

# Claiming Rights



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**Theme HIV&AIDS – 2006**

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Theme HIV&AIDS – 2006

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## SETTING THE CONTEXT

Poverty, exclusion and patriarchy perpetuate HIV&AIDS in India. These phenomena lead to the violation of the rights of People Living with HIV&AIDS (PLHA) and those vulnerable to HIV. It is the poor communities who experience greatest hardship in relation to HIV&AIDS and within poor communities, it is the women and children who suffer the most. HIV&AIDS affects livelihood of families as most deaths occur among young adults who are the mainstay of the workforce. It also threatens social cohesion by scything through the parental generation, leaving behind orphaned children without societal support.

ActionAid believes that programmes designed to end the HIV&AIDS crisis must address the context in which the disease is thriving. Recognising this fact, AA India (AA-I) works in partnership with vulnerable groups which include PLHA, sexuality minorities, people in sex work, trafficked women, migrants, injecting drug users, women, youth, children from excluded and minority communities, persons affected by disasters, and persons with disabilities.

## RIGHTS APPROACH TO HIV&AIDS

ActionAid India follows a rights based approach to HIV&AIDS. AA-I sees HIV&AIDS as a rights issue, closely linked with poverty and gender inequities. Our approach is to uphold three interlinking rights, with special focus on women and children:

**Right to Dignity:** The right to a life of dignity is of utmost importance in HIV-related work. The right to dignity ensures that PLHA, particularly women and children and vulnerable communities such as sex workers, MSM and transgender communities do not face stigma and discrimination. The right to dignity encompasses the right to survival, security and existence without fear.

**Right to Self Determination:** Building institutions of People Living with HIV&AIDS forms the core of AA-I's work to enable active participation to access rights and resources. AA-I upholds the GIPA (Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV&AIDS) principles of full and meaningful involvement of People Living with HIV&AIDS for protection and promotion of their rights.

**Right to Comprehensive Care:** AAI advocates for an urgent and holistic response to the HIV&AIDS epidemic and recognises the right of poor and marginalised people to receive HIV&AIDS related care that goes beyond basic treatment to include their social, psychological, nutritional and economic needs. Such care must counteract forces of stigma and discrimination to ensure that women, children and marginalised groups are given special access to care services. For AAI, prevention is an integral part of comprehensive care.

## The Most Significant Strategies and Changes in 2006: Stories and Events

### Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV&AIDS

ActionAid India recognises that People Living with HIV&AIDS need support and capacity development in order to go beyond the rhetoric of participation and to genuinely get their voices heard. ActionAid hence has initiated a fellowship programme to ensure that PLHA strongly



articulate their demands at national decision-making levels and they are also active in their local communities.

## ■ Fellowships: Novel Approach

### Reflections!

*"I have more faith on my association with ActionAid because of its continuous insistence on one thing – personal development. This has helped me regain my lost faith on myself."*

– Anita Pandey, Gujarat

*"I gained confidence by learning computers and the use of internet has helped me to communicate with other PLHA activists miles apart. I provided information about activities in Mumbai to different people through internet which helped to provide solution to the shortage of ARV drugs in Government hospitals."*

– Roma Jana, Mumbai



*Fellows sharing and learning at the training workshop*

The fellowship programme with 24 PLHA was initiated in December 2005. The programme is inimitable and aims to develop the capacities of PLHA to uphold their rights by self development, shared learning and community mobilisation. The Fellows comprise fifteen women, one sexuality minority and eight men.

- Fellows collected case studies on discrimination with emphasis on healthcare settings and denial of property rights for women living with HIV&AIDS. This was shortly compiled into a booklet called *Access to Treatment – A Distant Dream*.

- Fellows mobilised people during the Global Week of Action and articulated their demands to strengthen the primary health care system in the country.
- Issues of discrimination, property rights and sexual and reproductive health rights were highlighted during the Fortnight on Violence Against Women.
- Roma Jana, Fellow from Mumbai was instrumental in conducting the Positive People's Assembly and Dayanand Sharma, Fellow from Delhi coordinated the Positive People's Rally at the India Social Forum (ISF), demanding Universal Access to Treatment for PLHA. We facilitated participation of more than 300 PLHA at the India Social Forum.
- Hamid, Fellow from Pune played a key role in mobilising people during World AIDS Day by doing local advocacy on livelihood issues of PLHA. Across the country, mobilisation and articulation of demands for Fellows is what this Day is all about.
- In Uttar Pradesh, Ram Pravesh, brought PLHA together and formed the Azamgarh Network of Positive People. This network provides counselling and guidance for treatment and testing and creates awareness to destigmatise HIV&AIDS.



