

NACO NEWS

A Newsletter of the
National AIDS Control Organisation

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Government of India

Vol. III Issue 4

Oct - Dec 2007

Red Ribbon Express

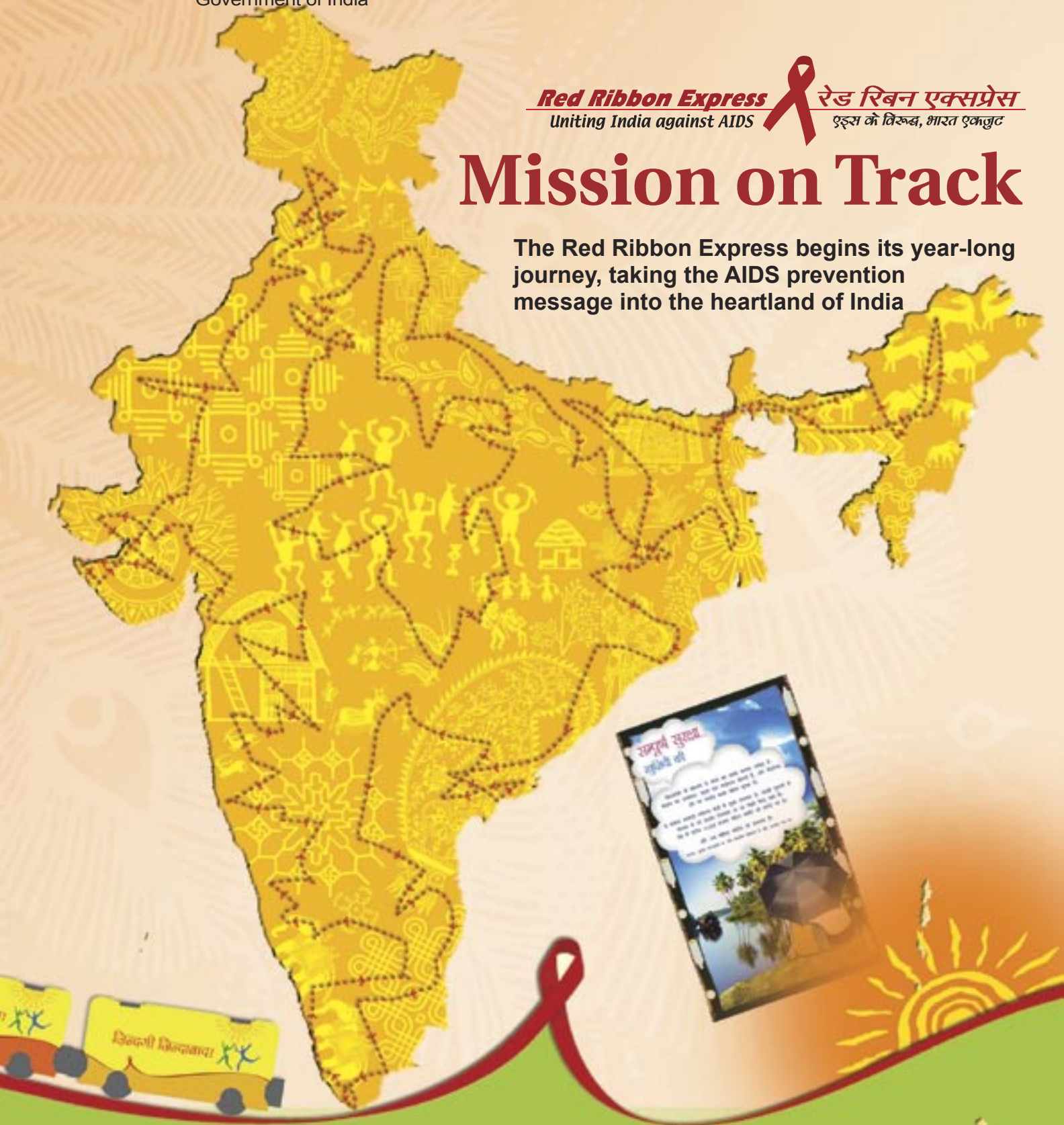
Uniting India against AIDS

रेड रिबन एक्सप्रेस

एड्स के विरुद्ध, भारत एकजुट

Mission on Track

The Red Ribbon Express begins its year-long journey, taking the AIDS prevention message into the heartland of India



In the Mail



NACO newsletter is informative and it is interesting to read the true life accounts of persons who are leading spirited lives despite their battle with HIV/AIDS. Such stories can not only inspire those infected but can also educate others who condemn without compassion. Though statistical data is

important, I feel human-interest stories put a face to the numbers. The stories can even be art or poetry written by PLHA. Art generates positive energy and society needs to recognise that HIV/AIDS does not spell any doom to anyone.

Sowmya
**Rajiv Gandhi National
Institute of Youth
Development, Chennai**

• • •

I have had occasion to look at NACO News. It is very informative and interesting.

U.S. Kulshrestha
*Dy. Development
Commissioner (Retd.)*
Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand

I read the NACO newsletter Jul-Sept 2007 issue. I think it is a perfect document that helps mobilise groups and individuals, disseminates information and raises awareness about the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Specially the "Behind the numbers" section was very informative. The fact that among those infected with HIV, almost 61% are males, of which 90% are in the age group of 15-49 is a cause of concern for our country.

Paresh Kumar
Chief Executive
Lily Consultants,
*Online Research &
Consultants*

I must congratulate NACO on their tremendous efforts in the field of HIV/AIDS awareness. The kind of information and material that NACO has shared with one and all, can go a long way in reducing stigma and discrimination as well as spread awareness throughout the country. NACO's newsletter specially helps those of us in the profession of radio jockeying, to spread the right and accurate kind of information to help eradicate prevailing myths and to build awareness among people. I wish all the best to the NACO newsletter.

Priya Baweja
RJ, BIG FM
October 2007

The red ribbon is an international symbol of **AIDS awareness** that is worn by people all year round and particularly on World **AIDS Day** (December 1) to demonstrate care and concern about people living with **HIV and AIDS**, and to remind others of the need for their support and commitment. The concept of a **World AIDS Day** originated at the 1988 World Summit of Ministers of Health on Programmes for **AIDS Prevention**. Since then, it has been taken up by governments, international organisations and charities around the world.



Number of patients on ART cross 1 lakh mark*

NACO supported ART Centres	11,8356
Intersectoral Partners	2479
GFATM Round II Centres	2489
Grand Total	12,3324

*As of 31st December, 2007

Help us in our constant endeavour to make NACO Newsletter more participative by sending us a variety of contributions:

- Case studies
- Field notes and experiences
- News clips
- Anecdotes... and much more

For back issues of the NACO Newsletter and for information on HIV/AIDS log on to:
www.nacoonline.org, or mail ritunaco@gmail.com



– Editor



From the Desk of the Director General

The Red Ribbon Express is the largest public mobilisation project in the world, but for us at NACO it is more than just a statistical achievement. It is the realisation of a dream and a logistical challenge that took three years from conceptualisation to actually 'get running'. The idea of a train doing a Bharat Parikrama, taking the HIV/AIDS messages to far-flung areas of the country, providing counselling services and training to a range of stakeholders, came from the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) in 2004.

The final nod from the Ministry of Railways for providing the train to NACO came in June 2007. Naturally no other occasion than the World AIDS Day could be better to launch the new initiative. We were left with less than six months time, the challenge was huge – the coaches had to be procured and fabricated, designs had to be finalised. Over and above, there was a massive coordination required among different agencies and state/district administrations for smooth implementation of the project. UNICEF came forward and worked day and night together with NACO to help in fabrication of the train. Though there were moments of nervousness, determination kept us moving. Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) also responded promptly to help build the teams of cultural performers, who had to spread out to villages as part of outreach activities of RRE for disseminating messages. Our UN partners extended all possible help in making this unique project a success. At the field level, all ministries, departments and NGOs participated with complete zeal to make it a national movement.

The train is going to travel to cities and small towns. Its outreach programme, in the form of

AIDS ambassadors on cycles and buses, is going to reach the hinterland of the station it stops at, and will go right into small villages and hamlets. In normal course, touching the lives of people by a single project would have been impossible. By the time it finishes its year-long voyage, the Red Ribbon Express project would have touched nearly 50,000 villages and, in some form or other, a quarter of India's people would have imbibed its missionary purpose.

It is essential to incorporate rural India into the National AIDS Control Programme to make the struggle against HIV/AIDS a genuine people's movement and to ensure that reversing the epidemic becomes an article of faith rather than just a theoretical pledge. As part of NACP-III, we are committed to district and local level interventions, not just broad-sweep statewide programmes. As surveys bear out, high-risk AIDS pockets often exist within states, rather than encompass an entire state. Our endeavour is to reach the entire high risk and vulnerable population in order to reverse the epidemic as envisaged in NACP-III.

I urge you all to visit the RRE to extend your support in making our initiative a joint voice towards a successful national response to HIV/AIDS in India. That is why we, at NACO, have placed such store on the RRE. So do become a part of this journey.

*Ms K. Sujatha Rao
Additional Secretary and Director General
National AIDS Control Organisation*



The Red Ribbon Express: All smiles as they begin the journey of hope across the nation. Inset: Flagging off! (From right): Ms Sonia Gandhi, Mr Lalu Prasad Yadav, Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar, (Second row) Ms Panabaka Laxmi, Dr Anbumani Ramadoss

Mission on Track

The Red Ribbon Express begins its year-long journey, taking the AIDS prevention message into the heartland of India

The eve of the New Year saw India launching one of the world's most unique train journeys— an exciting, pulsating voyage that mixes travel across a vast and diverse social and physical landscape, with a pointed public health message. Welcome on board the Red Ribbon Express (RRE). Flagged off from Delhi on December 1, 2007, World AIDS Day

by Ms Sonia Gandhi, UPA chairperson in the presence of a number of union ministers including Dr Anbumani Ramadoss, Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Sh. Lalu Prasad Yadav, Minister for Railways, Sh. Mani Shankar Aiyar, Minister for Youth, Sports and Panchayati Raj, Ms Panabaka Lakshmi, Minister of State for

Family Welfare and Mr R. Velu, Minister of State for Railways, the seven-coach RRE is the world's largest mass mobilisation campaign. During its one-year journey, RRE will travel across 24 states halting at 180 stations covering a distance of over 27,000 km. The outreach activities of the train and the bus caravan travelling along with it, in

The Red Ribbon Express consists of seven coaches.

Coach I, Exhibition

Display of HIV/AIDS educational material, interactive touch screens and 3-D models.

Coach II, Exhibition

Display of awareness material with focus on HIV/AIDS linked to National Rural Health Mission programmes, such as PPTCT services in the context of Reproductive Child Health, HIV-TB co-infection etc.

