendra Hardia and Project Director of Madhya Pradesh State AIDS Control Society, Dr. Manohar Agnani respectively. Ten of the 30 players participating in the match were HIV positive.

Seeing sportspersons on the field, each of whom was chasing a healthy competitive target, it was difficult to differentiate the HIV positive from negative. This was the entire point of the match, which aimed to draw attention to the fact that PLHIV could lead normal lives and do things like normal regular people. There was no reason to discriminate against them. Running, chasing the ball, hitting boundaries and being cheered by the audience, filled the air with true sporting spirit.

President of MPNP+ Manoj Verma said, "We need to create a lot more awareness, specially amongst medical staff in hospitals. Sports is a medium that cuts across all backgrounds, age and income groups. We hope this friendly match has given confidence to positive people and shown others that HIV is not something to shun or discard. Living with mutual respect is possible."

Human Chain Connects People of Chandigarh to HIV Community

High school and college students formed a 12-km long human chain to draw attention to issues related to HIV/AIDS. Carrying balloons and placards, they made a pretty statement as they walked the streets in white t-shirts with



Mass rally in Chandigarh propagating messages on HIV/AIDS.

bold messages, telling people that HIV was not infectious, people with HIV could live long and healthy lives and with treatment, life span could be prolonged.

Distributing red ribbons and broaches, they urged them to join and show support and solidarity to the cause. Later in the evening, as the sun went down, the young and old alike got together to hold candlelight marches. The city which is divided into sectors, saw 20 candlelight marches in slums/labour colonies and posh areas. Local mobile phone operators had already sent SMSs, alerting people to the city's observance of WAD. A helium filled balloon with HIV/AIDS written on it was flown above a busy market area and was airborne for four days. Elsewhere in the city, health camps, seminars and training sessions were held. Each of these were presided by a senior community leader/government official/opinion leader.

Clarion Call from Andamans to "Be Aware and Act with Fairness"

The Andaman and Nicobar AIDS Control Society organised numerous activities to promote NACO's theme of "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise" along with "Act Aware", the sub-theme for 2010, which motivated and implored people to make commitments and take action.

Mr. Shakti Sinha, Chief Secretary, Andaman and Nicobar Administration, flagged off a rally of 500 school and college students along with two specially designed mobile vans on two different routes. Prizes for inter-college and inter-school competition events were distributed and young people told to join the HIV movement as Goodwill Ambassadors, spreading HIV messages and debunking many prevailing myths and misconceptions.



A skit on HIV/AIDS organised by Andaman and Nicobar AIDS Control Society.

On the occasion, the School of Nursing presented a prize to the winners of dance drama on HIV/AIDS. All through the day, local electronic media brought out HIV related television spots and talk shows. The focus was to involve every member of the community in the advocacy movement and help change their perceptions about the infection.

Orissa Strengthens Health Infrastructure with New Model Blood Bank

To ensure greater access to safe blood transfusion, eight district level blood transportation vans and nine Elisa Readers were provided to blood banks in the state. The blood bank at Bhubaneswar which had been declared a Model Blood Bank also received a specially fabricated blood mobile van given by NACO.

At a state level function organised by Orissa SACS, Chief Minister Sh. Naveen Patnaik informed that over 12,000 PLHIV had been provided pension under 'Madhubabu



School children carrying the messages on HIV/AIDS during a rally in Orissa.

Pension Yojana'. HIV-affected families had also been included in a "low cost housing" programme (Mo Kudia Yojana).

The Chief Minister said that efforts were being made to develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with issues of migrants and step up testing, counselling and treatment amongst their cadre. Steps were being taken to link the HIV programme with NRHM to provide better access and services to people in hard-to-reach areas.

Marathons, street plays, signature campaigns, candlelight shows, and painting and essay competitions were held even as the state government stepped up its efforts to strengthen health infrastructure for vulnerable groups.

Tamil Nadu Creates Corpus Fund of Rs. 5 crore for CLHIV

In Tambaram, at the inauguration of a new facility at the Government Hospital for Thoracic Medicine (GHTM), Minister for Health, Sh. M. R. K. Panneerselvam, announced that a new corpus fund of Rs. 5 crore had been created to treat 1,500 children living with HIV (CLHIV). He said that this amount would be increased with contributions from the industry. To demonstrate his own personal commitment, he informed that he too had donated two months of his salary to the fund.

While releasing a special publicity poster on the occasion, he said that the Centre of Excellence inside the premises of GHTM had been specially created with financial support of Rs. 30 lakh for holding year-long training and counselling.

Mr. V. K. Subburaj, Principal Secretary, Health said the government planned to increase the corpus fund to



Cycle rally being flagged off in Chennai.

Rs. 25 crore in a year's time. Mr. S. Noori, managing trustee of SIP Memorial Home, appealed to the State Government to provide second line drugs in at least one of the five ART centres in Chennai. Almost all those receiving second line drugs in the region were dependent on GHM, which put pressure on the hospital and also on those waiting all day for their turn to get treatment.

Goa Gets New Red Ribbon Clubs

Multiple activities were organised to strengthen the fight against HIV in a state where risk element is high, given the large influx of foreign tourists. Government departments, corporate groups and voluntary organisations came together to express solidarity and togetherness, committing themselves to making the tourist state HIV-free. Goa SACS observed WAD by launching a new mobile blood donation unit which was inaugurated by Dr. Pramod Salgaoncar, Chairperson, Core Committee, Goa SACS in the presences of P. K. Mukherjee, M. D., Sesa Goa Ltd., Dr. Pradeep Padwal, Project Director, Goa SACS and other dignitaries.

Other events organised around WAD included a blood donation camp where more than 150 employees of Sesa Goa Ltd. stepped forward to donate blood. Population Health Services (India) in collaboration with Goa SACS took out a

rally in Panaji. This was followed by a State level function where blood donors and volunteers were felicitated and a CD on 'HIV/AIDS Situation and Response' was released. The HIV/AIDS policy of Sesa Goa Ltd. was also widely distributed.

Two new Red Ribbon Clubs (RRCs) were thrown open at the Govt. College of Arts, Science & Commerce, Quepem; and Govt. Polytechnic-Curchorem with an active group of members and volunteers.



Students from Goa participating in the rally on World AIDS Day.



Cultural performance being showcased in Assam.

Assam Spruces Up Services for PLHIV

Assam SACS organised district level functions, rallies and public meetings on the occasion of WAD. As part of a State level function, a rally was organised with 600 people representing different voluntary organisations. Prominent sportspersons took part, urging the youth to step forward and associate themselves with HIV/AIDS.

In a State level public meeting held at Guwahati where about 700 people attended, Mr. Himanta Biswa, Minister, H&FW, Assam, announced that the government would provide second line ART treatment to all HIV positive people free of cost. He flagged off the Blood Mobile vehicle and six Blood Transportation Vans, provided by NACO to Assam SACS.



Shri Gurbachan Jagat, Governor of Manipur, releasing the draft Revised State AIDS Policy.

Two HIV positive young girls narrated their story and told the audience how they had learnt to manage HIV, deal with stigma and rebuild their lives after the death of their parents. They placed on record the support they received from the Positive Network which linked them to the district hospital and followed up with them through the period of counselling and treatment.

Manipur Revises its 1996 AIDS Policy

Manipur joined the international community in observing the 22nd World AIDS Day with a series of functions and launches. Dignitaries who lent their support included Sh. Gurbachan Jagat, Governor and Sh. O. Ibohi Singh, Chief Minister of Manipur.

A special HIV/AIDS intervention programme was launched at Manipur Central Jail in Sajiwa to provide prevention, care and support services for inmates. The initiative was supported by Manipur SACS, UNODC, Jail Department, Govt. of Manipur and Manipur Network of Positive People (MNP+). This would link up with services like needle and syringe programmes, Opioid Substitution Therapy and other drug dependence treatment, HIV testing and counselling, ART, prevention and treatment of STI, condom promotion, targeted IEC for IDUs and their sexual partners, vaccination, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis, and prevention, diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis.

The Governor released the draft revised State AIDS Policy 2010, saying it was the first of its kind in the country, which was drafted in 1996 and amended to suit the evolving nature of the virus. A new mobile ICTC and IEC van (Red Ribbon Express) were also released on the occasion.