- In Karnataka, Fellows Renuka and Girija have formed networks of positive people in the districts of Shimoga and Davangere respectively. Through the networks, they conduct local level advocacy programmes and campaigns on access to treatment, legal rights and stigma and discrimination.
- In Orissa, Namita, the Fellow was instrumental in forming the Orissa AIDS Solidarity Forum.
- Fellowship enabled Ravitha in Haryana to strengthen the Haryana Network of Positive People.
- In Baroda, Ankur Patil, creates awareness among the Men having Sex with Men (MSM) community on their vulnerabilities to HIV&AIDS and fights for the rights of MSMs.
- The issues of transgenders are the focus of Fellows based in Chennai, namely Elizabeth and Anandraj.
- Through the year, the Fellows have bonded with each other without barriers of regional differences and languages. The Fellows are lobbying with National AIDS Control Programme (NACO) and government structures to change the care and treatment scenario of PLHA across India and to convert the Global Week of Action into a Global Week of Protest in 2007.
- Each of the Fellows are in touch with a large number of PLHA and through Fellowship, AA-I reaches out to more than 10,000 PLHA promoting Positive Living.

#### ■ PLHA Voicing Concerns with Parliamentarians

##### Reflections!

*"I thank ActionAid for giving this opportunity for a face to face meeting of Parliamentarians and PLHA. We are committed to the issue and will strive to ensure dignity for all PLHA."*

– Shri Oscar Fernandes, Minister of State for Labour and Convener,  
the Parliamentary Forum on HIV&AIDS

*"We are touched by the first hand account of the problems that PLHA go through on a regular basis. We will actively work to address issues of PLHA as well as sensitise (our) peers. Given the gravity of the issue, it will be taken forward irrespective of party lines and it is high time that the stigma and discrimination around HIV is wiped out."*

– Mr J D Seelam, Member of Parliament, and Co-coordinator, Parliamentary Forum on HIV&AIDS



AIDS Activists demand political commitment at a Rally

An interface between Parliamentarians, PLHA and AIDS activists was held in Delhi on 23 May 2006 as part of the Global Week of Action. Eleven members of Parliament, including Mr Oscar Fernandes, Mr J D Sheelam, Mr Madhusudhan Mistry and Dr Senthil met 15 PLHA and AIDS activists.

The key issues brought to their attention were: non-accessibility of Anti Retroviral Therapy, Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission and the need to strengthen the Primary Health Care system as a



prerequisite for HIV prevention and care. Renowned social activist Kamla Bhasin moderated the interactive session and credited it to be *'one of the most exceptional programmes in my 35 years of activism'*.

## ■ 'Advocating' with Dr Ambumoni Ramdoss, Minister for Health and Family Welfare

### Questions posed to the Health Minister

*"Can we get medicines at Primary Health Centres rather than having to travel long distances to the few existing ARV centres?"*

– Renuka, Shimoga

*"Why is the government not having any policies and programmes for children? Many children are dying due to lack of nutrition, psycho-social care and medicines?"*

– Muneeshwari, Andhra Pradesh

- Advocating events connected PLHA in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh to the International AIDS Conference in Toronto (August) and the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV&AIDS (May) in New York. The concept of advocating, developed and pioneered by ActionAid, brought together people from different countries, living miles apart, via the web-based link, Skype. Through advocating, the concerns and demands of PLHA across the globe were presented to decision makers/leaders via a video link, urging them to meet their commitment towards HIV&AIDS.
- During the advocating at the International AIDS Conference, PLHA came face to face with Dr Anbumani Ramadoss, the Indian Minister for Health and Family Welfare. The AIDS activists quizzed him about the goal of Universal Access to Treatment by 2010, a promise made by world leaders at the G-8 Summit in 2005. It was disappointing to hear Mr Ramadoss say that the focus of the Indian Government was on prevention and that 75% of the country's resources for HIV&AIDS will be used for this. Consequently, the advocasters urged the Minister to look at issues of care and support of PLHA, especially access to treatment at Primary Health Centres.