Coach III, Exhibition

Display of educational material with focus on HIV within the socio-developmental context (inter-sectoral/mainstreaming approach)

the outer periphery of the districts through which RRE will pass, will cover over 50,000 villages. The train carries the exhibits and equipment that showcase AIDS awareness and prevention messages, information on healthy living, and the National Rural Health Mission. Attached to the train is an auditorium coach, where three batches of 60 people each can be trained per day on issues concerning HIV/AIDS. There is also a counselling coach, where four counsellors and two doctors have been deployed to provide HIV counselling services in a confidential environment, as well as STI symptomatic treatment services. By the time RRE chugs back into Delhi on November 28, 2008, the train and the media blitz generated by it would have touched, directly and indirectly, over 300 million people, which is more than a quarter of India's population.

A gigantic exercise

Planning the journey was a logistical challenge. The idea conceived by Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) in 2004 was developed into a project and is being implemented by NACO

in partnership with the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), UNICEF and the Ministry of Railways. A host of ministries and government departments, UN agencies and NGOs are on board with NACO to make this journey a success. It is truly a multisectoral enterprise but at the same time a huge management challenge requiring 24x7 coordination among a number of agencies at the Union, state and district levels.

At the national level, the RRE Advisory Committee is headed by the

Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Sh. Naresh Dayal. The project is being implemented under overall supervision of Ms K. Sujatha Rao, AS & DG, NACO. The state level and district level plans are operationalised by State Level Organising Committees (SLOCs) headed by Chief Secretary and District Level Organising Committees (DLOCs) headed by District Collector. These committees have representation from all major ministries/ departments and also have on board local prominent leaders and NGOs.

National advisory committee on Red Ribbon Express

- Secretary, Health & Family Welfare (Chairperson of the committee)
- Secretary General, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation
- Director General Health Services
- Secretary, Railway Board, Ministry of Railways
- Secretary, Rural Development
- Secretary, Women & Child Development
- Secretary, Panchayati Raj
- Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy, Human Resource Development
- Secretary, Social Justice & Empowerment
- Secretary, Youth Affairs & Sports
- Secretary, Information & Broadcasting
- Director General, Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangathan
- A Representative from the National Rural Health Mission
- Country Coordinator, UNAIDS
- Country Representative, UNICEF.

Coach IV, Auditorium-cum-Conference Hall

Arrangement for orientation/sensitisation of selected groups. Group of 60 people to be oriented in a batch: three sessions planned per day. Has LCD projector and platform for folk performances.

Coach V, Counselling-cum-Medical Services

Six cabins: four counselling cabins and two doctors cabins for providing counselling and syndromic treatment for STI and RTI cases.

Coach VI, Sleeper coach


A team of 50 cultural performers is travelling in this coach.

Coach VII

Office, Dining-cum-pantry



The RRE Reckoner

	States and UTs	24
	Districts	180
	Programme points to be covered by RRE cultural performers	8544
	Villages to be covered	50,000 (approx.)
	Persons to be reached (direct)	5 Cr. (approx.)
	Persons to be reached via print and electronic media	25 Cr. (approx.)
	Total distance to be covered by RRE	27,000 Km

RRE comes to town

It is not just a matter of the “AIDS train” drawing into a railway station. The preparatory work in the individual states starts more than a month in advance. Each district and station is linked by a team of NACO, SACS and district officials for micro planning. A list of trainees is prepared drawing people from government departments such as the police, Panchayati Raj institutions, the Departments of Women and Child Development, Rural Development and Education, Self Help Groups, CSO/NGOs etc. The NYKS teams go to the field to identify the villages for organising cultural performances once the train is in a particular district. Press conferences are

organised at the state and district level and publicity of the train is done through mass media and by erecting hoardings and banners so that more and more people may visit and benefit from the services available in the train. Route charts for the two buses travelling along with the train are drawn in advance covering the periphery of the districts to maximise the outreach of the whole project.

The cultural performers on board the train are divided in six groups of

By the time it completes its journey across the country, the RRE would have made an impact on NACP-III's goal of reversing the AIDS epidemic in India.

nine persons each and go to the villages on cycles – thus creating a hype on the way itself. Each group performs in four villages per day. Therefore, 24 villages are covered directly by these performers everyday. Adding to this, NYKS volunteers mobilise people from adjacent 5 villages for each performance in a village i.e. 120 villages are covered directly and indirectly per day per station.

In case of bus caravans, a team of Song & Drama Division travels with each bus. Each bus stops at three Block Headquarters for major performances where exhibition in the bus is opened to public, cultural performances by Song & Drama Division artists are held and condom demonstration stalls by HLFPT on PSI are organised. In addition to Block Headquarters, the buses stop on the way if there is a gathering of people or demand by them.

In the first month of its journey through Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh, the train exhibition was visited by 75,000 people and more than 9,000 were counselled and over 54,000 were trained. The bus caravan reached to more than 35,000 people.

RRE is not an ordinary project – it is a mission aimed at uniting India in the war against HIV/AIDS. It is not limited to raising awareness about HIV/AIDS, it aims at creating a pool of trained resource persons in every district through which the RRE passes. They will work as soldiers carrying on the fight in their respective districts by disseminating correct messages on prevention, availability of services and challenging affront stigma and discrimination attached to the infection.

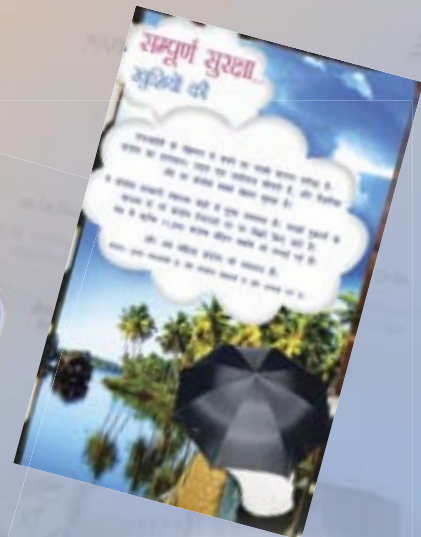
■ Mayank Agrawal, JD (IEC) and Project Coordinator (RRE)



Ms Sonia Gandhi, Mr Anbumani Ramadoss, Mr Lalu Prasad Yadav and Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar visiting the exhibition inside the train

Bharat Parikrama

RRE route map





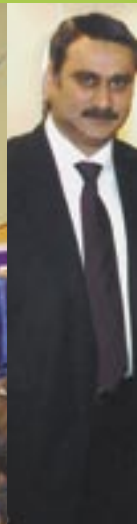
Red Ribbon Express

Uniting India against AIDS



रेड रिबन एक्सप्रेस

एड्स के विरुद्ध, भारत एकजुट



Inside R

▲ Ms Sonia Gandhi at the inauguration

▲ Voice of the people: Cultural programmes use the local idiom and folk traditions to deliver messages on HIV prevention and battling stigma and discrimination.

▶ The train has been specially painted to give it a unique branding



▼ VIP guests look at collateral exhibits that are part of the RRE outreach



▲ AIDS envoys on cycles are an engaging aspect of the RRE programme



Mission montage



ed Ribbon Express



▶ The train carries specific recorded messages on HIV/AIDS for various audience

◀ The outreach programme gets going in Madhya Pradesh



▲ Breaking the culture of silence: Women come out to discuss issues on HIV/AIDS

Joint voice of the young and old in Jaipur towards the national response to HIV/AIDS

each initiative



A Red Ribbon Day

How does a typical day go for the RRE regulars?

He's an AIDS outreach mission veteran, having participated in the "AIDS Walk for Life", a year-long, 7,000 km awareness programme that travelled from Delhi to Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, before getting back to Delhi. Yet, even that experience must take a backseat for Mohan Rana, now that he's on the Red Ribbon Express.

It's early in the morning and the train is scheduled to leave Jhansi for Gwalior at 1.30 am. It's been an exciting, action-packed period in the city of Rani Lakshmbai, and Mohan Rana can look back at two days of hard work and enormous satisfaction, even if it has meant no sleep till well after midnight.

The reception was exciting, he remembers: "It has been so everywhere, people start coming as early as 5.00 in the morning in anticipation of the special train."

So how does a typical day go for the Red Ribbon Express army? The actual cultural programmes began at about 8.00 am. That is when the RRE cultural team in the form of

cycle caravans, backed by the young volunteers from the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan move out from the railway station to the hinterland.

The cyclists are divided into six groups of eight members. Each team of cyclists comprises both male and female performers. They stop at villages and specified locations and perform street plays – *nukkad nataks* – that slip into their script a strong anti-stigma and anti-discrimination message, and promote behaviour that could help avert HIV.

The cultural programme and the underlying texture of the *nataks* changes from state to state, to accommodate local theatre forms and idioms. The cyclists and cultural artistes too change from state to state, to ensure familiarity with the immediate surroundings and promote a sense of ownership of the Red Ribbon Express initiative.

Two busses, plying simultaneously along with the train, are drawing attention. They have been designed, painted and fitted with an exhibition display.

As they travel to villages for special shows, people are mobilised beforehand. The district magistrate and other officials are invited to attend and participate.

The performers along with the bus, stop at chosen venues, entertain audiences with magic shows, *nukkad nataks* and other forms of cultural expression. In all cases, HIV/AIDS issues and messages are highlighted. There is a tumultuous response as the RRE bus nears its destination. Condom demonstration stalls are drawing huge crowds. On the way non-traditional condom outlets are opened, as part of condom market expansion plan.

Meanwhile, what's been happening back at the station? On the train itself, the exhibition is thrown open to visitors at 9.00 am, and a regular stream of arrivals is reported till at least 6.00 pm. There are days when the exhibition timings are extended, to accommodate more and more footfalls.

Typically, the Red Ribbon Express halts at a particular station for one to three days – the length depending generally on the HIV prevalence rate in the districts and other logistics. The local media interest in the train as well as in its outreach initiatives – in the cyclists and bus-bound performers and how they convert an important public health mission into an easily intelligible and fun-filled cultural event – has been excellent. Doordarshan and All India Radio coverage has been regular and rigorous.

At the end of the stay, the Red Ribbon Express chugs away from its temporary home. It's on the way to a new station, a new adventure, a fresh responsibility at a new destination.



On the run: Red Ribbon Express bus caravans



Silver Screen, Golden Message

Bollywood joins fight against AIDS with the Jaago films

Between them, Mira Nair, Santosh Sivan, Vishal Bhardwaj and Farhan Akhtar have made some of the most exciting movies and been responsible for some of the most engaging cinema in India in recent years. Now, the AIDS Jaago Project, a collaborative venture of Mirabai Films and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has brought this army of talent under a common banner.