West Bengal makes PLHIV their Focus on WAD

SNP+, an affiliated body of BNP+, organised a series of events from 1-3 December, 2010 to mark WAD. Most of their activities centered around the PLHIV community and society. An information stall was put up at Sonarpur Railway Station Complex to disseminate information on HIV/AIDS. The stall aroused curiosity, with young people thronging for information. More than 8,200 condoms were distributed. A film screening was organised where films with HIV theme (My Brother Nikhil, Chameli, Phir Milenge) were screened. Discussions ensued around the rights of PLHIV and stigma and discrimination, especially at the workplace. A lively cultural programme with songs and skits enthralled the audience and created a platform for dialogue and experience sharing.

■ With inputs from the States

Powerful Play Brings Introspection on World AIDS Day

Delhi's leading theatre Repertory stages "Shifa" as part of a socially relevant contemporary initiative.



Shifa, the play, highlighting the stigma attached with HIV.



Shifa means "healing" and was the title of the play that was staged to a full audience in New Delhi's Mavalankar Hall on December 1, 2010. Specially written, directed and staged by the National School of Drama (NSD), it was supported by UNICEF and NACO.

Directed and scripted by Associate Professor, Tripurari Sharma of NSD, it was based on extensive research and interactions with PLHIV and caregivers. The play travelled through Allahabad, Varanasi, Ballia, Lucknow and Saharanpur before being screened in Delhi.

Using powerful narratives and portrayals to convey key issues that affect PLHIV, Shifa highlighted the ways in which stigma affects a family that is already battling loss, grief and penury. It also highlighted the plight of a grandmother who has to fend for the surviving children of her son and daughter-in-law, both of whom have succumbed to AIDS. It brought to the fore the reaction of a strapping young lad who just discovers his HIV positive status with the knowledge that death is not a distant reality, and a young woman whose joy at being pregnant is cut short with the discovery that she too is HIV positive and the status of her unborn child unknown.

The play addresses the issue by:

- Breaking the silence through the medium of theatre.
- Giving an opportunity to PLHIV to be heard.
- Addressing the issue of risk perception, by breaking the barrier between "them" and "us".
- Depicting the courage and confidence many positive people have successfully shown in facing life.
- Addressing stigma and discrimination as it is practised in society.
- Showing audience how they can take collective and individual responsibility.
- Providing accurate and credible information on the subjects addressed.



The MoHFW pavilion at the IITF, New Delhi.

MoHFW Pavilion Awarded Gold Medal at IITF; NACO Booth Draws Huge Crowd

A thematic display by different organisations within the government health system helped showcase services, schemes and projects to an enthusiastic line up of visitors.

The India International Trade Fair (IITF) in the capital is one of the country's premier annual trade shows that meets with an overwhelming response both from the general as well as the business communities. The week-long fair which was held in New Delhi from 14-27 November, 2010 had more than 300 participants from India and overseas, putting up products and services on display.

Showcasing its flagship National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's pavilion was based on the theme of 'Swasth Gram-Swasth Rashtra' (Healthy Village-Healthy Nation). The pavilion was awarded a Gold Medal among the Central Government

pavilions for excellence in display. NRHM, NACO, Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh (JSK), Department of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH), were part of this health pavilion and had their own stalls.

It highlighted the Government's resolve to provide quality healthcare to the remotest areas in the country. The pavilion, which was inaugurated by Union Health Minister Sh. Ghulam Nabi Azad, offered services like routine health check-ups, blood group examination, eye check-up, counselling for contraceptive choices and family planning methods.

NACO's exhibition was on the theme of the Red Ribbon Express. The bogie from the train was recreated with the message displayed from the train. A giant LED wall was also created to run the NACO spot. To engage the audience, two condom men were placed throughout the trade fair. HIV counselling and testing services were provided and condoms were distributed along with information leaflets.

Folk performances were also organised, both inside and outside the pavilion to spread HIV messages through the medium of entertainment.



Union Health Minister Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad visiting the NACO stall at IITF, New Delhi.

■ Prachi Garg
Advisor (IEC), NACO



Volunteers urging people to donate blood on the occasion of National Voluntary Blood Donation Day.

Voluntary Blood Donation Becomes a National Movement

The observance of the National Voluntary Blood Donation Day on a pan India basis has gained momentum with each state planning its own unique set of activities.

Voluntary donation is the only way of accumulating blood safely to meet emergency requirements for saving lives. October 1 is observed as National Voluntary Blood Donation Day all over the country to create awareness of safe blood. The day is observed to help mobilise voluntary blood donors to step forward for the larger cause of humanity. Over the years, various campaigns have been carried out to dispel myths and misconceptions that keep people away from donating blood.

Also, young icons have been roped in as Blood Donation Ambassadors, who urge the youth to donate not once but repeatedly. Most of the messaging highlights the importance of safe, uninfected blood both from the point

of view of the donor as well as the recipient. Against this backdrop, the National Voluntary Blood Donation Day acquires a great deal of significance. Each state, depending upon what its stock position on blood is and what are its strengths and limitations with regard to awareness, number of donors, issues of access and involvement of the civil community, mounts its own campaign and promotion activities. Below is a snapshot of what the country did on October 1, 2010.

Orissa Installs Blood Units in Four Locations

In Orissa, a massive voluntary blood donation drive was organised by the State Red Cross Society in association



Blood donation camp organised by Orissa SACS.

with the Indian Medical Association, National Service Scheme (NSS) units in colleges, students unions and local clubs. The Orissa Red Cross Society jointly with Ama Odisha set a new record in blood donation, breaking the previous record of 2002. The Health Department of Orissa installed separate blood units in Bhubaneswar, Berhampur, Sambalpur and Angul. Implemented by NACO, it will be a boon for patients who require specific blood components in remote parts of the State. Plans are in the offing to computerise the 77 Blood Banks that are operational in Orissa and provide them with specific codes and identity cards.

Blood Banks in Sikkim Organise Series of Events

The National Voluntary Blood Donation Day was celebrated with fervour in Gangtok and Namchi Blood Banks in collaboration with local NGOs, and sponsored by the Sikkim State Blood Transfusion Council and Sikkim State AIDS Control Society. In the South district headquarters of Namchi, Voluntary Blood Donor Motivation Camp and Open Quiz Competition were held at the Government College. More than 84 units of blood were collected at the District Hospital.

As a precursor to the main event, on September 26, the Voluntary Blood Donor Motivation Camp was organised with over 130 participants. A painting and essay competition was held on the theme 'Giving Blood Regularly' and on October 1, an awareness rally was organised in Gangtok which was followed by a Voluntary Blood Donation Camp. The week-long celebration concluded with the commemoration of National Voluntary Blood Donation and Gandhi Jayanti celebrations with government officials, former ministers and officers from the Sikkim Blood Transfusion Council attending the event. As part of IEC activity, video spots and audio programmes were telecast for five days.



Members of the United Sikkim Sporting Club wearing the Red Ribbon in an attempt to promote voluntary blood donation.



Display of selecte posters on voluntary blood donation by the Blood Bank in Chandigarh.

Campaign Activities Undertaken in Chandigarh

Total blood units collected by the four licensed blood banks during the month-long campaign in the Union Territory included 6,932 units from 60 blood donation camps. Two blood donation camps were organised at PGIMER and IDBI Bank, Zirakpur. Regular donors and motivators were

felicitated. Schools which had played an active role in promoting blood donation amongst the youth were awarded. Functions were also organised by blood banks in association with the State Blood Transfusion Council and the Rotary Blood Bank Society and Resource Centre to honour blood donor organisations.

Armed Forces Active in Andamans' Blood Donation Drive

The Andaman and Nicobar AIDS Control Society organised a voluntary blood donation camp at JNRM College, Port Blair to observe the National Voluntary Blood Donation Day. A coat lapel (badge) was specially made and distributed to all voluntary donors with the message "I donated blood today. It was very easy", largely to dispel the myths that surrounded blood donation. The month-long campaign ended on October 31.

On October 8, it organised a voluntary blood donation camp at the Island Tourism Festival (ITF) ground also with the cadets and officers of the naval unit. Regular donors, some of whom had donated over 50 times, were felicitated. It was pointed out that last year, only one percent of the island's population had donated blood through voluntary



Defence personnel lined up to donate blood at the blood camp organised by Andaman SACS.



Shri B. Sriramalu, Health Minister, Karnataka flags off blood transportation vans.

blood donation camps, out of which more than 80 percent units were collected from the defence forces and the remaining from donor organisations, family members and friends of patients who needed blood. This year with over 35 camps being organised, the percentage had increased manifold.

Health Minister Sets an Example in Karnataka

The National Voluntary Blood Donation Day was celebrated by KSAPS, the Indian Red Cross Society and the Karnataka State Blood Transfusion Council. Health Minister who is himself a regular blood donor, called upon young people to add a new twist to their birthdays—the day they were born—by donating a unit of blood every year to save the lives of those who needed it. On the occasion, he flagged off nine blood transportation vans, each serving the needs of general hospitals in Mysore, Belgaum, Hubli, Gulbarga and Bellary.