## Women and Girls: Redefining Change

### ■ MILANA - Women at the Centre of Change

### Reflections!

*"We, the women members at MILANA today know and grasp our potentialities, accept responsibility for our life and live it the way we decide. We are in the process of change: from being a passive recipient to becoming an active participant in one's own life."*

– Puspalatha, Member, MILANA

*"Today we stand here knowing for sure that not many young women and men have the courage to do what we are doing. We made a conscious effort to be a leader in showing that an HIV diagnosis is not the end of life. Many in a similar situation would not even go out to learn and update themselves with information about this virus that is affecting us so much. Not many can stand the risk of being discriminated against. Many are still dying in fear and stigma. Our role as peer counsellors at MILANA is to help them make the transition from a victim to victor."*

– Collective thoughts and voices of Peer Counsellors in MILANA



MILANA peer counsellors shedding inhibitions and dancing at the positive people's meet during the Global Week of Action

Women in MILANA were at the forefront of the protest against the drug, Emtri, which caused severe side effects. The drug was introduced to the free Government ARV Roll out programme, replacing the medicine manufactured by Cipla. With the change in companies, many PLHA experienced severe side effects. They brought this to the notice of the National AIDS Control Programme, the Karnataka State AIDS Control Society as well as AIDS-e-Forum on HIV&AIDS, causing other groups of PLHA from across India to respond with their experiences of side effects. Senior officials from Emcure, the pharmaceutical company manufacturing the medicine came to MILANA to defend the quality of their products. The women at MILANA stood by their concerns and demanded

that the drug be withdrawn. Emtri has since been withdrawn from the free Government ARV roll out programme.

### ■ **Abhaya – Living Fearlessly and Creating an Enabling Environment for Women Living with HIV&AIDS**

#### Reflections!

*“My family abandoned me when they came to know my status. If I had known about HIV&AIDS earlier, I would have used condoms and protected myself. My health started deteriorating and at one stage I couldn't get up from the bed. The staff at Abhaya then took me to ACCEPT, a care and support centre in Bangalore. They took care of me and I regained my health. At Abhaya I received counselling, nutritional advice and nutrition, treatment literacy and love and care. I had lost all hopes but now I wake up everyday with dreams. I want to live life to the fullest from my earnings as a fruit vendor; I want to get my daughter married. I am happy to see the large numbers of women who are being helped by Abhaya.”*

– Manjamma, woman living with HIV, Shimoga

Abhaya-ActionAid Karnataka Projects is helping over 500 PLHA and their families to regain lost confidence and move ahead in life through their networks – Abhaya Dhama and Abhaya Bhimba in Shimoga and Davangere districts, respectively.





## ■ WINS – Creating Women Leaders

Reflections!

“My family disowned and abused me and my children after I revealed to them that my husband died of HIV. I lost all my dignity and self confidence. At WINS I felt wanted, I felt like one among them and it gave me great confidence.”

– Sujatha

Women living with HIV&AIDS are being trained by Women’s Initiatives (WINS) in Andhra Pradesh. Twenty-nine women have been trained in 2006 to work as community volunteers and peer leaders who have established links with local NGOs, health care providers, DOT centres, banks, anganwadis, and academicians. They initiated the Parallel Network of Positive People in Chittoor district which reaches out to more than 1,500 PLHA and 1,000 sex workers. Women from the Parallel Network played key roles in advocasting and also during the Positive People’s Assembly at the India Social Forum.

## ■ Fortnight on Violence Against Women: 16 Days of Activism

Reflections!

*“After my father’s death, my mother could not send me to school and made me work with a lady who runs a local wine shop. It was this lady who introduced me to selling sex and I was initially happy because I was earning good money. As I was not educated, I did not have any knowledge about safe sex. I became pregnant and my mother sent me to stay with some relatives till the birth of my child. At the Government hospital, I was tested and found HIV positive. I wish I had known how to protect myself.”*

– Lily, 18-year-old mother from Dimapur, Nagaland

- The Fortnight on Violence Against Women, observed between 25 November and 10 December focused on creating awareness on violence against women, HIV&AIDS and the links between the two. The Fortnight was observed across India with all the states highlighting the Domestic Violence (DV) Act 2005 and the Draft Legislation on HIV.
- In Delhi, community youth theatre groups were formed who staged plays on domestic violence, sexual abuse within homes and at workplaces in Delhi, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.
- In Manipur, alliances were built to combat HIV&AIDS in the North-East region with the formation of district working committees and an Advisory Committee comprising bureaucrats, State AIDS Control Society officials, health department officials and members of the judiciary.
- In Orissa, Namita Nanda, an activist of the Orissa AIDS Solidarity Forum and ActionAid Fellow, along with the Deputy Director of Orissa State AIDS Control Society (OSACS), Dr Annapurna Mishra featured in the live telecast programme ‘DISHA’ on Orissa TV. The theme of the one-hour programme was ‘Women and HIV&AIDS’. Namita openly stated her HIV positive status and highlighted the major challenges and issues of women living with HIV&AIDS.