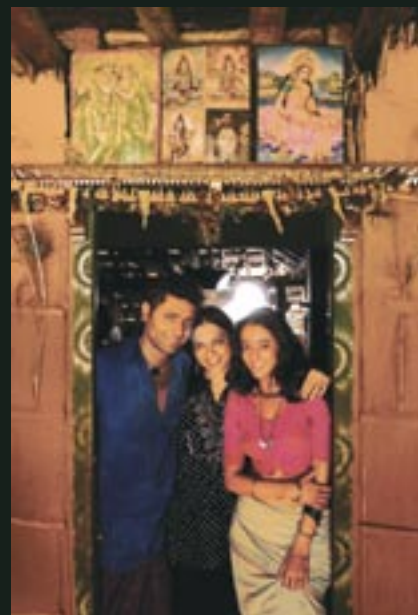
Seen as young, cutting-edge film-makers, the four have made a quartet of short films (see box) aimed at dispelling myths about HIV/AIDS and fighting stigma and prejudice. From Boman Irani to Shabana Azmi, Prabhudeva to Sameera Reddy, a host of top stars feature in these films.

This project was the brainchild of Mira Nair and the films have been produced by her company, Mirabai Films. The movies capture different facets of India's AIDS story – human drama, economic disaster, urban and rural anguish, the initial shock and the ability to fight back.

The Jaago films premiered in September 2007 at the Toronto Film Festival, and met with critical acclaim. In November, they were shown to a far removed but equally impressed audience at the 38th International Film Festival of India held in Goa.

In conceptualising the project, Nair said she sought to use the “immense power” of Indian cinema to “wake people up about AIDS”. She coined the name AIDS Jaago because it means “awaken” in Hindi. “I proposed that I would get together the most cutting-edge, commercial, populist film directors from different regions of India,” she explained, “who would each use iconic movie stars ... each make a dramatic tale of 15 minutes in length.” The idea was to entertain, educate and enlighten.

To make them reach a larger number of people, NACO requested Doordarshan and satellite news channels such as Zee News, Sony, Sadhana, NDTV, National Geographic, Times Now, Janmat, Star TV and Sahara to air the films. Many of them provided their platform to air these films.



Aweome foursome

Santosh Sivan, *Prarambha (The Beginning)*: Prabhudeva plays a truck driver who discovers an abandoned boy in his vehicle. The boy is searching for his HIV positive mother who has left him on learning of her status.

Vishal Bhardwaj, *Blood Brothers*: Siddhartha is a young man who tests positive for HIV. He falls into despair, convinced his life has crumbled. Pankaj Kapoor plays his strong and silent doctor.

Farhan Akhtar, *Positive*: Starring Boman Irani, Shabana Azmi and Arjun Mathur, this is the story of a family with a small child, and describes how AIDS devastates their little home.

Mira Nair, *Migration*: Shiney Ahuja, Raima Sen, Sameera Reddy and Irfan Khan are part of a narrative that sees the HIV virus as a great class leveller, uniting different strata of society, rural and urban India, in one epidemic.



Our Web 2.0

NACO refurbishes online home, gets spiffy website



A new homepage greets NACO's online visitors

A clean, spiffy layout, a comfortable browsing experience, but one packed with information: welcome to www.nacoonline.org, the revamped home-on-the-web of the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO). The aim of the website is to provide the visitor adequate links on the home page itself to all facets of NACO's work and to India's National AIDS Control Programme (NACP). For instance, at the click of a mouse, a variety of relevant information on NACP-III can be accessed, including its priorities and thrust areas, its prevention strategies, and care and treatment services.

An icon called "NACO Events" leads the visitor to recent landmark happenings in the NACO calendar, such as the flagging off of the Red Ribbon Express (RRE) on December 1, 2007. Posters and brochures in a variety of languages, audio and video spots and

photographs, can be easily downloaded from the IEC resource centre. The latest NACO Newsletter is also available online, as is a set of archives. In a sense, the website becomes a one-stop shop for any individual or organisation seeking resources and supporting documentation or audio-visual inputs for an AIDS advocacy or education mission.

From its civil society and private and international partners to the State AIDS Control Societies (SACS), NACO's site provides a wealth of information and a host of links and contact details of local, ground-level bodies that stakeholders can easily access.

The site also provides a statewide list of Integrated Counselling and Testing Centres, blood banks and ART Centres. This makes it a convenient reckoner of addresses, phone numbers and other details

for anybody who wants to get tested or for avail other services. In the case of ART Centres, even the name of the specific medical officer to be contacted is mentioned.

At the click of a mouse, the visitor can access all NACO's publications and get updated about NACO's event calendar. All new data and information related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in India and NACO's response to it, can be easily reached.

An example of the efficacy of the website is the section "Living with HIV/AIDS". It enables the visitor to reach ART and community-care services, as well as helplines/hotlines. People living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) are also encouraged to share their experiences and, if faced with an instance of discrimination or stigma, to report the incident.

PLHA's rights are clearly explained and those who feel their rights have been subverted are encouraged to contact NACO or the Lawyers Collective HIV/AIDS Unit. The legal group's website and e-mail addresses and phone numbers in leading cities, are given for redressal. Not just PLHA, but anyone with a question can post his or her queries on the site and NACO's experts attempt to answer these.

All in all, the new-look NACO website caters to a range of visitors, from various walks of life, who want to know more about HIV/AIDS, from field advocates and activists to public health professionals and ethicists. It answers any question that, in the normal course, may be raised about the HIV/AIDS situation in India.

■ Ritu Shukla, DD (IEC)

Second Coming

NACO begins second-line ART roll-out

Starting January 1, 2008, India has begun rolling out second-line Anti Retroviral Therapy (ART). An announcement to this effect had been made a month earlier, on December 1, 2007, World AIDS Day, when Dr Anbumani Ramadoss, Hon'ble Minister for Health and Family Welfare, had officially told the nation that second-line ART would soon be widely available.

NACO is working towards an ambitious plan whereby 10 "centres of excellence" across India will provide second-line ART. The centres are being groomed by NACO and equipped with state-of-the-art diagnostic facilities, quality human resources and adequate research laboratories. These centres will serve as role models for other institutions of HIV/AIDS care in their hinterland.

In the first phase, the roll-out of second-line ART is taking place at two centres – the Government Hospital of Thoracic Medicine (GHTM), Tambaram, Chennai, and the J. J. Hospital, Mumbai. The two are part of a pilot programme that will allow NACO and SACS to gain enough experience before replicating

the second-line venture in eight other centres.

For the two centres selected for the initial roll-out, all necessary preparatory work was done well in advance. Technical documents were finalised, as were monitoring tools and handouts, counselling material, job aids and patient education material. A team of doctors from the Chennai and Mumbai facilities was sent to Bangkok for hands-on training in second-line ART deployment.

To understand the importance of the initiation of second-line ART a little background is called for. The free (first-line) ART programme was inaugurated by NACO on April 1, 2004. Since its inception in mere eight centres, in less than four years the ART mission has expanded to 137 centres in 31 states and Union territories. Close to 120,000 patients are receiving free treatment. Many of them have benefited immensely from ART.

Yet, not everybody has been helped in equal measure. Once inside the human body, the HIV virus replicates constantly. During this process of

replication there are errors (mutations) that make the virus resistant to first-line ARV drugs.

In India, a rough estimation has shown that nearly 3,000 patients currently on ART may have developed resistance to first-line ARV drugs. These are the people who critically and urgently require second-line drugs.

However, second-line ART is expensive and costs about Rs 100,000 per patient per year. For most Indians, this is simply unaffordable. Now NACO and its partners have offered hope. As per Dr Ramadoss' announcement and the plan decided upon, second-line ART shall be provided free of cost to all those who need it and live below the poverty line. It shall also be provided free to women, children and those who have been on first-line ART at government centres for at least two years but are now no longer safe receiving just that level of treatment.

It is crucial to issue a cautionary here, especially for those who hope to avail second-line ART. It is very important to take these drugs regularly so as to avoid the development of resistance and ensure healthy living with HIV/AIDS.

Before being put on second-line ART, a patient who is failing to respond to first-line drugs needs to go for a special blood test called the viral load test. The GHTM facility in Chennai and the J. J. Hospital in Mumbai have been linked to specialist pathological laboratories that can conduct this test. The drugs for second-line ART are being supplied to NACO by the Clinton Foundation. In turn, the Clinton Foundation has an agreement with UNITAD, an international NGO that raises funds for AIDS treatment by collecting an ear-marked cess on airline tickets.

■ Dr Damodar Bachani,
JD (CS & T), NACO



Dr Anbumani Ramadoss, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare addressing the press on World AIDS Day

Donating Hope

Commemorating Voluntary Blood Donation Day



Participants hold up candles of hope

Safe and risk-free blood transmission and donation are essential for the success of National AIDS Control Programme. As such, the observance of the National Voluntary Blood Donation Day on October 1, 2007, was an important event for everybody at NACO, the SACS and those working in the field of AIDS control. Rallies, voluntary blood donation camps, seminars and community meetings marked the occasion across the country (*see box*).

In partnership with the Blood Safety Division, NACO brought out posters, stickers, folders and helped put together a month-long special campaign on All India Radio, Doordarshan, cable and satellite channels and FM stations. Catchy, youth-oriented TV and radio ads and jingles were produced to capture people's imagination.

In the states, the SACS organised functions in the capital cities and

districts to generate greater awareness about voluntary blood donation. The focus was on motivating young people to step forward to donate blood voluntarily. It also removed common misconceptions related to blood donation.

In Delhi, a symposium on recruitment and retention of voluntary blood donors was hosted by the Indian Red Cross. Regular voluntary blood donors and committed organisers of blood donation camps were honoured. A poignant human touch was added to the proceedings by some of the blood donors, who spoke on their experiences and what motivated them to give their blood to enable others to live healthy lives.

In addition, a national seminar on the promotion of voluntary blood donation was held at Delhi's India Habitat Centre. Here too, voluntary blood donors of long standing were lauded, and a cultural programme was held.

In the capital on October 1 and 2, 10 voluntary blood donation camps were put up at strategic locations all over the city. In all, over 950 units of blood was collected. An intensive publicity campaign had run for a full fortnight on FM radio stations and been successful in getting young people to come forward and give blood.

On October 1 itself, a grand function at Delhi University was inaugurated by Mr Oscar Fernandes, Union Minister for Labour and Employment. Veteran blood donation volunteers were honoured, and facilities for skits, cultural shows and adventure sports activities were provided.

In rest of the country ...