Health Secretary Mr. E. V. Ramana Reddy informed that the state had 171 blood banks and thrust was being

given on the establishment of blood storage facilities rather than blood banks in the first referral units. He added that such storage units had already been established in 30 talukas under the NRHM.

Mr. R. R. Jannu, Project Director, KSAPS, apprised the audience that the state required four lakh units of blood every year and collection through voluntary donation camps had contributed to 3.25 lakh units last year. The state already has 171 blood banks. The country's first blood storage centre was opened at Kundapur taluka in Uttara Kannada district. Presently, there are 30 functional blood storage centres at taluka level in the state.

An announcement was made that blood banks in the six new medical colleges would be upgraded to blood component separation units soon. Also, KSAPS would step up monitoring in the blood banks to ensure they have a valid licence from the Drugs Controller. Additionally, the blood banks will carry out mandatory tests for HIV 1 and 2, HbsAg (HBV), HCB, VDRL and Malaria.



The voluntary blood donation drive in progress in Kerala.

Kerala Moves from Low to Moderate Blood Safety Performance

Voluntary non-remunerated blood donors are the foundation of safe blood supply as they are associated with significantly lower levels of infections and least likely to transmit life-threatening infections. Keeping this in mind, KSACS and SBTC Kerala implemented an 'Intensive Campaign for the Promotion of Voluntary Blood Donation in Kerala' with the support of HLPPT. Voluntary blood donation in Kerala was only 37 percent in 2008-09, despite the support of NGOs, service clubs, students' organisations and individuals. The programme which was planned and implemented in Kerala, contributed to the increase in voluntary blood donation to more than 70 percent. Some of the activities undertaken included situational assessment and stakeholder analysis of each blood bank, leading to the development of tailor made action plans; formation of district blood donor's forum; holding outreach and institutional camps; and having sensitisation and capacity building programmes for stakeholders.



Staff of Sesa Goa donating blood in the mobile blood donation van.

The observance of World Blood Donors' Day and National Voluntary Blood Donation Day helped create wider awareness on the importance of voluntary blood donation and in encouraging more people to become regular blood donors. Elected representatives, district collectors, celebrities, Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members, corporates and NGOs participated in the district level activities. Over 1000 partners included educational institutions, RRCs, NGOs, members of the NSS, local clubs, blood banks and other organisations. More than 1,200 student peer educators from RRCs were trained on voluntary blood donation and around 1,100 voluntary blood donation camps with 38,000 unit donations were conducted for 2010-11 against 1200 camps and 31,470 unit donations in 2009-10. The average unit of donation per camp doubled from 20 to 40.

Goa Gets New IEC and Blood Donation Vans

Recognising the importance of IEC and branding, Goa SACS developed special material which was released on October 1 in the presence of dignitaries, young people and community members. A state level function was held at ITI, Margao. The dignitaries who were present included Mr. Aleixo F. da Costa, Director, State Directorate of Craftsmen Training; Dr. Wiseman Pinto, Prof & HOD, Dept. of Pathology, GMC; Shri M. R. Allabaksh, Principal, ITI, Borda, Margao; Dr. Suresh Mandrekar, Asst. Professor, Dept. of Pathology; Dr. Pradeep Padwal, Project Director, Goa SACS; and Dr. N. V. Markande, Deputy Director, Blood Safety, Goa SACS. A special IEC mobile van was created with colourful messages and facility for miking in addition to a voluntary blood donation mobile van, both of which were flagged off by Mr. Alexio F. Da Costa.

■ With inputs from the States



Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, flagging off the "Walk for Blood" at Rajpath, New Delhi.

Rotarians "Walk for Blood" in the Capital

The Rotary Blood Bank organised a celebrity studded walkathon where positive messages on blood donation were beamed by all walkers in the 15-80 age group.

Students, Rotarians, their spouses and families, eminent sportspersons and culture icons joined hands on December 5, 2010 to participate in the Rotary Blood Bank's "Walk for Blood" on Rajpath, New Delhi. The Walk was flagged off by Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, who was accompanied on the entire walking route by his wife Dr. Isher Judge Ahluwalia.

The event was supported by NACO with Dr. Ahluwalia as Chief Guest. Ms. Aradhana Johri, Additional Secretary, NACO on the occasion said, "Voluntary Blood Donation must be promoted amongst all cross sections of society. Walks such as the one organised by the Rotarians will go a long way in promoting cause-based messages."

Nearly 6000 school and college students from 40 educational institutions wearing white T-shirts with logos and messages on blood donation and sporting red caps, participated enthusiastically in the Walk. They carried placards and chanted slogans exhorting the virtues of blood donation and dispelling common myths which keep people from stepping forward to donate.

More than 600 Rotary members including their spouses participated in the Walk. Director-elect Yas Das and his wife

Manju Das came from Ambala to show their solidarity to the cause. Three Commonwealth Games gold medal winners Ashwini Ponnappa (Badminton), Anisa Sayyed (Shooting) and Krishna Poonia (Discus throw) also participated, urging people to commit themselves to creating awareness amongst their friends and family members to donate blood.

Other celebrities who spoke on the occasion and joined the Walk included well known danseuse Padma Vibhushan Dr. Sonal Mansingh, Padma Shree Saroja Vaidyanathan and Padma Shree Shovana Narayan. Prominent social activist, Nafisa Ali also spoke on the occasion. Rtn. PP Atul Jain, Rtn. PP Ajay Chauhan and PP Kamal Bhambani who helped organise a number of blood donation camps were felicitated.

According to Rtn. Sudarshan Agarwal, Former Governor of Sikkim and Uttarakhand, Past Director and President Emeritus Rotary Blood Bank, "Blood donation creates a compassionate, caring and egalitarian society which is the need of our times. Blood donors are loving, unselfish and compassionate human beings who are always ready to do something for society".

■ Vinita Srivastava
Programme Officer (VBD), NACO



Bruni Reaches Out Compassionately to Pregnant Women Living with HIV

Ms. Aradhana Johri, Additional Secretary, NACO welcoming France's First Lady Carla Bruni at Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi.

Carla Bruni's empathetic understanding of HIV helped her make a strong appeal to the Indian Government to ensure availability of medicines, especially to women.

Few people know that 43-year old Carla Bruni, France's First Lady, can sing effortlessly and melodiously. At the Naz Care Home which works with HIV positive orphans in the capital, she interacted with about 30 children between the age of 2 and 17 years, regaling them with a song and also promising to send them copies of her music albums.

Representing the Global Fund as its Ambassador, responsible for promoting messages related to protection of mothers and children against HIV and AIDS, she expressed concern over the need for developing countries like India to halt HIV transmission from mothers to their newborns. To understand the plight of women better, she tried

stepping into the shoes of an HIV pregnant woman in Safdarjung Hospital.

Dressed in a dark blue pant suit and blue stole, she took the path all pregnant women take when they come to the hospital for delivery, starting with the overcrowded Out Patients Department, which on most days caters to about 5,000 patients. From here, she moved to the obstetrics and gynaecology section, and later to the ICTC where pregnant women were counselled on HIV and AIDS before being tested. She also visited the laboratory where blood samples are collected. Attendant staff demonstrated to her the manner in which they counselled their clients. She asked many questions and listened empathetically. She could see

that most people in the ward came from marginalised and poor backgrounds with limited resources and in many cases almost no family support.

Safdarjung Hospital was chosen for Bruni's visit because it records 50-100 births a day, the highest in any hospital in Delhi. Additionally, it runs the region's largest programme to prevent transmission of HIV from pregnant mothers to newborns.

Bruni later met with UPA Chairperson Smt. Sonia Gandhi at a dinner hosted by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, where she once again broached the subject of HIV treatment and the need to provide universal access to medicines. She said, "Since we have the drugs which organisations like The Global Fund can bring to every country, my job becomes even more significant. I would like to see an exponential increase in the number of mothers who go to the hospital, get tested and avail timely medical help". She added by saying that, "HIV was not a trauma, but a condition. By taking steps that can help reduce chances of bringing an HIV positive child in the world, every effort should be made by governments and programme managers to take care of the interests of the family and community".



France's first lady Carla Bruni taking a look at the IEC material developed by NACO.

Carla Bruni stood tall and elegant as she interacted with everyone. Soft spoken and sensitive, her presence was soothing and reassuring for both patients, doctors and caregivers who felt enthused by her visit.