Women Bikers at the outset of the Rally

- In Maharashtra, 15 young women bikers rode across Maharashtra, covering the districts of Pune, Ahmednagar, Usmanadbad, Parbani and Solapur. The motorcycle rally culminated in Mumbai on World AIDS Day. The women carried a strong message that violence against women is unacceptable and that women must speak out against it. The women bikers, stopped at colleges and schools, towns and villages, emphasising the message that women must have the confidence and skills to negotiate safe sex and say 'NO' to unwanted sex. In addition to street plays,

songs and discussions, the bikers also gave demonstrations on condom usage and spoke to village leaders on the need for sex education for the youth.

## Comprehensive Care

### ■ Stepping Stones – A Behavior Change Communication Tool on HIV&AIDS

Reflections!

*“Being a public health specialist, I go to villages and give speeches on preventing diseases. After Stepping Stones I think that instead of telling them what my viewpoint is, I should get their feelings and share my experiences and then plan a better comprehensive way of preventing health problems.”*

– Dr Riken Rina, Project Director, Arunachal Pradesh State AIDS Control Society.

*“In my estimation, one of the most valuable recent additions to the quite scanty written materials available in the area of community mobilisation”.*

– Noerine Kaleeba, Community Mobilisation Advisor, UNAIDS



- Stepping Stones (SS) is the longest running life skills programme of its kind and is being used in over 100 countries by more than 2,000 organisations. We created a cadre of over 300 facilitators in 2006 in India who can now take SS to communities.
- AAI facilitated translation of manuals into various languages and today SS manuals are available in Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada.
- A Braille Manual was also produced for the benefit of persons with visual disabilities.
- SS was taken into specific communities including PLHA, Youth, Sex workers, People with Disabilities and Injecting Drug Users. A documentary *Stepping Stones – A Behaviour Change Tool on HIV&AIDS* was produced, highlighting the experiences of SS in India.



■ **Collectivisation: Harnessing the Strengths of Vulnerable Communities**

- **Sex workers support groups** have been formed to collectively address the denial of rights of sex workers and their continuous exclusion from the mainstream society. The support groups collectively address issues that affect them such as unwarranted arrests and violence by rowdies. These initiatives are ongoing programmes undertaken in Karnataka, through Abhaya–AKP, in Nagaland through Akimbo Society and through WINS in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Men who have Sex with Men (MSM)** are collectivised in Davangere and Shimoga to face stigma and discrimination challenges. Drop-in-centres, counselling and STI facilities and promotion of condom use are some of the programmes for them.
- **The South India Positive Network (SIP+)** is a distinctive organisation which motivates transgender to study in open universities, attend evening classes and take courses in catering, computer, dance, tailoring, etc. This emerged from the realisation that the transgender community faces discrimination which greatly reduces their opportunities for livelihood.



Positive people at a protest march

- **Just Trust** working with trafficked women in Tamil Nadu works to reintegrate and empower them to lead positive lives. A recent achievement of the organisation is its intervention with the Government Vigilance Home. It was observed that trafficking victims in vigilance homes rely on their brokers and traffickers to get bail who then push them back into sex work. To prevent this, Just Trust lobbied with the Judicial Academy and for the first time in Tamil Nadu, a District Judge visited the home and assessed the situation. The organisation along with the judiciary is now working towards setting minimum standards to be adopted in short stay homes.

- **HIV&AIDS Related Work Initiated in Tsunami Areas:** It was noted that vulnerabilities of PLHA significantly increase following a disaster with regard to loss of livelihood, access to food and clean water, medical care and support. In light of this knowledge, ActionAid Tsunami response programme, initiated HIV&AIDS related work in January 2006 in two coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh and three districts of Tamil Nadu. The work in the two states focuses on prevention of HIV as well as addressing immediate needs and care and support for PLHA. **'Theatre in Education'** is being widely used to increase awareness on HIV&AIDS and Reproductive and sexual health. The North Tamil Nadu Hub reached out with the reproductive health programme to 728 women and 60 adolescent girls across four districts.