- **Meghalaya:** State-level functions were organised, mobilising youth, celebrities, NGOs, political and faith-based groups.
- **Madhya Pradesh:** Awareness campaigns were held in universities. The fortnight from October 1-15, 2007, saw donation camps at various locations. A registry of rare blood group donors was opened.
- **Rajasthan:** Voluntary blood donation camps were organised in hospitals with the help of NGOs and civil society groups. Seminars, debates and rallies took place.
- **Orissa:** A candle light procession marched down Bhubaneswar, with school and college students participating. Donation camps were organised.
- **Gujarat:** In Ahmedabad, awards were handed out to veteran blood donors and to star donor institutions.
- **Jharkhand:** As early as August, a Mega Blood Safety Campaign and Voluntary Blood Donation Camp had been inaugurated at the Raj Bhawan in Ranchi.
- **Chandigarh:** College students marched in a candle light procession. Regular voluntary donors were felicitated by the Blood Bank Society and the SACS.

■ Dr Pushkar, TO (Blood Safety)

Art for AIDS

A unique, autorickshaw-based AIDS intervention

On December 1, 2007, as the Red Ribbon Express (RRE) began its year-long journey, it did so amid splendid colour, literally. Five retrofitted autorickshaws carried with them the ArtMoves message. Supported by NACO, ArtMoves is a joint project of Make Art/Stop AIDS (MA/SA) and the Centre for Media and Alternative Communications (CMAC). ArtMoves is a mobile, human rights-based, art-centric AIDS intervention. It sees participation by artists from four countries: Brazil, South Africa, the United States and, of course, India.

ArtMoves is part of the larger Make Art/Stop AIDS exhibition



Art gives AIDS a hand

that will open in Los Angeles on February 23, 2008. Deploying traditional communication motifs, a bioscope for instance, ArtMoves intends to use art to engage with the AIDS epidemic, trigger thought, debate and action within communities. The exhibition in Delhi was appreciated by visitors, with one lady terming it a “mind opening experience”.

In India, ArtMoves was facilitated by NACO and introduced to the wider AIDS stakeholder community. The Delhi Network of Positive People (DNP+) provided volunteers who served as on-site educators. ArtMoves also received logistical support from Bajaj Auto, which makes, among other things, auto-rickshaws.

■ Rajeev Verma, Director (MA/SA)

Protecting the Young

NACO satellite session at Asia Pacific sexual health meet

The theme of the Fourth Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights (APCRSH) – held in Hyderabad at the end of October 2007 – was “Exploring New Frontiers in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights”. The conference saw 1,200 stakeholders, ranging from NGO representatives to government officials, donors to parliamentarians, who participated in vigorous discussions, bringing together a variety of opinions.

Since Asia has 700 million young people aged between 10 and 19, the issue of adolescents was of particular importance to the delegates. Given that India has, over the past year, seen much debate on the relevance and methodology of sex education in schools, the Hyderabad meet

Given that India has, over the past year, seen much debate on the relevance and methodology of sex education in schools, the Hyderabad meet provided an opportunity to tap international minds on the subject.

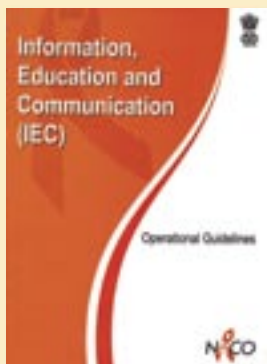
provided an opportunity to tap international minds on the subject.

As such, NACO sponsored a satellite session on “Sexual behaviour among the young: Risk and protective factors” at the conference. The deliberations were interesting and thought-provoking. Data from the Third National Family Health Survey (NFHS-III) and the Baseline Sentinel Survey (BSS) 2006 was

analysed to study the vulnerability of youth and adolescents to risky sexual behaviour. Work done to sensitise and educate various categories of youth and adolescents – ranging from school-goers across the Asian region to out-of-school tribal children in Jharkhand and Rajasthan – was detailed.

The vulnerability of young women, who are pushed into early marriages and early motherhood, and the risks of mother-to-child transmission were also brought up. It was pointed out that people – including marginal and religious minorities – were not necessarily hostile to educational programmes about reproductive health. Only, they wanted these appropriately contextualised, and relevant to the individual community’s socio-economic conditions.

■ Dr Gita Bamezai, Lead Consultant (IEC, Mainstreaming)



New IEC guidelines

Information, Education and Communication (IEC) operational guidelines have been developed for NACO and its NACP-III partners, including SACS and allied bodies. The guidelines emphasise mainstreaming, advocacy and social mobilisation, in keeping with the priorities of the national programme.

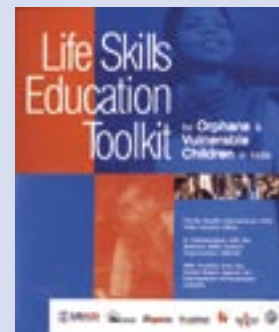
The importance of monitoring and evaluation has been reiterated and clear processes have been outlined. Management, financial and coordination issues have also been addressed.

To download copy:

http://www.nacoonline.org/Quick_Links/Publication/IEC_Mainstreaming_and_Social_Marketing/

Holistic life skills

The Family Health International country office, in collaboration with NACO and with funding support from USAID, has released the Life Skills Education toolkit. It takes a participatory approach and deals with “the whole child” – feelings, beliefs, development needs – and equips children with skills required to make safe choices and lead healthy lifestyles. The toolkit is invaluable in sending messages related to HIV prevention. Its child-friendly, participatory approach uses games, role plays, debates, brainstorming, drama, story telling, group learning, case studies and poster making.



For more details contact:

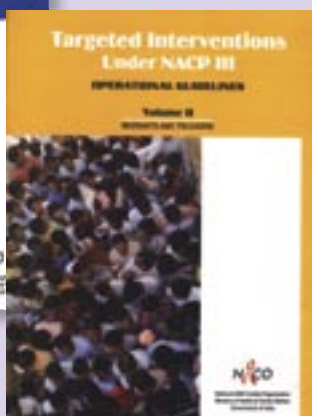
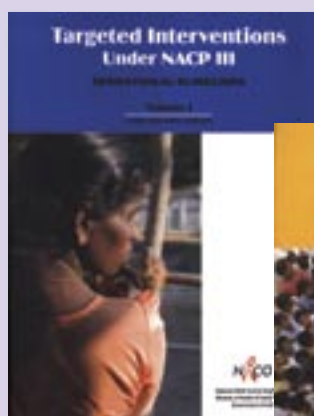
Family Health International-India Country Office
Website: www.fhi.org

Poster children

Sexual and Reproductive Health Initiative for Joint Action Network (SRIJAN) is a network of 135 NGOs spread across 101 districts and seven states. As part of its mandate, it has developed a poster advocating support for culturally appropriate sex education in schools. Another poster promotes safe and responsible sexual behaviour, and condom use as a dual protection from STI- HIV and pregnancy. Earlier, SRIJAN had released a set of two posters on the “right age of marriage”.

For more details contact:

MAMTA-Health Institute for Mother and Child
Website: www.mamta-himc.org



Guide to intervention

NACO has released two sets of guidelines – Targeted Intervention under NACP-III (Vol 1) and Core High Risk Groups and (Vol 2) Migrants and Truckers. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure quality HIV prevention interventions through the targeted interventions (TIs) under NACP-III. They provide detailed information on issues related to programme management, human resources, infrastructure, linkages and monitoring and evaluation.

To download copy:

http://www.nacoonline.org/Quick_Links/Publication/NGO_Targeted_Interventions/

Convergence theory

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has released *National Guidelines on Prevention, Management and Control of Reproductive Tract Infections including Sexually Transmitted Infections*. These are intended for programme managers and service providers in the Second Reproductive and Child Health Programme (RCH-II) and the Third National AIDS Control Programme. The guidelines have been developed keeping in mind the differences in the two programme settings and yet present a fine example of convergence between the RCH and NACP.

To download copy:

[http://www.nacoonline.org/Quick_Links/
Publication/NGO__Targeted_Interventions/](http://www.nacoonline.org/Quick_Links/Publication/NGO__Targeted_Interventions/)



A generation in transit

It lasts only 20 minutes but the documentary 'Badalte Din' (Changing Days) is a deep study of school-going adolescents and the period of change that they are in. It is a sensitive look at the peer camaraderie and pulls and pressures, and relates these to the awakening in terms of physical and emotional changes, and to sexual development. It encourages children to resist peer pressure, to learn to say "no" to sexual advances, and to cope with the media stereotypes being fed to young, impressionable minds.

For more details contact:

UNESCO House

B-5/29, Safdarjung Enclave

New Delhi - 110 029

E-mail: newdelhi@unesco.org



Young modules, care manuals

The India HIV/AIDS Alliance has come up with a series of documents and modules that could be invaluable to groups and individuals in the AIDS field. "Building Blocks: Young Children and HIV" is a version of the Building Blocks briefing note developed for Africa, adapted for India. It aims to assist local organisations and service providers to strengthen family and community support. It has also prepared a Training Module for Peer Education, national and international NGOs, individual trainers and CBOs. It describes ways in which NGOs may design, deliver and manage training programmes for peer educators.

The third manual relates to treatment and care of those living with HIV/AIDS and in need of ART and related psychological, social and emotional support services and nutritional interventions. It is intended for use by primary care health workers in resource-limited settings.

For more details contact:

India HIV/AIDS Alliance

To download copy: www.aidsallianceindia.net

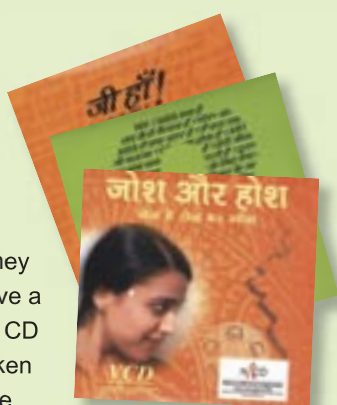


A ray of hope

These three beautifully made videos are a ray of hope - "Aao Sikhein Jeena HIV ke Sang", "Ji Haan" and "Josh aur Hosh". The first two CDs take us through the lives of people affected by HIV. How they chose to brave the odds and live a healthy normal life. In the third CD the entire family as a unit is taken into account, everyone from the children to the adults; everyone is made aware that HIV can happen to anyone if precautions are not taken.

To download film:

<http://www.nacoonline.org/>



Change to lead

Brought out by the Constella Futures Essential Advocacy Project, "The Power to Change" training manual is designed to build the advocacy capacity of agencies that work with key populations in terms of responses to HIV/AIDS. The manual and its resultant programme enable participants to understand and use data to make the case for a strengthened policy environment. The aim is to build leadership to foster a more robust response to HIV/AIDS.