At an ART centre, an HIV positive woman who was five months pregnant, said, "Seeing big and beautiful people involved in the programme, I am not feeling alone, abandoned and destitute." Coming to Delhi has been a life saver for her who is now enthused with a spirit that wants her to live and fight the infection.

The HIV movement needs compassionate Ambassadors like Carla Bruni. It provides succour and comfort to sufferers and caregivers and also gives a fillip to the cause itself. Indian NGOs have urged Bruni to take up the issue of having a more flexible approach towards scaling up of treatment with the European Union and the French Government. They have also requested her to look into the matter and see how the new trade agreements must not impact access to medicines and the European Commission should be made aware of its obligations on the right to health and medicines as well.

■ Madhu Gurung
Media Advisor, NACO

“Since we have the drugs which organisations like The Global Fund can bring to every country, my job becomes even more significant. I would like to see an exponential increase in the number of mothers who go to the hospital, get tested and avail timely medical help". She added by saying that, "HIV was not a trauma, but a condition. By taking steps that can help reduce chances of bringing an HIV positive child in the world, every effort should be made by governments and programme managers to take care of the interests of the family and community”.



Rallies performance by the folk artists from Karnataka.

Development of Standardised Resource Materials for Folk Forms

At the national level, eight states participated in a script designing workshop to develop standardised scripts and performances based on specific HIV and AIDS messages

Recognising the role of folk and cultural performances in creating awareness with an effective plan and valid messages for dissemination, NACO planned three script designing workshops with state level popular folk artists. The first workshop was conducted from 17-20 November, 2010 at Delhi. The workshop was conducted in partnership with APAC-VHS, banking on their extensive technical expertise in this field.

The aim was to provide a catalyst by bringing together different folk forms, so they could brainstorm and come up with possible ways of reaching the rural population with messages on HIV/AIDS. The main messages would be on

prevention, care and support, as well as on how and where to access services for treatment for STI and HIV.

The workshop is the first of its kind in the country and is seen as a cost effective way of giving out messages using entertainment and information. The workshop brought out a series of standardised scripts developed for wide use and dissemination through state specific popular folk forms.

The importance of traditional media in HIV/AIDS communication is an accepted fact. In a country where rural communities are characterised by low literacy levels and limited access to technology, folk forms through their local

folklore, dialects, costumes and music are a powerful communication medium. The objective behind the workshop was to orient and train the folk troupes on basics of HIV/AIDS so that they can incorporate HIV/AIDS messages suitably in their folk forms.

The national workshop was preceded by a meeting on November 17, 2010 for developing a comprehensive plan. SACS IEC officers and national facilitators were briefed, working groups finalised, key themes and messages outlined and a common roll-out plan for post workshop activities drawn up. This also included how to brief SACS and resource persons from each state to develop standardised scripts.

Under the guidance of national facilitators and technical support from NACO, the artists and master trainers from Rajasthan, Haryana, Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu developed 71 scripts on specific thematic areas. Rigorous practice sessions helped perfect rendition of the scripts. Comments and observations offered by NACO mentors and national facilitators during the peer review sessions were incorporated for improvement in performances by maintaining a balance between entertainment and intended messages.

Rajasthan developed themes to be converted into *kala jatha*, puppetry and magic; Jharkhand on *Chhau* dance and *Santhali* folk; Karnataka on *Yakshagana*; Haryana on *Swang*; Bihar on *Bideshya* and *Jumur*; Kerala on *Theruvunatakam*; Tamil Nadu on *Karagattam* and *Oyilattam*; and Andhra Pradesh on *Palle Sudulu* and *Veethinatakam*.

According to Ms. Aradhana Johri, Additional Secretary, NACO, more coordination and thematic focus were needed on issues related to safe sex including use of condoms, migrants,



A folk troupe performing Chhau dance at the workshop organised by NACO.

Objectives

- Prepare standardised, customised and region-specific tools for folk performances, including scripts and performances.
- Develop a pool of resource persons and master trainers for conducting training of trainers (ToTs) in states for supporting folk teams.
- Ensure a specific and appropriate monitoring and evaluation system.
- Develop priority messages for different target groups, specially those in high risk categories.

counselling and testing, PPTCT, stigma and discrimination, voluntary blood donation and youth vulnerability. Also STI, ART and drug related messages could be interspersed as cross cutting issues wherever possible. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) would be an essential component of the programme.

Way Forward

The chief message that emerged from the workshop was that creative inputs to the performing teams should be provided on an ongoing basis. Their end results should get a suitable platform in not just HIV/AIDS programmes but also in other NRHM and health programmes implemented at the district level. Preference should be given to blocks and districts which have high HIV prevalence.

As a way forward, states will conduct training workshops and prepare the roll-out plan as per the operational guidelines provided by NACO. The state level master trainers and identified troupes on popular folk forms will participate in the training workshops under the guidance of the States and which will implement the roll-out plan and monitor the programme. As part of the implementation strategy, the District Support Team comprising Targeted Intervention and Link Worker Scheme NGOs, District AIDS Prevention and Control Unit, Technical Support Unit, Social Marketing Organisation and other partner agencies will provide ground level support and also be part of the monitoring team.

APAC was entrusted with the responsibility of facilitating M&E. Armed with expert inputs from the team of NACO, SACS and master trainers, the folk troupes will conduct performances round the year in their States.

■ Sanchali Roy
Consultant (IEC), NACO

Strong India Presence at 18th International AIDS Conference in Vienna

Countries pledge to make the world inhabited by PLHIV more fair and equitable and to pump in additional resources to make treatment for all, a reality.

Visitors at the 18th International AIDS Conference organised in Vienna.

The 18th International AIDS Conference held in Vienna, Austria from 18-23 July, 2010 saw as many as 19,500 delegates from across the globe deliberating on the theme of 'Rights Here, Right Now'. The lively debates and voices echoed the sentiments of policymakers, academicians, researchers and civil society activists, who were relieved to find that protecting the rights of PLHIV was finally centre stage.

The aim was to find ways of ensuring that the rights of PLHIV were not violated and would have access to leading normal and stigma-free existence as their non-PLHIV peers.

While talk of stigma and discrimination has been around ever since HIV became a public health issue, efforts to fight it have largely been confined to individual nations, networks and organisations. It has become a major barrier to scaling up of HIV prevention and treatment.

A concerted global response on the scale of the Vienna conference was testimony to the importance the issue was getting at the government, donor, corporate, activist and healthcare community levels.

The head of the International AIDS Society (IAS), Julio Montaner, called for providing universal access to treatment for PLHIV, saying that only a third of the 15 million people who needed potentially life saving AIDS drugs were currently accessing them.

The conference dealt with important issues. These included drastic reduction in funding for HIV/AIDS; issues of human rights that continue to surround the world; and treatment of IDUs. Discussions also ensued on new ART, guidelines for adolescents and adults by WHO besides guidelines for PPTCT and issues related to HIV and TB.

The benefits of using simplified, less toxic ART drugs in first line and second line ART were emphasised. Findings related to new drugs and novel strategies in the use of ART drugs for prevention were deliberated upon. Both developed countries as also certain African countries like Botswana and Malawi talked of adapting new treatment guidelines to fit specific country programmes.

Data on HIV infection rates amongst prisoners was shared and it was emphasised that harm reduction programmes such as safe needles and provision of

condoms in prisons needed to be made more easily available.

Funding HIV in a Changing World Environment

There was a protest regarding funding issues at the opening of the conference, wherein 2000 activists marched to the conference hall under the banner “No Retreat – Fund AIDS”. Julio Montaner commented that though donor countries were finding it difficult to fund AIDS commitments, they had no difficulty in providing financial support to their corporate friends and bankers.

In 2008-09, donations from European countries fell by \$600 million and it is estimated that the fund is running a deficit of \$4 – \$6 billion. It is estimated that if current levels of demand continue for the next two years, the Global Fund (GF) will need \$17 – \$20 billion for the health needs of developing countries.

The conference drew attention of all countries, especially those where the HIV infection was increasingly spreading amongst members of the general population. The conference felt there was need to strengthen AIDS prevention and control budgets in the wake of external aid funding being under severe pressure.