- **Children of Sex Workers:** Mentoring centres for children of sex workers, set up by the project IFPEC in Chennai, provide part-time foster care for 126 children. Laws and policies largely ignore these children who live in the vicious cycle of poverty and sex work. Homes of project members double as mentoring centres in the evenings. Every evening the children meet in their assigned mentoring centres to study, play and share experiences.
- **Injecting Drug Users:** Akimbo Society in Nagaland actively works to reduce vulnerability of injecting drug users and supports positive drug users. The organisation is involved in harm reduction strategies for drug users. ActionAid's work with injecting drug users is mainly concentrated in the north-eastern region of the country, by Eluenthos Christian Society in Nagaland and Manipur Network of Positive People in Manipur. Akimbo Society now hopes to adapt the tool of Stepping Stones for injecting drug users.

## Building strong and strategic partnerships

### Reflections!

*"Nobody gave us this much respect and space till date. Now we have a space to talk about our issues in bigger forums and to take necessary steps to protect our community from HIV infection. Earlier people were laughing at us. Now people listen to us."*

– Sonali, President of transgender community, Orissa

*"Injecting drug users were never invited to sit in large forums. No one tried to understand their vulnerability to HIV infection. But in the OASF meetings, drug users are not looked down upon."*

– Niraj, Orissa



*The strength in togetherness*

In 2006, ActionAid and its partner organisations working on HIV&AIDS allied with several networks and organisations across India. Prevention, access to treatment for PLHA, fighting stigma and discrimination, protection of rights of PLHA are some of the core themes taken up by Alliances.

One of the key achievements in 2006 has been the alliance building with the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, which is the apex church body having a church in every hamlet of the state.

- The Church has been long silent on the issue of HIV&AIDS due to its moralistic stands. However, through continuous efforts, a partnership with the churches in Nagaland has been established in the hope of reaching out to larger number of people. Eleutheros Christian Society, an ActionAid partner drafted an HIV&AIDS policy which was endorsed by the Nagaland Baptist Church Council.



- A training module has been developed for church functionaries on HIV&AIDS. The Nagaland Development Outreach, the apex development agency of the Church Council has given consent to adapt and utilise this module in all the 2,000 villages of the state. The module will also be used in Bible colleges across Nagaland which train future Church leaders.

**SHAN Network, Gujarat:** Nearly 83 organisations, consisting of trade unions, women’s groups, health groups, etc, have collectivised to form a strong alliance called the Sexual Health Action Network (SHAN). The main objective of the network is to develop a common platform to articulate common concerns, share information, enhance skills and align to take a common position for issues on HIV&AIDS responses in Gujarat.

- The network reached out to nearly 45,000 people in 13 districts in Gujarat through the Global Week of Action.

**Hyderabad Hub:** In Hyderabad, the World AIDS Day was marked by a concert, a collaborative venture of Richard Gere Foundation, Satyam, AIDS Alliance, ActionAid, NGOs and the State AIDS Control Society. The major stakeholders working on HIV&AIDS came together to form the Hyderabad Hub, a network of organisations working together to develop strategies to fight HIV&AIDS.

**Citizens Alliance, Uttar Pradesh:** The Citizen’s Alliance in Uttar Pradesh called the HIV&AIDS Citizen’s Forum, includes organisations such as the Family Planning Association of India, the Uttar Pradesh Network of Positive People (UPNP), PANI and the Bharosa Trust.

- The alliance forced UNICEF to withdraw their discriminatory hoardings on HIV. The group was instrumental in conducting the study on impact assessment of IEC material in UP.
- The Uttar Pradesh Network of Positive People is an integral part of the Alliance and since its inception has partnered with ActionAid for the fellowship programme, promoting Stepping Stones, the GWA campaign and the India Social Forum.



*Cine actors, Sanjay Suri and Tara at the launch of Global Week of Action, Bangalore*

**Bangalore HIV&AIDS Forum, Karnataka:** The Bangalore HIV&AIDS Forum, is a consortium of nearly 30 NGOs working on HIV&AIDS.

- The Forum was instrumental in conducting the Global Week of Action activities in Bangalore and taking up issues of facilities and discrimination in the Government hospital, constant changes of the Project Director, KSAPS, the Karnataka Bill on HIV promoting Mandatory Testing, etc.
- A three-day Writers Workshop in partnership with ‘Saarthi’, a media research organisation led to the



publication of 13 stories in the most popular Kannada magazine, *Sudha* which reaches out to 1 lakh households and 8 lakh readers.