For more details contact:

The Essential Advocacy Project (EAP)

Constella Futures



Jackie to the Rescue

Movie star is part of CLHA initiative

He's fought villains on screen, and now he's ready to take on a public health and social challenge – AIDS-related stigma. Jackie Shroff has lent his name, fame and presence to a NACO-backed programme that is rooted in communication material developed for India by the Health Communication Partnership (HCP) based at the Johns Hopkins University's (JHU's) Bloomberg School of Public Health. The material is designed to take on stigma and discrimination against children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Jackie Shroff and Children Living with HIV/AIDS (CLHA) will feature in two



Go Jackie, go: A shot from the film

television spots, two radio spots and a poster. All material, including the audio visual spots, will be available in English, Hindi and Marathi. NACO will air the spots nationally on Doordarshan and on private cable and satellite channels, as well as broadcast the audio spots on All India Radio and local FM stations.

The communication strategy aims at raising awareness levels, dispelling myths and misconceptions and creating a supportive and enabling environment to strengthen children and families affected by HIV/AIDS. It will draw attention to the need to help children who encounter HIV and catalyse advocacy efforts in this direction.

■ Ritu Shukla, DD (IEC)

Answering a Call

NACO's engaging interaction with faith-based groups

In a deeply spiritual country such as India, the need to use faith-based organisations as disseminators of meaningful messages for public health and social uplift cannot be overstressed. That is why NACO saw the Seventh National Youth

Convention organised by the Youth Commission of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) at Cambridge School, Cuttack, as an opportunity. The week-long convention took place in late October 2007 and was a gathering of Catholic youth from 160 dioceses. At the event 1,200 youth and 21 religious leaders participated and were sensitised on HIV/AIDS related issues and the roles and responsibilities of youth.

NACO's team interacted with the youth and satisfied all the queries – which ranged from basic information on signs and symptoms regarding HIV/AIDS to testing and counselling, condoms and their use, and what hope there was for a child born HIV positive. The young people present were encouraged to volunteer for blood

donation. Dr Rabindran, from the St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences, spoke on the subject of the "Church and AIDS", seeing the challenge of the epidemic in terms of Catholic traditions and theological values. He encouraged his audience to abstain from risky sexual behaviour.

Orissa State AIDS Control Society (OSACS), had put up a stall for the event, distributing information booklets, blood donation stickers and other communication/outreach material. The joint effort by NACO and the Church was appreciated by all concerned. CBCI agreed to incorporate HIV/AIDS issues into the life skills manual being developed for use in schools. It is hoped that with this the HIV prevention message will reach the 10,000 CBCI schools and the 300,000 pupils studying there.

■ Preeti Gabriel, PO (Youth), NACO



NACO-CBCI synergy

‘Our objective is to sensitise society towards HIV positive people, and promote mainstreaming’

Aadhar is an organisation of HIV positive people in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. It is committed to making Positive people self-reliant and independent. We spoke to its president, Varsha Vala.

Q. How did Aadhar begin?

Our journey started in 2004 and we were registered in 2005. The word Aadhar means “to provide support”. Today Aadhar has more than 700 members. We have been supported by well-wishers such as the Dardi Shayak Trust, Action Aid, State Bank of India and, of course, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation AIDS Control Society, which has provided us infrastructure support and given us office space.

Our objectives are to carry out advocacy to promote mainstreaming of positive people, to sensitise and orient society towards the needs of HIV positive people, and to provide psychological, emotional, and social support to HIV positive people and their family members/caregivers. We work towards facilitating income-generating activities for our members and their families.

Q. Tell us about your Food for Work Programme.

On January 24, 2007, Dr Amarjit Singh, Health Commissioner of Gujarat, inaugurated our Food for Work project. Many people living with HIV in India find it difficult to make both ends meet. Since they have to go to ART centres regularly for treatment, they sometimes have problems attending work regularly. They may also face stigma in the job market.

Aadhar has, since its inception, been intending to start a programme to provide food to its members. We have finally been able to mobilise resources for utensils and basic food items – wheat, rice, oil, spices – to



cook and provide free food for our needy members. The food is rich in nutritional value.

We started this venture with external funding. Of course, more help would be welcome. But we are committed to going ahead regardless. We have also started a catering service, providing meals to government and

Do you have a special programme to help children?

“Children of HIV positive parents often have to compromise on their education as expenses pile up and school fees, uniforms, textbooks become unaffordable. This compels the children to opt out of education and start earning to help the family. Aadhar has mobilised resources to provide children of HIV positive parents with school uniforms, textbooks, exercise books and paid their fees as well. So far, 126 children have been helped”

private offices, NGOs and so on. This helps us raise funds. Volunteers who are involved in preparing the food get around Rs 70 a day. This keeps them motivated.

Q. How are decisions taken in your organisation?

Aadhar has always adopted a rights-based approach and is a firm believer in people’s participation in the development and growth of an organisation. Keeping this in view, the Board of Trustees decided to put together a platform for all members to actually question the Trustees and seek any clarifications. “Samvaad: Lok Manch”, as the programme was called, was arranged on June 23, 2007. Around 200 members were present along with all office bearers. People asked questions, received clarifications, gave suggestions – and the democratic nature of Aadhar was affirmed.

Q. What made you organise a cultural event for children of members?

As I said earlier, HIV positive parents are constantly under mental pressure and stress. In such circumstances, they tend to have little time to spare for their children’s all-round growth and recreation, struggling as they are to make both ends meet. At Aadhar we try to ease the situation. With the help of the Utkarsh Health Foundation we recently arranged a painting and dancing competition. All children of members came, participated and had fun. Some won prizes too. It was a nice, happy evening for children and parents alike.

India observes World AIDS Day

World AIDS Day was commemorated on December 1, 2007, and various State AIDS Control Societies (SACS) and their partner organisations hosted events and symposia to raise awareness about the epidemic as well as bolster the attempt to curb and reverse it. We present a bird's eye view



BIHAR

Focus on out-migrants, prison inmates

World AIDS Day saw a busy calendar in Patna. It began early in the morning, at 9.00 am, when over 500 college students marched from the Patna Women's College to Kargil Chowk, Gandhi Maidan. The students carried placards that bore messages and information on HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, mainstreaming, and testing and counselling services. As their march commenced, the 500 young residents of Patna were urged on by Mr Chandra Mohan Rai, Health Minister of Bihar,

who said, "We must address the issue of AIDS promptly, especially among the most vulnerable sections – families of out-migrants from the state." On December 1, at six vantage points in the state capital, the Bihar SACS set up Integrated Counselling and Testing Camps, which were also used to distribute free condoms and disseminate relevant IEC material. Keen to mobilise political support for the HIV/AIDS programme, the Bihar SACS joined hands with the American Centre, Kolkata, and screened a film on the epidemic and its ramifications for the members of the Bihar Legislative Forum on HIV/AIDS.



GUJARAT

GOA

A positive cultural show

On December 4, the Ahmedabad Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS put together a Youth Awareness and Cultural Programme. Supported by social organisations such as the Lions Club and Giants International and by Pepsico, the event sought to spread awareness about HIV/AIDS, fight stigma and, in particular, involve young people. What was heart-warming about the cultural programme, hosted at Ahmedabad's Tagore Hall, was that HIV positive people not only organised it but also participated.

The opening of the function saw well-known singer Falguni Pathak perform. Later, Children Living with HIV/AIDS (CLHA) danced away to Hindi film music and even presented a fashion show. Later, Mr Akash Malik, Vice-President, Pepsico, underlined that "unity is the biggest weapon ... to eradicate HIV/AIDS". Mr Milan Dalal from the Lion's Club emphasised that, "Prevention is better than cure, but for HIV/AIDS, prevention is the only cure." Mr Jitesh Vyas, Chairman, Jaago Gujarat, a Giants International initiative, announced that by end 2008 his organisation would be sponsoring the education of 400 CLHA across Gujarat.

A call to testing

From December 1 to 14, 2007, the Goa SACS observed AIDS Fortnight, organising various programmes to spread awareness among the general public and key vulnerable groups. December 1 itself was marked by an event at the state secretariat in Panjim, where the day's slogan was highlighted: "Drop the fear, know your status." It was a call to testing.

Health Minister Vishwajeet Rane was the first to get himself tested and urged people to join him and shed their weariness and fear. Movie star Tanushree Dutta was the guest of honour and spoke to the audience, as did an PLHA and a host of public officials.

Later, a convention was held for NGO working in the HIV/AIDS arena. The NGOs put up stalls, displaying and distributing IEC material. The best stall was given a prize. Later, children living with HIV/AIDS (CLHA) from the community care centre Asro put up a cultural show. The day rounded up with a candlelight march to draw attention to AIDS, flagged off by Mr Rane.



Films, rock concert on AIDS theme

In the state capital of Aizawl political leaders and government officials, community and faith-based groups as well as NGOs attended a function set around the theme “Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise”. The focus was on providing “Leadership” to “Keep the Promise”. Mr R. Tlanghmingthanga, Minister for Health and Family Welfare, was the chief guest and his speech emphasised that challenging AIDS was a common enterprise that required all Mizos to pull together. He was particularly concerned about the information and services-gap in rural areas. Two video films – “Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise: Leadership” and “Save the Children” – were screened on the occasion. The second film was seen by the organisers as crucial to educating the public on the feminisation of the epidemic.

The film clips were also shown at a music concert that took place on the evening of December 1 at Aizawl’s A.R. Ground. Top music stars from the state belted out numbers at the concert, put together by the Mizoram SACS and the Federation of NGOs Working in Drugs, HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care (FONWIDAPAC). Public health officials also conducted a workshop for CRPF jawans and their families on HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention.

CHHATTISGARH

Rural carriers of good news

A marathon co-hosted by the Chhattisgarh SACS and the Bilaspur-based radio station My FM Dil Se; an AIDS awareness rally and cultural programme organised for school students and youth that saw active participation by public health workers; a day-long HIV/AIDS testing and counselling facility at the Medical College Hospital in the state capital; a camp for pregnant ladies: it was a busy World AIDS Day in Raipur. The rural areas saw a flurry of activity too, with the State Health Resource Centre announcing that from December 7, 2007, HIV/AIDS related services and awareness programmes were becoming part of its agenda. At the first stage, field coordinators and supervisors would be educated on treatment and counselling services and ART. In turn, they would pass on the information to the Mitanins, the “community friends” who act as counsellors in the villages of Chhattisgarh.

An envoy against stigma

On World AIDS Day, Tamil Nadu’s Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Mr M. R. K. Paneer Selvam, announced a commitment to expand the availability of treatment in public health settings. “More people have come forward to know their HIV status,” he said at a function in Coimbatore, “so far 17 lakh people have tested for HIV, which is the highest in the country.” In fact, the state government, in collaboration with NACO, has made HIV testing free at its medical centres, writing off even the small Rs 10 fee charged earlier. In terms of treatment, the minister said, Tamil Nadu has established 26 ART centres and these are now providing free medicines to 25,000 people. On the occasion of World AIDS Day, he promised to upgrade eight of these centres in a scheme that would cost Rs 1.6 crore.