Snapshot of Key Discussion Points

- Scaling up of treatment was to continue being a priority area in the fight against HIV/AIDS.
- United Nations, the world's largest supporter of programmes against HIV/AIDS, feared that wealthy donor nations might cut funding to AIDS programmes due to economic recession.
- The WHO revised the international treatment cut-off to a CD4 count of 350 per microlitre of blood from the earlier 250 in 2009.
- For the first time, a microbical vaginal gel proved capable of blocking the AIDS virus, halving a woman's chances of getting HIV from an infected partner, as shown by a study in South Africa. Scientists termed it as a breakthrough in their long quest for a tool that could help women whose partners refused to use condoms. The results need to be confirmed, but researchers are optimistic that these can be improved.
- Rise in infections among IDUs has prompted public health experts to ask governments to decriminalise drug users and lift ban on drugs such as methadone and buprenorphine, which are used for substitution maintenance therapy at de-addiction centres.
- Need for clarity on compulsory licensing (CL) for medicines, as it affects both affordability and access.



Glimpses of Exhibition booth of NACO at the 18th International AIDS Conference, Vienna.

Scope of the Conference

- Increasing capacity of delegates to introduce, implement and advocate for effective, evidence-based HIV/AIDS interventions in their communities, countries and regions.
 - Influencing leaders to increase commitment to gender-sensitive, evidence and human rights-based HIV/AIDS interventions.
 - Serving as an accountability and feedback mechanism for those engaged at various levels in their response to HIV/AIDS.
 - Increasing public awareness of the continued impact of HIV and establishing a connection between human rights and an effective response to AIDS.
 - Providing opportunities for multi-stakeholder dialogue to develop creative solutions to unresolved challenges in research and implementation of HIV policies and programmes.
- The importance of HIV-TB collaboration was stressed, and the conference identified the provision of ART and Isoniazid Preventive Therapy (IPT) as major game changer for HIV-TB collaboration.
 - An increasing number of HIV cases were being registered among prisoners in some of the countries and in the absence of harm reduction programmes (safe needles and provision of condoms) in prisons, this number was likely to go up. Countries were urged to undertake an assessment in their prisons and take suitable action.

The conference ended with the articulation of a new global vision, as envisaged by UNAIDS, one that could help the world move closer to a “zero discrimination, zero AIDS-related death” scenario. The Vienna Conference proved to be a big success also on account of the large number of people across the world, who tracked its proceedings and discussions through new media tools that included blogs, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook.

India Satellite Session demonstrates Strong Political Will to Fight HIV

India made a strong presence at the conference, with the NACO team led by the Additional Secretary, Ms. Aradhana Johri, steering a satellite session on the subject of “Winning the Battle Against HIV: Going to Scale”. Chaired by the Health Minister of Tamil Nadu, Mr. M. R. K. Panneerselvam, it was attended by over 500 delegates. A new film that captured the essence of NACP was screened, giving a complete overview of where India stood in its fight against HIV. It showcased specific initiatives and

interventions that had been carried out over the last two decades.

Ms. Johri made a presentation on “Winning the Battle: Scaling Up in a Cost-Effective Manner,” sharing details of strategies, focus areas and progress of NACP. The presentation highlighted the status of the epidemic in India. It also showed various prevention, care and support strategies that helped avert new infections. It detailed scaling-up of services for targeted interventions, counselling, testing and ART.

Mr. J. D. Seelam, Member of Parliament, spoke about the role of political leadership in building national response and for mobilising stakeholders in implementing the programme.

Dr. Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director of the Global Fund (GF), while appreciating India’s response to the HIV epidemic, urged for a more rigorous sharing of successful practices.

Mr. Steve Kraus, Regional Director of UNAIDS in Asia-Pacific, spoke about the effective role that political leadership and civil society could play in AIDS control programmes. He drew attention to initiatives such as the formation of a Legislator’s Forum on HIV/AIDS in Maharashtra, hoping similar efforts would be made in other high prevalence districts too.

Mr. Kanwaldeep Singh, Director of Finance for NACO, gave an overview of the partnerships built by NACO including



Ms. Aradhana Johri, Additional Secretary, NACO and Mr. Dinkar Khullar, India’s Ambassador to Austria inaugurating the exhibition booth of NACO.



Activists protesting at the opening of the conference on funding issues.

funds and programme related support received from international and non-governmental donors.

The community mobilisation section began with a screening of the film on the Red Ribbon Express (RRE), which showcased the successful implementation of the world's largest mass mobilisation project on HIV/AIDS. Mr. Mayank Agrawal, Joint Director (IEC), NACO shared findings of evaluation reports which indicated that people exposed to the project had higher knowledge of HIV/AIDS as compared to those who were not exposed.

Ms. Nukshinara Ao, GIPA Coordinator, Nagaland SACS made an appeal for the rights of positive people and the meaningful role that PLHIV can play in programme implementation. Ms. Bhagya Lakshmi, Ashodaya Samithi, an organisation working among sex workers in Mysore presented the work done by them in forming the network of sex workers, providing services to them and also how it helped in police sensitisation. The role of civil society and empowerment of vulnerable communities was taken up by Mr. Anand Grover from the Lawyers Collective. He updated the audience on India's progress on decriminalising homosexuality in an attempt to address vulnerabilities of the MSM population.

The exhibition organised by NACO generated a lot of interest, especially as the booth was designed and developed on the concept of RRE. As many as 18 presentations were accepted from India, in addition to 284 posters in the poster

presentation, eight poster discussions and 137 CD ROM presentations.

The NACO team also held fruitful meetings with the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), WHO, UNODC and meetings were also held with Dr. Bruce Agnis, Medical Director of New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute. Some of the issues that were taken up included future programmes and activities, possible funding avenues and ways of eliminating barriers that hampered the success of the programmes.

■ Mayank Agrawal
Joint Director (IEC)
NACO

Some remarks as entered in the Visitors Book

The Indian Government stall was very eye catching and informative through words and pictures.

F.G. Mogae, Former President of Botswana

Best booth in Vienna.

R. Ngethe

Extremely creative.

Frareyne Harrigas, Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union



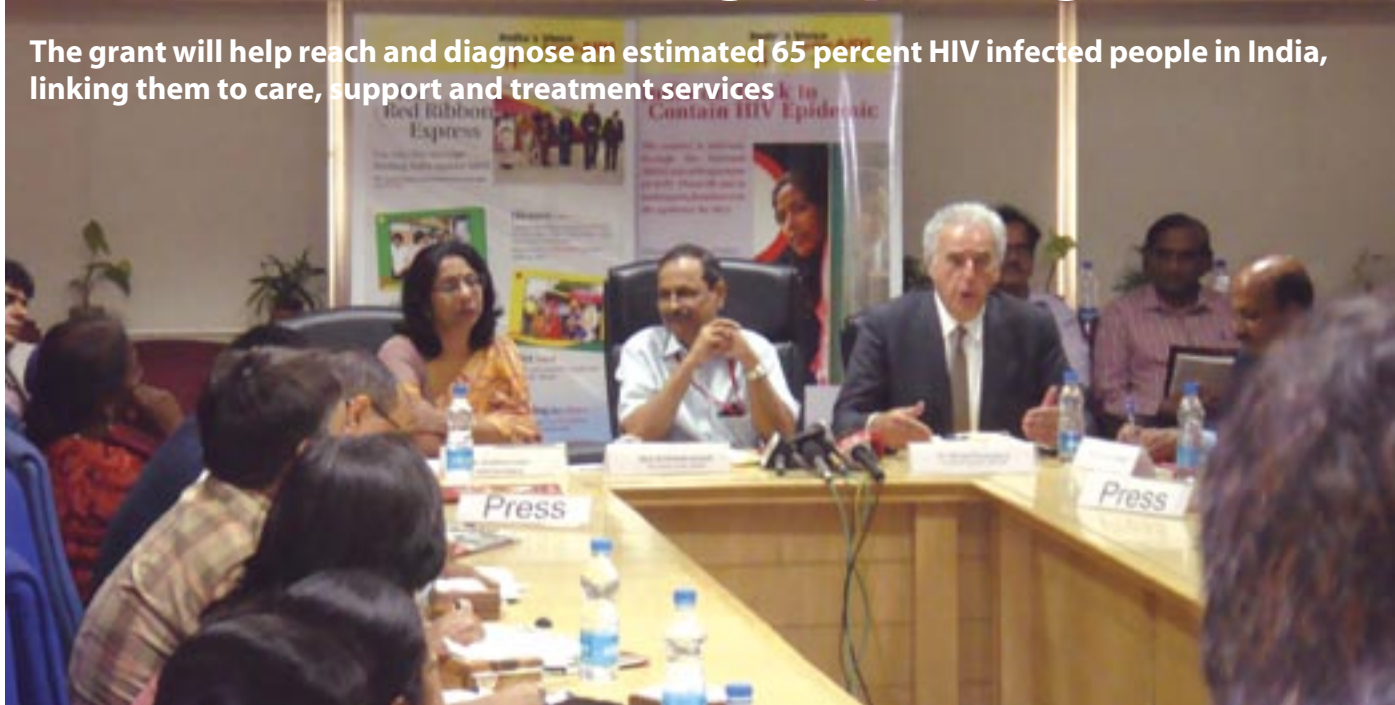
Monographs showcasing NACO's key initiatives in the Vienna Conference

The monographs document the strategies and achievements of NACO which could be used by policymakers and professionals in the field of HIV/AIDS.