The state government also used the day to announce special programmes for workplace interventions. As the Minister for Rural Industries, Mr N. Pongalur Palanisamy, put it, “Coimbatore will take the lead in providing access and treatment to PLHIV. Thirupur, which is one of the most industrialised towns in the state, will be covered with workplace interventions to reach the entire workforce engaged in the garment industry.”

At the Coimbatore function, many civil society activists, Positive people and public health officials who have worked tirelessly and courageously to make life easier and better for the community affected by HIV/AIDS were honoured with awards and special mentions. For many, this was an emotional moment.

In addition, Tamil Nadu SACS (TANSACS) used the opportunity on December 1 to get civil and police officials, medical professionals, students and others to take a pledge to fight stigma and discrimination against HIV positive people. “Ini oru vidhi seivom (let’s make it right)” goes the pledge, which is being popularised by TANSACS and UNDP with the help of a celebrity ambassador, film personality Kamalhaasan.





Glimpses of a nation: India observes World AIDS Day



▲ The active Manipur Legislators' Forum mobilises the public to take on the challenge of HIV/AIDS

▼ IEC/BCC materials being displayed at Goa



▲ Movie star Kamalhaasan lends support to Tamil Nadu's AIDS control programme



▼ College students march across Patna to raise consciousness about the AIDS issue



▲ Cultural evening at the Tamil Nadu Function

▼ Signature event: Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Ms Panabaka Lakshmi on AIDS Day function in Andhra Pradesh



▼ Condom Vending machine performing its due social role





▼ Leadership to spread awareness taken by youngsters in Uttar Pradesh



▼ Awareness and cultural evening at Gujarat



▲ Government and Bollywood both pledge to fight against HIV/AIDS
▼ Children appeal for safe future to Chief Minister Dr Rajasekhra Reddy



▼ Bihar public health officials come together to participate at the state World AIDS Day function



▲ Dr Sidhu, Governor of Manipur pledges to fight against discrimination at the gathering in Manipur
▼ Concert that rocked Mizoram with HIV/AIDS messages



▲ Children at their best on the ramp in Ahmedabad



UTTAR PRADESH

HIMACHAL PRADESH



Level-playing field for mainstreaming

From a six-a-side soft-ball cricket tournament to a marathon, the Uttar Pradesh State AIDS Control Society (UPSACS) had a busy outreach programme designed around World AIDS Day. The theme for this year's commemoration was – "Take a Lead", in the effort to fight the epidemic. The multi-event programme began on November 29, 2007, with an Infotainment Mela that targeted adolescents and those aged between 15-24 years. Through a variety of methods, from exhibits to quiz competitions, young people were sensitised to and educated about HIV/AIDS and how to prevent it. On November 30, UPSACS and partner agencies such as the state Sports Authority, UNICEF and the Clinton Foundation organised a cricket tournament at Lucknow's K.D. Singh Babu Stadium. Six teams, including one comprising HIV positive players, took part, innovatively marrying a popular sport to the larger calling of HIV/AIDS mainstreaming.

Finally, on World AIDS Day itself, a special marathon was flagged off by Mr Anant Mishra, Minister of Health, Government of Uttar Pradesh, at the Vidhan Sabha. The race concluded at the Ravindralaya campus in Lucknow, where, right after the finishing line, agencies had put up an HIV-themed exposition, covering topics like condom use, tackling opportunistic infections such as tuberculosis, counselling and empowering Positive people. A combination of seminars and rallies, rangoli and poster competitions ensured that each of the state's 70 districts had a communication effort devoted to World AIDS Day. Two days later, on December 3, UPSACS helped organise a blood donation camp at the Balrampur Hospital in Lucknow. Here too, IEC material was disseminated.

Awareness at the workplace

World AIDS Day may have been limited to December 1, but in Himachal Pradesh a fortnight of events centred on the AIDS theme concluded only on December 15, 2007. On December 1 itself, there were 35 awareness workshops organised for a range of stakeholders and target groups: from religious leaders and college principals to mahila and youth mandals, as also variety of government departments. A massive IEC programme was also unleashed – 100,000 Red Ribbon cards being pinned up at key locations. For the rest of the fortnight, the AIDS wagon moved from Shimla to the hinterland. Workshops for industrial workers, for shopkeepers and small businessmen, for farmers and anganwadi workers and self-help groups (SHGs) were organised. Workplace interventions were stressed, particularly at a workshop for human resource professionals of all business units that employed more than 500 people in Himachal Pradesh. Organised with support from the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), 35 senior HR managers took part in the workshop. Well-known names such as Dabur, Unilever, Wipro, Drish Shoes and Torrent were represented.



KERALA

Many media, one message

Kerala SACS marked World AIDS Day with the help of PLHA, core risk populations, NGOs, and government and civic institutions. A vital feature of the events was that different, segmented themes were used for individual target groups – district-level programmes for panchayat representatives; folk cultural shows (woven into these was the AIDS message) for auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers and head-load workers; poster designing competitions for students and seminars for public health practitioners. The idea was to keep every section engaged. Institutions and individuals who have selflessly contributed to the AIDS prevention and control mission were honoured by Kerala SACS.

As Ms P. K. Sreemathi, Minister for Health and Family Welfare, pointed out, "World AIDS Day marks the beginning of several new initiatives and approaches to effectively reduce the spread of the epidemic in Kerala." In her message, Dr Usha Titus, Project Director, SACS, thanked the public and other government departments, in particular the Kerala Police and the State Road Transport Corporation, for helping make World AIDS Day a memorable one.



A year of living boldly

World AIDS Day 2007 marked the first anniversary of the “Be Bold” campaign initiated by the Andhra Pradesh State AIDS Control Society (APSACS). The programme was aimed at reducing stigma and encouraging mainstreaming, by urging people to get themselves tested for HIV and by providing access to treatment and counselling for those who are Positive. It is a result of initiatives such as “Be Bold” that Andhra Pradesh today has 80,000 people registered for ART. 22,378 people are already receiving ART.

The first birthday, as it was, of “Be Bold” was a time to renew the pledge. As Mr Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, said at the function held on the occasion in Hyderabad, “The fact that the number of people who took the HIV test in the past one year has gone up three times, to 1.5 million, is a clear indication of the success.” The Chief Minister also released a booklet, put together by the Centre for Advocacy and Research, on the impact of the “Be Bold” campaign in the state.

APSACS used World AIDS Day to host a symposium on the role of leadership – whether from the political, corporate, health or social sector – in reversing the AIDS epidemic. More than 70 participants made presentations. Different aspects were discussed, from the role of the State Legislators’ Forum on HIV/AIDS to how industry could put in place an HIV/AIDS friendly workplace policy in conformity with the International Labour Organization’s global guidelines.

In other commemorative events, hundreds of children marched together and met the Chief Minister, appealing for an AIDS-free world. In addition, three doctors were chosen for special mention for having served HIV positive people in a dedicated manner and without any discrimination. APSACS also announced awards for five journalists for exceptional reportage on HIV/AIDS issues.

AIDS tableau marches through town

From essay-writing and painting contests to educative lectures and public health sensitisation events, World AIDS Day was observed in both the capital of Port Blair and far-flung rural and smaller island locales. The Andaman and Nicobar AIDS Control Society provided banners, posters and IEC material to its partners across the Union territory. Medical officers, college and school teachers and the Indian Navy – which has a large presence in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands – contributed their bit. In Port Blair, the highlight of the day was a march by school students and teachers, media-persons, doctors and nursing staff and members of the public. A tableau fabricated on a truck, and depicting messaging appropriate to HIV/AIDS, accompanied the marchers, who journeyed from Netaji Stadium to G. B. Pant Hospital.

At the Hospital itself, a function was held in the auditorium and saw Ms Mariyam Bib, Zila Parishad Adhyaksha, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, light the lamp. Students of the Nursing School attached to the hospital presented a welcome song and, later, a play on the theme of HIV/AIDS.

JHARKHAND

Ranchi gets a condom gallery

On World AIDS Day, the Morabadi maidan in Ranchi saw the Jharkhand State AIDS Control Society and its partner bodies unveil an impressive Condom Gallery, displaying different brands of prophylactics and providing information on them. The gallery was inaugurated by Mr Bandhu Tirkey, Minister for Human Resource Development, Jharkhand. Other government officials and dignitaries were also present. A massive outreach and information programme was launched on the occasion – 5,000 posters on the theme of World AIDS Day, 4,000 posters, 6,000 booklets and 10,000 folders on various aspects of the epidemic – ranging from condom promotion to HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention to battling stigma.

In Ranchi, a testing and counselling cum awareness camp was organised by JSACS in collaboration with the city chapter of the Federation of Obstetrician and Gynaecological Societies of India. In the districts, a landmark occurrence was the mass awareness programme at 17 health centres of the Dhanbad-based Bharat Coking Coal. Employees and their families came forward in impressive numbers, gaining information and also having fun by participating in school and college quiz contests.

Taking Ownership of the Mission

Underlining how critical it was to reverse the HIV/AIDS epidemic for the well-being of the state, Dr S.S. Sidhu, Governor of Manipur, and Mr O. Ibobi Singh, Chief Minister as well as chair of the Manipur SACS, both attended the special function held in Imphal on World AIDS Day. The Governor expressed concern at the spiralling of opportunistic infections, and requested political and public health leaders to be at the “forefront in the fight against HIV/AIDS”. The Chief Minister too urged: “There is no room for procedural delay in implementing programmes for HIV/AIDS ... The time has come to use all our resources.”

He pointed out that much had been done since, in 1996, Manipur became one of the first states in India to formulate a state AIDS policy. An active Manipur Legislators’ Forum on HIV/AIDS has also meant that individual MLAs have taken ownership of constituency-wise AIDS awareness programmes. Yet, as Chief Minister Mr Singh affirmed, women and the youth are becoming more vulnerable to the



epidemic and the HIV positive population has increased in hill districts such as Ukhrul and Churachandpur. The guard cannot be lowered, he warned.

From Village to Village

Panchayati Raj bodies to partner NACO at the grassroots

Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar, the Minister for Panchayati Raj, Youth Affairs and Sports, inaugurated a National Campaign on HIV/AIDS to be run through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) on November 28, at the Samrat Hotel in Delhi. Also present at the function were Ms Meenakshi Datta Ghosh, then Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Ms K. Sujatha Rao, Additional Secretary & Director-General, NACO, and a host of representatives from UN agencies and national organisations dealing with HIV/AIDS.