They covered the themes of Care Supported Treatment, Red Ribbon Express, Monitoring and Evaluation, Targeted Interventions, Condom Promotion and NACP-III.

Global Fund Grants \$128.4 mn for Continuation of Flagship Programmes

The grant will help reach and diagnose an estimated 65 percent HIV infected people in India, linking them to care, support and treatment services



Press conference announcing NACO and Global Fund signing a three-year grant agreement to scale-up HIV/AIDS related services in India.

The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) has signed a three-year grant agreement for \$128.4 million (Rs. 609.9 crore). This will support continuation of flagship programmes on integrated counselling and testing (ICT) services, prevention of parent to child transmission (PPTCT) and HIV-TB collaborative services.

The agreement was signed by Shri K. Chandramouli, former Secretary and Director General, NACO and Dr. Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director, GFATM on September 8, 2010 in New Delhi.

Scope of the Grant

- Reach and diagnose an estimated 65 percent HIV infected people in India, linking them to care, support and treatment services.
- Test 1.82 crore people annually in as many as 10,700 ICTCs by the end of 2012; special focus on antenatal women; high risk groups; and those suffering from STI and TB.
- Work closely with National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and increase number of facility integrated ICTCs in PHCs from 1000 to 4,755.
- Increase the number of facility integrated ICTCs under the Public-Private Partnership scheme in the private sector from 266 to 1,600.
- Of the estimated 43,000 HIV positive pregnant women in the country, reach and identify 60 percent to administer prophylactic treatment for PMCT under the PPTCT programme. In order to achieve this target, 830,000 pregnant women to be counselled and tested every year in ICTCs.
- Detect 70 percent HIV infected TB patients through an intensified package of HIV-TB collaboration services.
- Build capacity of the National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHFW) and 20 State Institutes of Health and Family Welfare (SIHFWs) and five National Institutes under the TB programme, through the establishment of an HIV unit, with requisite infrastructure and human resource strengthening.
- Set up cold storage units in 110 warehouses across the country to store thermolabile products like rapid HIV diagnostic kits.
- Install a nationwide logistics management and information system to improve supply chain management.

■ Dr. Raghuram Rao
Programme Officer (ICTC)
NACO



Sikkim Uses Local Festivals to Promote Multimedia Campaign

Mime artists portraying the messages on HIV/AIDS in a play conducted by Sikkim SACS.

Young people's participation and involvement saw a record turnout during festivals and soccer tournaments which were held alongside the state-wide campaign.

Sikkim's multimedia campaign on HIV/AIDS 2010-11 gained momentum with Sikkim SACS stepping up awareness activities during popular local events and festivals, especially those which drew the attention of young people.

Sikkim SACS initially proposed HIV/AIDS messages during the "All India Governor's Gold Cup Football Tournament" held in Gangtok from October 21 to November 2, 2010. Giant sized flex banners were displayed at the venue in addition to two well equipped IEC stalls. The campaign received positive publicity and saw a large turnout of people. Promoted by much loved football player, Baichung Bhutia, the event earned favourable mileage, goodwill and media coverage. On-ground activities were synchronised with visual advertisements in the local television channel and newspapers, and appeals through All India Radio (AIR) at prime time. This ensured that all HIV-related messages were well received, to the extent that they had an impact on different target groups, encouraging active discussion forums on the Internet and in colleges.

Local folk performances and interpersonal communication were carried out during the festivals. Apart from existing events, Sikkim SACS launched the "Red Ribbon Sikkim Star" music competition. The talent hunt competition included performing arts like song, drama and dance with HIV/AIDS as its theme. Professional and amateur singers came

together to put up their best performances to audiences that were encouraging.

Out of the 250 participants drawn from across the state, 45 teams/individuals were selected for the semi-final round which was held in Gangtok on January 5-6, 2011. The first and second rounds of auditions were telecast as episodes in the first week of January 2011, through the local TV network in the four districts. About 8-10 teams made it to the Grand Finale with each team being backed by a large number of fans and supporters.

The North-East has a strong music and dance culture which has been reflected in the creative outpourings of its young people. Established musicians have often been roped in by health programmes to advocate socially and culturally appropriate messages. The multimedia campaign on HIV/AIDS succeeded in giving a chance to many musical groups to perform. Such events go a long way in engaging young people in not just adopting safe behaviours but also in propagating the same as active Ambassadors in their colleges, residential localities and other forums.

■ Ms. Prachi Garg
Advisor (IEC), NACO, with inputs from Raj Kumar Sharma
Deputy Director (IEC), Sikkim SACS

Arunachal Pradesh's Multimedia Campaign Combines Music with Soccer and Road Shows

Arunachal Pradesh SACS conducted numerous high impact activities to reach out to target groups, ensure participation and HIV message absorption.

Arunachal Pradesh launched its four-month long multimedia campaign on HIV/AIDS on November 10, with much fanfare. Organised by Arunachal Pradesh SACS, it kicked off at Daporijo before moving to 11 more districts. Carried out in association with the Directorate of Higher & Technical Education, Department of IPR, Department of Art & Culture, Department of Sports & Youth Affairs, AP Union of Working Journalists, Arunachal Press Club, DDK, Itanagar, AIR, Itanagar and District Administrations, it used local entertainment avenues such as music concerts and sports to reach out to young people.

In Phase I of the campaign, a music competition was held among local bands of the state covering nine of its high HIV prevalence districts. Since the campaign's focus was to reach out to young people, all possible entertainment avenues having potential of drawing youth were explored. Resultantly, along with music, state level soccer tournaments and road shows in 20 blocks of the state were also organised.

At the inaugural function, the Chief Guest, Setong Sena, Finance Minister, called on the youth to ensure that Arunachal Pradesh remains a healthy state. He advised

them to resolve to stay away from alcohol, drugs and unsafe behaviours. Tanga Byaling, Minister, Health and Family Welfare, said that a collective effort had to be made to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS. He said, "Young people should be Wellness Ambassadors, guiding and motivating people to adopt health seeking behaviour and lifestyle choices. This would also help halt new HIV infections".

Others present on the occasion included Nido Pavitra, Parliamentary Secretary, Health and Family Welfare; Kaling Tayeng, Health Secretary; Tapen Siga Daporijo, MLA; Dr. Nishing, Additional DHS; and Dr. Riken Rina, Deputy Director.

Winner of the Red Ribbon Superstar Contest was the popular band, 'Symmetry Clan'. They also happen to be the Brand Ambassador of Arunachal Pradesh SACS, taking part in road shows in 20 blocks in the state. 'Church of Blood', a death metal band, won the second place and 'Margin of Error', a band from Seppa, won the third place.

■ Tashor Pali
Deputy Director (IEC), Arunachal SACS



Prize distribution during the grand finale of the Red Ribbon Superstar contest in Arunachal Pradesh.

Churches Participate in Choir Campaign in Mizoram



A choir performance in Mizoram

About 25 district level choir teams participated in a mega music competition that brought together church leaders and members in the fight against HIV.

The HIV prevention movement in Mizoram got an impetus with the active engagement of the churches. Church members and leaders helped strengthen and sustain an HIV prevention programme for providing care and support through the organisation of a mega “Red Ribbon Choir Competition” as part of Phase I of the Multimedia Campaign 2010.

The Red Ribbon Choir Competition was held in Mizoram in November-December 2010. The competition was based on the theme of disseminating information on HIV and enhancing the role of churches in prevention, care and support of PLHIV. Organised by Mizoram SACS and Doordarshan, Aizawl, the campaign was supported by churches of different denominations, media houses, AIR and PIB, besides being funded by NACO.

In each district/zone, a committee was formed with representatives from churches, youth organisations and media houses. A total of 58 choirs enrolled out of which 40 participated and 25 were selected for the final competition on December 16-17 in Aizawl. All choirs were accommodated in 18 churches in Aizawl. For the final event, a common theme song was composed with lyrics on HIV prevention and on reducing stigma and discrimination.