The campaign started on December 1, 2007, and will continue till March 31, 2008. It will use PRIs as grassroot level agencies to promote awareness about AIDS, spread information on prevention of HIV as well as fight stigma. Over four months, it will cover every gram sabha in 250 districts, in a unique, bottom-up public health intervention.

As part of the campaign, HIV/AIDS issues will be factored into district planning by the PRIs and will also form part of all training programmes. A pilot zila panchayat led prevention and care synergy effort will be launched in 25 districts across five states. An “HIV/AIDS Response Corner” will also form part of the national panchayat portal. It is envisaged as a one-stop information booth, and will eventually carry contact details of district-wise service facilities. Further, the Panchayati Raj Ministry will sponsor a film on the theme of HIV/AIDS.

Speaking at the inaugural function, the dignitaries welcomed the partnership between NACO and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. Mr Aiyar urged NACO to approach elected local bodies and make them allies in its effort to reverse the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It may be noted that in 2007, NACO had taken the HIV prevention message to village panchayats through a specially produced booklet called *Gram Sandesh*.



The AIDS-prevention lamp is lit

HIV Situation – India Update

India, today stands at the crossroads in its battle against HIV.

Responding to the immense challenge of the HIV/AIDS threat, NACO has articulated a clear and effective response to increase access to services and communicate effectively for behaviour change.

What is HIV?

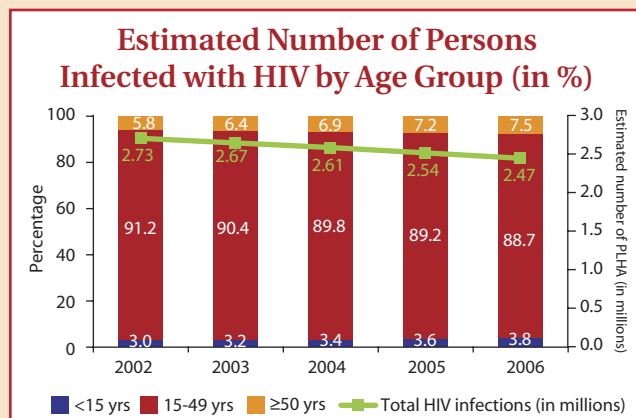
HIV is an infection caused by a virus. HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. HIV is a tiny virus, a thousand times smaller than the thickness of human hair. It looks like a rolled up porcupine or a sunflower in full bloom. HIV infects human cells and uses the energy and nutrients provided by those cells to grow and reproduce. The first case of HIV infection in India was detected in 1986 in Chennai.

Routes of HIV transmission

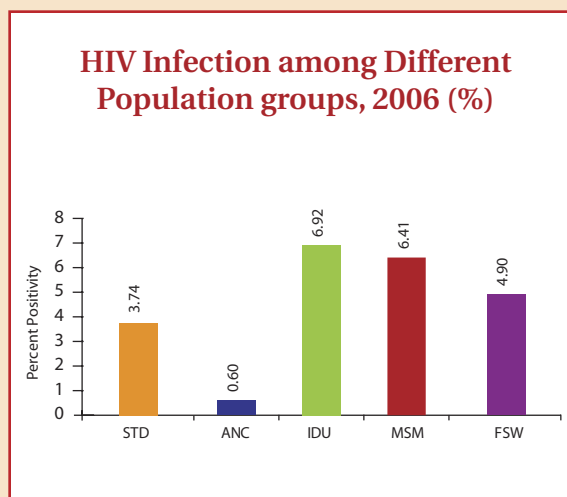
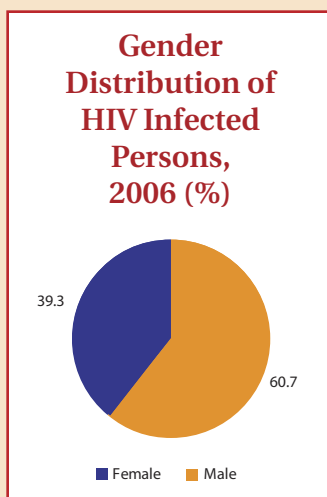


AIDS

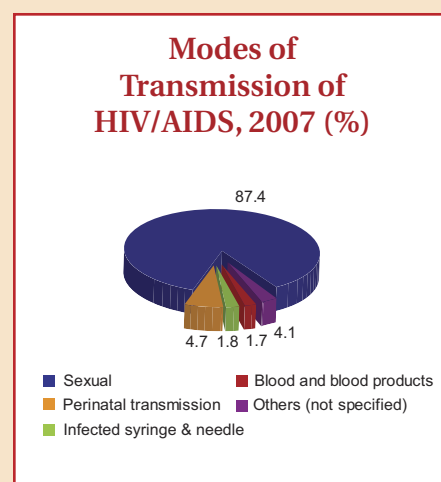
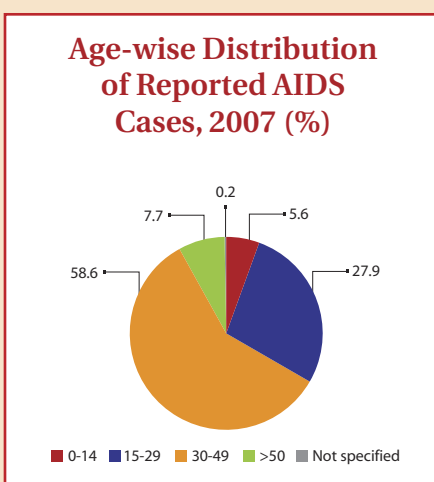
When a person is infected with HIV, the virus enters the body and multiplies primarily in the white blood cells. These are immune cells that normally protect us from disease. The hallmark of HIV infection is the progressive loss of immune cell called T-helper, or CD4



Total AIDS cases reported from January to October 2007: 17,231



Total AIDS cases reported from 1991 to October 2007- 1,94,697



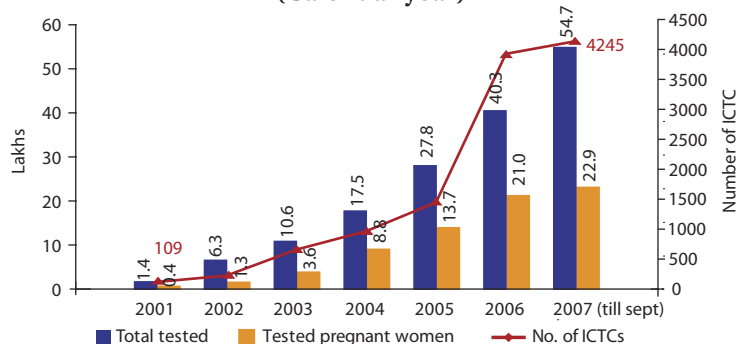
cells. When the CD4 count falls below 200, the person is said to develop AIDS. As the virus grows, it damages or kills these and other cells, weakening the immune system and leaving the person vulnerable to various opportunistic infections and other illnesses. These illnesses usually occur six to eight years after the infection. Common opportunistic infections seen in India are tuberculosis, diarrhoea, skin infections, pneumonia, fever and weight loss, and certain types of cancer.

Dynamics of HIV Transmission

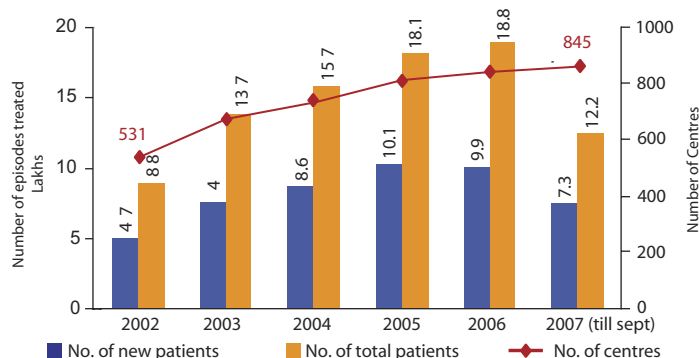
A variety of demographic, behavioural, and social factors place people at risk for becoming infected with HIV and other STIs. Traditionally cited risk factors include for example, multiple sexual partners, history of STIs, and drug abuse. Anyone who engages in a behaviour that exposes him or her to HIV is at risk of infection. Social and economic factors make people or groups of people vulnerable to the infection. HIV/AIDS does not discriminate.

HIV Prevention Services

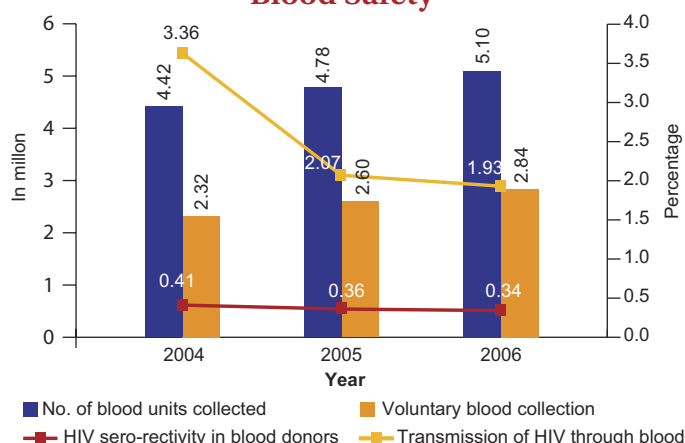
Progress in Integrated Counselling and Testing Services in India, 2001-2007 (Calendar year)



Year-wise Progress in STI Services in India, 2002-2007 (Calendar year)



Blood Safety



▲ Free ICTC services for all

The virus usually spreads from people indulging in high risk behaviour into the mainstream through the bridge population. Women, in particular, are more vulnerable to infection because of

biological factors. Further, gender inequities and the lack of social and economic empowerment make it difficult, if not impossible, for them to negotiate safer sex with partners.