Winners of the competition were Champhai Kahrawt Pastorate Choir, Champhai District, Mizoram Synod, Presbyterian Church of India; 1st runner up was Ramhlun North Pastorate Choir, Aizawl District, Mizoram Synod, Presbyterian Church of India; and 2nd runner up was Bawngkawn Pastorate Choir, Aizawl District, Baptist Church of Mizoram. The Doordarshan Kendra of Aizawl also signed a contract with all the choirs entering the state level final competition.

IEC activities included music videos, promos, talk shows and announcements by local celebrities on TV with messages on ‘Prevention-My Responsibility’ focusing on youth. The competition was telecast live on TV and radio. Banners were displayed in villages, towns and district headquarters, and pamphlets distributed.

A one-day convention of faith-based organisations was also held under the chairmanship of the Minister, Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of Mizoram on December 15, 2010. More than 50 participants from 30 local churches took part. Site visits to the service centres were made to help build better understanding of HIV programmes.

■ Ms. Prachi Garg
Advisor (IEC) NACO, with inputs from
Zuiliani Hrahse, Deputy Director (IEC), Mizoram SACS

Musical Notes Reverberated with HIV Messages in Nagaland



Eleven rock bands performed to a 2,000 strong audience at the climax of a year-long campaign that toured 11 districts in the state.

The Red Ribbon Super Star Campaign Ambassador Kenei Chalie and winner of last year's event, Dementia made a special appearance and gave a lively performance. The function was graced by the Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Shri Kuzholuzo (Azo) Nienu along with Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner, Shri Alemtemshi Jamir; actor and VJ Luke Kenny, heads of state and district departments, NACO-NERO and other stakeholders including Commissioner of Health, Menukhol John; DC of Mon district; Dinesh Kumar, Director, Music Task Force; and NNP+ President and Secretary, Mr. Lanu and Ms. Chongte.

Participation at the "Rock Reach" multimedia campaign hosted by Nagaland SACS.

Using music to bring together young people and to instill in them a sense of responsibility towards those living with HIV/AIDS, proved to be a successful initiative in Nagaland. "Rock Reach" was the second multimedia campaign implemented by the Nagaland SACS and NACO. It was launched as a district level competition on October 18, 2010 in Dimapur and it toured 11 districts, spreading the message of "Prevention: The only cure", relevant especially to the sexually active age group.

Dimapur district has nearly 50 percent of Nagaland's HIV/AIDS affected population, making any large scale advocacy effort relevant and impactful. Eleven bands from 11 districts converged at Rock Reach-the Red Ribbon Super Star event, performing to a 2,000-strong crowd of rock music enthusiasts on November 27, 2010. The bands at the "Big Brawl" were interestingly titled and included Melodrama (Dimapur), Woebegone (Peren), Enlighter (Phek), Re-Evolution (Kiphire), Toxic Peace (Mon), Inyushong (Longleng), Psychonic (Tuensang), K3M (Wokha), Rock Ventures (Mokokchung), Black Creepers (Zunheboto) and Alice in Wonderland (Kohima).

Shri Azo expressed concern saying, "No one is secure when it comes to HIV/AIDS. Such multimedia campaigns help keep the HIV debate alive, putting the onus on the community to fight it with knowledge, grace and dignity". He presented the award to the winner of the competition, Melodrama, a Dimapur-based Rock Band with a citation and cash prize of Rs. 100,000.

Each rock band sang one song composed on the theme of "I Care", dedicated to PLHIV along with another popular song of their choice. A member of NNP+ shared her experience. According to her, "Many people failed to get proper and timely treatment due to a nagging fear of rejection and discrimination. It was important to bring HIV out of the closet and for people to be confident of support from society to enable them avail of treatment, care and support with an anguish-free mind". The venue resonated with positive energy with people resolving to educate themselves on all aspects of HIV. Various IEC materials (leaflets, T-shirt and caps) with HIV messages were distributed and HIV messages were beamed continuously on a digital backdrop on the stage.

■ Ayieno
Joint Director (IEC), Nagaland SACS

Government of India Launches Punjab's First OST Scheme

Drug harm reduction programme in Punjab gets a boost with the inauguration of six fully equipped OST centres in four districts.



Officials during the inauguration ceremony of the OST centre in Amritsar by Smt. Laxmi Kanta Chawla, Health Minister, Punjab.

Migrant labour, unpredictable returns from agriculture and a large population of unemployed and semi employed youth have contributed to the rising number of men taking to injecting drug use (IDU), making them vulnerable to HIV infection through use of infected needles.

NACO has been working in the area of IDU, facilitating the running of Oral Substitution Therapy (OST) centres and harm reduction programmes with the help of NGOs and community-based organisations. The IDU epidemic has so far been concentrated mainly in North East India where maximum number of programme interventions exist but seeing the numbers increasing in Punjab, the government responded by launching a special OST scheme on 3 October, 2010 covering four prominent districts.

The scheme would be rolled-out through reliable infrastructure of health systems in Punjab. Punjab is unarguably a priority area where technical and managerial support would be required to respond to the current status of the epidemic.

The NACO team led by Ms. Aradhana Johri, Additional Secretary, NACO visited the OST centre in Guru Nanak Dev Hospital, Amritsar; Swami Vivekanand Medical Mission I, Islamabad, Amritsar (IDU TI); OST Centre, Civil Hospital, Tarn Taran; OST Centre, Civil Hospital, Batala; OST Centre,

Civil Hospital, Jalandhar; Aid-et-Action, Jalandhar (IDU TI); and ICTC, Batala CHC (Gurdaspur).

On 4 October, 2010, the centre at Amritsar was inaugurated by Smt. Laxmi Kanta Chawla, Health Minister, Punjab and the centre at Tarn Taran was inaugurated by Ms. Aradhana Johri, Additional Secretary, NACO. Present on the occasion were Commissioner, Amritsar, Director General Health Services, Secretary Medical Education, staff from the OST centres and IDU TIs of all five districts and Medical College Amritsar; representative of National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre, AIIMS, New Delhi; and representatives from SRI-IMRB.

The relevance and timeliness of the centre was evident with the long queue of patients and clients who lined up for services. Nearly 20 clients registered themselves for OST on the first day of its functioning. Dr. N. M. Sharma, APD Punjab SACS shared results of an IDU mapping exercise carried out in five districts, showing prevalence of HIV amongst IDU. He outlined the scheme and role of partners such as AIIMS, DFID and ICMR.

Ms. Johri, speaking on the occasion gave a national perspective on HIV interventions. She highlighted the importance of Punjab's existing health system in implementing a first-of- its-kind model where NGO-led outreach would ensure OST coverage to IDUs in public health settings. She explained how transmission of HIV infection from high risk groups and bridge population (truckers and migrants) could be prevented by practising safe sex and use of condoms.

On October 5, the officials divided themselves into two teams and visited OST centres in Jalandhar and Batala. A team led by DDG (TI) NACO visited Jalandhar and another team lead by PO (OST) visited the Batala OST centre. Gaps were identified and steps indicated to remedy the situation.

■ Dr. Alok Agrawal
Programme Officer (IDU/OST), NACO

HIV Becomes Part of School and College Agendas

By training programme officers of schools and colleges, Goa Administration demonstrates deep and long lasting commitment to HIV/AIDS.

After establishing numerous RRCs in colleges and having a series of awareness sessions, blood donation camps and rallies in the state, a more permanent step has been taken by the Administration. By training NSS officers of colleges and higher secondary schools, HIV will now prominently figure in the institutional calendar of the colleges.

A one-day workshop for 'Sensitisation of NSS programme officers on HIV/AIDS' was organised by NSS Cell of Goa University under the aegis of the Goa SACS on December 7, 2010, with an objective to strengthen RRCs in colleges.

The workshop was attended by 70 NSS programme officers from various colleges and schools.

Dr. S. B. Patkar, Coordinator, NSS Cell, Goa University and Mr. Khorlim-Mapusa, Principal of Saraswat Vidyalayas Sridora Caculo College of Commerce and Management Studies, spoke on the importance of students, teachers, parents and staff coming together to raise awareness and protect our youth.

■ Umakant Sawant
Deputy Director (IEC), Goa SACS

Chhattisgarh Launches Country's First Migrant Intervention

With the help of implementing partners, Chhattisgarh SACS initiated migrant interventions in the three districts of Raipur, Bilaspur and Champa.

Migrants are one of the core vulnerable groups that are the focus of prevention and treatment interventions, and strategies under NACP-III. A revised Migrant Strategy envisages identifying high out-migration locations; providing them information on HIV/AIDS, STI and safe migration; and linking them to public health services for STI, ICTC, ART and other ongoing programmes like the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and Village Health and Nutrition Day (VHND). These interventions would be followed up by village level workers and volunteer peer leaders.

In order to achieve the desired objective of the strategy, Chhattisgarh SACS implemented interventions in three districts, namely, Raipur, Bilaspur and Champa. These interventions would be run by local NGO partners. In Raipur, the implementing partner is Samata Mahila Mandal; in Bilaspur, it is Samarjit; and in Champa, it is the Gram Mitra Samaj Seva Sanstha.



Launch of migrant interventions in Chhattisgarh.

Most of the activities were carried out at railway stations where it was easy to reach out to a majority of migrants.

■ Mahendra Kumar Janghel
Joint Director (IEC), Chhattisgarh SACS

Brave Grandmothers as Sole Caregivers in HIV Households

NACO News salutes two grandmothers in Maharashtra who have with dignity and purpose, cared for AIDS sufferers and survivors with some State and NGO support.



Smt. Zumbarbai Kushaba Salve with her grandson.

67-year old Zumbarbai Kushaba Salve lives in village Ahilya Nagar. She was born in Baburdi Devachi village, which is about 32 km from Ahmed Nagar. Till she got married, she worked with her mother as a daily wage agricultural labourer. A happy-go-lucky child, she never complained about the hard work, poverty, or the fact that on good days they had only one full meal to eat and on many days, it was just one dry *roti* with water. Education was never a priority since survival and subsistence occupied all their waking hours. Besides, the school was far and it would have been too much of an effort for her working parents to send her and her siblings. In a strange sort of a way, this life of penury prepared her for a long drawn-out battle with poverty, grief, loss and deprivation that stretched before her. And yet, in the midst of all this, the bubbly and spontaneous girl in her remained, allowing her to smile even in the most adverse and trying circumstances.

She was barely 14 when she got married. Belonging to a Dalit community, she and her family were treated as castaways. They lived on the periphery of the village and were never part of the mainstream community. But amongst their own lot, they had respect since her husband

was the sort who helped others and stood by them in their hour of need.

Since their economic condition was delicate, both worked in a sugar factory to make ends meet. As a recognition of his hard work, her husband was made Supervisor while she worked on the shop floor. They had four children – two sons and two daughters. The first 15-20 years of marriage were difficult but happy. They gave their children a basic education something they were had. Their daughters married in decent households and left home while the sons took up work in the city.

However, destiny had its own share of shocks and surprises in store for Zumbarbai. Both her sons were given to promiscuous behaviour, with one of them even taking up residence with a sex worker. When the family got wind of this, they pulled him out of the city and brought him home. They even hastily got him married, little realising that they were compounding the damage. Both sons were detected with HIV. Not just that, one daughter-in-law and three grandchildren too were found positive. Fortunately, the younger son was not married. But the older son's three children (out of five) were infected. Caring for the older son sapped Zumbarbai of all her energy. He was an alcoholic and indifferent towards treatment. It was with a lot of effort and coercion that he could be taken to hospital. He had a painful time with loss of weight and opportunistic infections.

By 2005, both her sons and one grandson had died. Her life was then confined to serving her children and doing all the tasks with a smiling face. Her grandchildren helped her as best as they could, from washing their clothes, cooking food, changing innerwear. Right until their last breath, she served them unflinchingly.

In the twilight zone of her life, Zumbarbai has no time to reflect and dwell on what could have been. Instead, she looks positively to the future and sees what she has. She is proud of the fact that her surviving grandchildren are capable of standing on their own feet. They have completed their education and are ready to take up jobs.

She is also grateful to programmes like CHAHA which provided support to her at a time when her back would have collapsed carrying the weight she had to. By paying for the children's fees and medicines, as also making regular visits to her house to counsel her and talk to the kids, their presence never made her feel as if she was waging a battle alone.

Zumbarbai says that government schemes should be easy to avail with minimum documentation as she feels that a lot of time and effort is lost on paper work. However, she has taken the hard knocks of life with sheer grit.

The Making of an Unlikely Change Maker

Yet another grandmother who battles HIV not just as a caregiver but as the head of the family is 50-year old Alka Ashok Karadkar. Living in Kolhapur village in district Kolhapur of Maharashtra, where HIV prevalence is high, oblivious of what was going on in the outside world, Alka's life revolved around the home and hearth. From the time she was a child, fending for her siblings and later her orphaned children, she has known a life of hardship. Today, she is the sole breadwinner in her three-member family, which includes two grandchildren Prerna (9 years) and Prem (7 years), one of whom is HIV positive.

A typical day in her life involves getting up at the crack of dawn; finishing housework; washing utensils and swabbing floors in half a dozen homes; returning at noon, to bathe, and send the kids to an evening school; and then again going out to work post lunch. Evening dinner she prepares with the help of Prerna when both of them bond and share their day's happenings.

Originally hailing from Vijaipur, she was two months old when her father died of snake bite. It was tough for her mother to find a sustainable source of livelihood since they did not have any family land which could be ploughed and tilled for their benefit, leaving her no option but to seek employment on other farmlands. So while Alka took care of the house and children, the mother worked as an agricultural labourer to feed the family. Schooling was never an option for Alka. Sometimes, she would request the neighbour's children to lend her their books and go through the pictures, allowing herself to be transported to a different world.

At 17, she was married. Her husband was gentle and kind. He worked hard to give her a life of security and comfort. As an autorickshaw driver, he worked double shift. Compared to her childhood, early years of marriage were in a better socio-economic environment. One thing she

had not anticipated was her husband being accident prone. He met with two accidents within the first decade of their marriage. Though he recovered, his confidence on his driving got shaken and when he met with his third accident, he could not recover from the shock and injuries. Their income which had already dwindled, further shrank and after being bedridden for sometime, he died leaving Alka once again on her own.

The local community had always envied her happiness and two able bodied sons. They often joked with her, saying she would have no reason to worry and that they would bring home rich brides and she would never have to work. But after her husband's death, she was left with no choice but to seek work and the only thing she could do was pick up employment as a domestic help. With that income, she educated her sons up to High School and helped them acquire special skills as craftsmen - silversmiths.

HIV was an alien term for her. She first heard of it when her elder son tested positive at an ICTC during her daughter-in-law's pregnancy. Her first reaction was that however serious the disease, she would find a way to cure him. But when the counsellor educated her on how it was transmitted and what the treatment options were, she realised the gravity of what she was pitted against. Once she reconciled to the situation, she got the family to draw up an action plan. She, her son and daughter-in-law decided to work in whatever they could and save money for a future which was uncertain and bleak. For treatment, they were directed to Sangali Civil Hospital in Sangali. For a few months, things stabilised but once the son got tuberculosis, his health plummeted and he died in February, 2007. Six months later, her daughter-in-law too died. Both the grandchildren were now dependent on her.

Fortunately their school was just a kilometre away and the community was already sensitised to HIV so no one discriminated against them. Certain high profile HIV cases had in the recent past been reported from Kolhapur and these had led to advocacy and sensitisation amongst schools, doctors, ASHAs and general population. Alka could have got a better paying job in a garment factory in the city but she chose to remain here because of the enabling environment.

For both Zumbarbai and Alka, life may have come full circle but instead of brooding at the cards life dealt out to them, they are determined not to leave a single member outside their care and support. Both admit the way forward is to soothe and love.

■ Madhu Gurung
Media Advisor, NACO

A YEAR

**Book Launch 'Positive Journey'
Vignettes of HIV in India**



**Early infant diagnosis
introduced by NACO**



**International Women's Day
Celebrations on March 8**



**South-West Asia Regional
Meeting Discusses New
Funding Under GF Round 10**



**Youth Urged to Join Voluntary Blood
Donation Movement**

**Donate BLOOD - every 3 months
It makes you feel good and active**

**World Blood Donor Day
"Celebrating your gift of blood"**

**At 18 you grow, at 18 you drive,
at 18 you give blood
to keep someone alive**

**NACO Steps Up Intervention
Sites and Services to Prevent HIV
among IDUs**



THAT WAS

National Workshop for State Folk Artists for Standardising Folk Performances and Develop State/Regional Resources



Convergence is the Way Forward for India's National AIDS Control Programme



Strong India Presence at 18th International AIDS Conference in Vienna



HIV finds artistic expression

44-year old Pankaj Gupta is an established Lucknow-based artist, who has in his latest body of work used the deft strokes of the brush to paint the many facets of anguish and hope which a person living with HIV goes through as she/he comes to accept his/her reality.

The series, titled "dohri peeda" (dual suffering) comprises 11 paintings which capture the different emotions experienced by women and children infected by HIV. Hope is a central theme in all his work with the symbolic depiction of



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