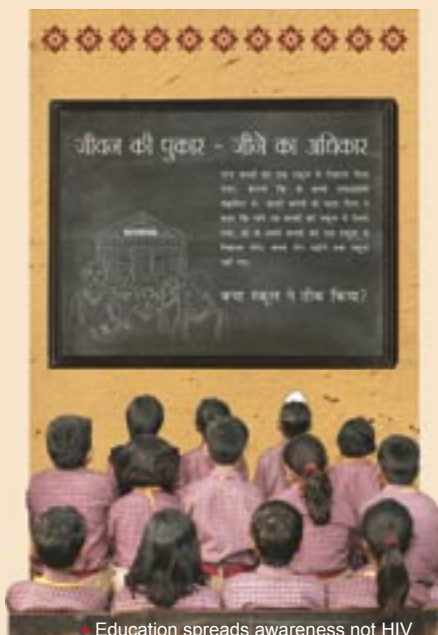


HIV transmission from high risk groups to the general population through bridge population

High risk groups

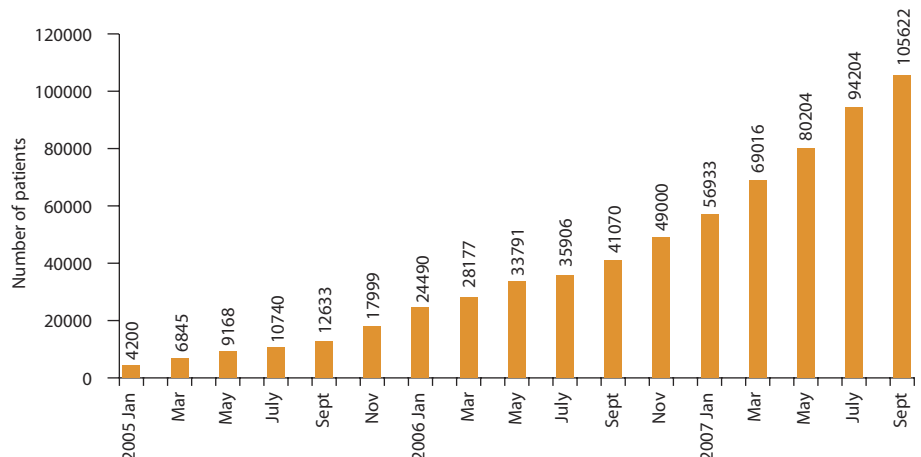
Bridge population

General population

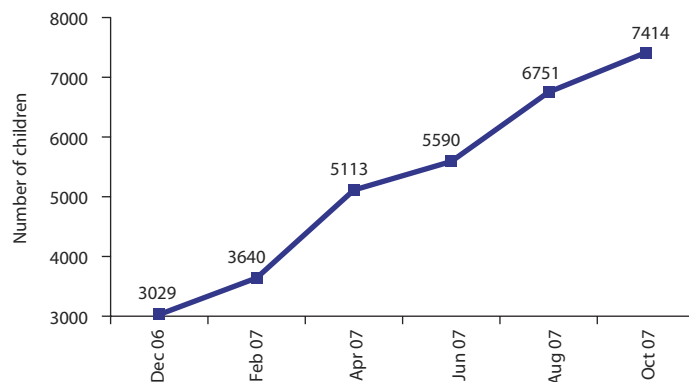


Care, Support & Treatment

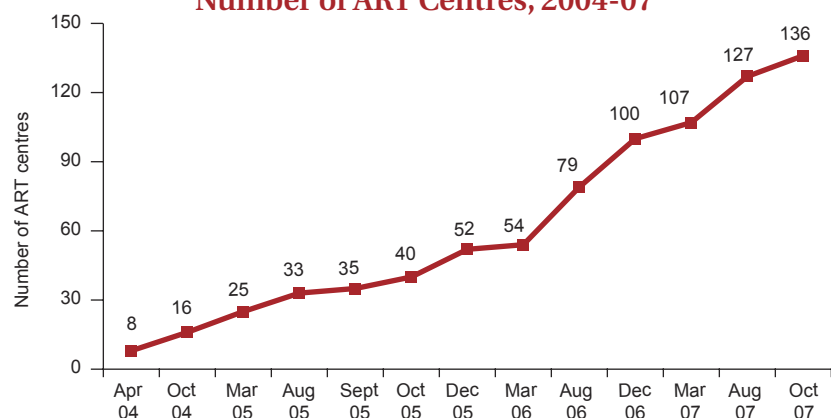
Number of Patients on Treatment, 2005-07



Number of Children on ART, 2006-07



Number of ART Centres, 2004-07



Misconceptions about HIV

HIV is a highly fragile virus. It can only survive in specific body fluids like blood, semen and vaginal fluid and not in sweat, tears or saliva.

There are a lot of myths and misconceptions about HIV.

HIV does not spread through:

- Shaking hands, hugging or kissing
- Coughing or sneezing
- Using a public phone
- Visiting a hospital
- Sharing food, eating or drinking from the same utensils

- Using toilets or showers
- Using public swimming pools
- Through mosquito or insect bites
- Working, socialising, or living side by side with HIV-positive people



▲ Use condoms always

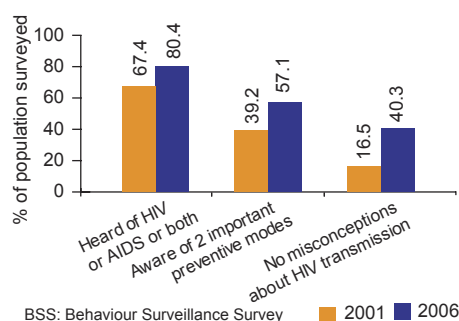
Responding to HIV

Communication strategies

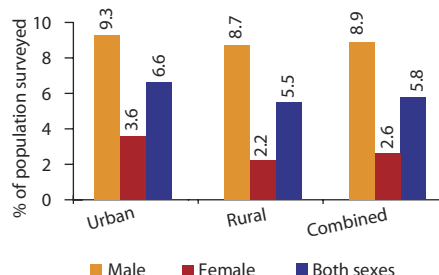
- Knowledge is the only weapon
- Use of all communication channels for effective communication aimed at behaviour change
- Education in schools, colleges, workplaces and in the community
- Awareness programmes for illiterate and out-of-school youth
- Focused one-to-one communication with high risk groups

Awareness & Condom Promotion

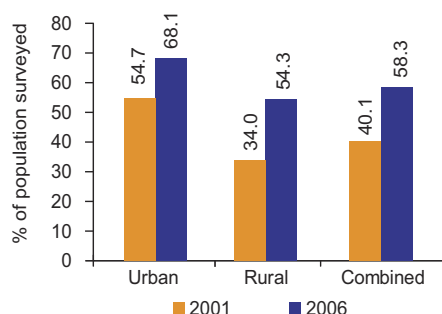
HIV-related Awareness among General Population, BSS 2001 & 06



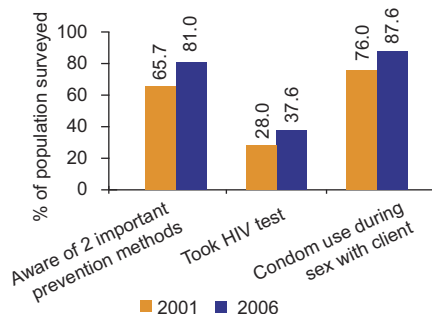
Reported Sex with Non-regular Partners, 2006



Condom Use in Last Sex with Non-regular Partner, BSS 2001 & 06

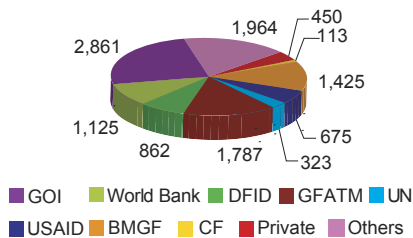


Awareness and Condom Use among FSWs, BSS 2001 & 06

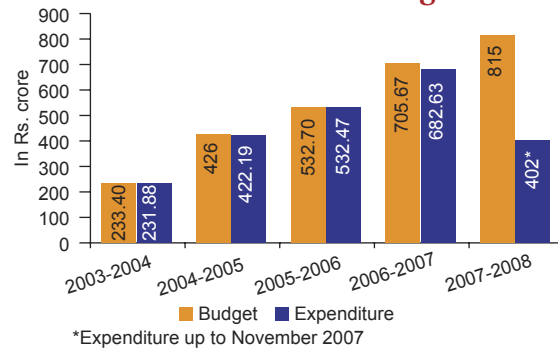


Financial progress

NACP - III Investment Plan Total Rs. 11,585 crore



Year-wise Financial Progress



Political commitment

There is a strong political commitment for containing and controlling HIV/AIDS at the international and national levels.

A Parliamentary Forum on HIV/AIDS has been set up and a National Council on AIDS (NCA) has been constituted under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

The National AIDS Prevention and Control Policy, 2002 and National Blood Policy, 2002 have been formulated to help tackle the epidemic.

As a concerned citizen help prevent the spread of HIV

- Avoid risky behaviour
- Adopt the A (Abstinence), B (be faithful), and C (use condoms) approach
- Increase awareness among colleagues and friends
- Discuss and seek guidance on sexual behaviour and other risk behaviour
- Show tolerance and empathy towards HIV-positive persons
- Help people understand the importance of safe sexual behaviour and spread knowledge about the condom as the only prophylaxis available for protection against all sexually transmitted infections including HIV



▲ HIV does not discriminate

Stigma and Discrimination

Stigma and discrimination are the major obstacles to effective HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Fear of discrimination often prevents people from seeking treatment for AIDS or from acknowledging their HIV status publicly.

- Reducing stigma and discrimination at all levels is essential
- Stigma drives people away from prevention efforts
- Promotion of testing and treatment services helps to reduce stigma

Red Ribbon Express Route Schedule



01.12.2007		Delhi
02.12.2007	11.12.2007	Rajasthan
11.12.2007	19.12.2007	Madhya Pradesh
20.12.2007	28.12.2007	Maharashtra
28.12.2007	31.12.2007	Chhattisgarh
01.01.2008	06.01.2008	Madhya Pradesh
07.01.2008	16.01.2008	Uttar Pradesh
16.01.2008	18.01.2008	Madhya Pradesh
18.01.2008	20.01.2008	Uttar Pradesh
20.01.2008	21.01.2008	Rajasthan
21.01.2008	25.01.2008	Uttar Pradesh
26.01.2008	30.01.2008	Uttarakhand
30.01.2008	09.02.2008	Uttar Pradesh
10.02.2008	11.02.2008	Bihar
12.02.2008	12.02.2008	Uttar Pradesh
13.02.2008	15.02.2008	Bihar
16.02.2008	23.02.2008	Jharkhand
24.02.2008	07.03.2008	Bihar
08.03.2008	09.03.2008	Assam
10.03.2008	12.03.2008	Nagaland
13.03.2008	17.03.2008	Assam
18.03.2008	31.03.2008	West Bengal
01.04.2008	15.04.2008	Orissa
16.04.2008	27.05.2008	Andhra Pradesh
27.05.2008	28.06.2008	Tamil Nadu
28.06.2008	11.07.2008	Kerala
12.07.2008	21.07.2008	Tamil Nadu
21.07.2008	16.08.2008	Karnataka
17.08.2008	18.08.2008	Goa
19.08.2008	10.09.2008	Maharashtra
11.09.2008	16.10.2008	Gujarat
17.10.2008	26.10.2008	Rajasthan
27.10.2008	09.11.2008	Punjab
09.11.2008	10.11.2008	Jammu and Kashmir
11.11.2008	14.11.2008	Punjab
14.11.2008	28.11.2008	Haryana
28.11.2008		Delhi



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