- Theatre artists were initially sensitised on HIV&AIDS, and later they wrote a screenplay for a stage performance on HIV. The play, with many PLHA acting in it, was staged as part of World AIDS Day in Bangalore.

**Orissa AIDS Solidarity Forum, Orissa:** The Orissa AIDS Solidarity Forum (OASF) with a membership of 15 organisations across 18 districts of Orissa is an inclusive state-level consortium of individuals, NGOs, CBOs, networks of PLHA and AIDS activists. The Forum believes in having a collective voice and collective actions, binding all the partner organisations and giving a uniform identity.



Members of Orissa AIDS Solidarity Forum presenting the Charter of Demands

- A nine-day massive campaign to spread awareness on HIV&AIDS was conducted during the Jagannath Car Festival in Puri, Orissa with more than 70 volunteers from 10 districts. OASF developed a questionnaire 'Think and Tick' consisting of 30 statements related to HIV&AIDS to spread the message. The group also organised an 'instant' poster competition which was a huge crowd puller at ISF.

- The Forum, recognised by the Orissa State AIDS Control Society is a strong stakeholder in all HIV-related activities taking place in Orissa.

**Sanghabandho:** In West Bengal, the Kolkata Regional office is working closely working towards capacity building of the Bengal Network of People Living with HIV&AIDS (BNP+). Sanghabandho, an alliance of civil society organisations and BNP+ and partner organisations strongly advocated for access to treatment, and rights of People Living with HIV&AIDS. The alliance is also supporting and working with district-based networks in 6 districts.

**TASA:** Tamil Nadu AIDS Solidarity Action is an alliance of NGOs, CBOs and collectives that works towards promoting quality intervention care and support to PLHA with key stakeholders in Pondicherry and TamilNadu.

**Manipur Alliance:** Eight district level networks were formed in Manipur, with a membership base of over 1000 PLHA across the state. Collective vision and mission building exercises were organised involving these networks to collectively arrive at a vision and objectives of the network for the next five years.

- The members of Manipur Network of Positive People are included in the Executive Committee, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Joint Appraisal Committee (JAC), Participatory Assessment team (PAT) and State Coordinating Committee on TB/HIV of Manipur State AIDS Control Society (MSACS). This is a major step towards realising the principles of



Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV&AIDS (GIPA). They were involved in planning of free ARV rollout programme at the state and district levels, thereby building a strong alliance with the local Government. The network is now campaigning for inclusion of network members in the District AIDS Committees.

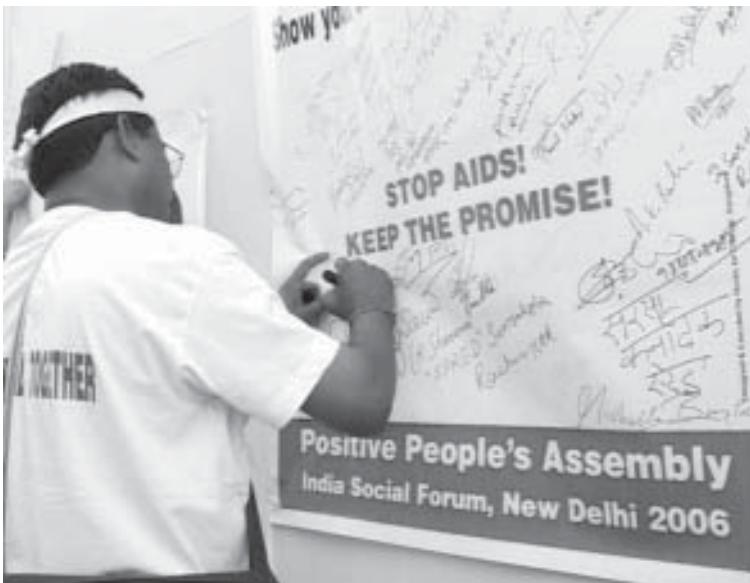
## People Centred Advocacy: Demanding Attention and Action

### ■ Campaign on Access to Treatment

#### Reflections!

*“There are no ART centres in Madhya Pradesh. I have to leave my children with someone else and spend a lot of money to travel long distances to access my medicines in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. I travel 6 hours each way by bus from my home, wait long hours for my turn at the ART centre and return late at night or the next day. Each time I come back, I feel so exhausted and unwell. I can’t afford even the travel cost which is about Rs350 for much longer. Soon, I may just have to give up and pray.”*

– Ramola, 32-year-old mother and widow



*AIDS activist lobbying for Universal Access to Treatment*

Through the Campaign on Universal Access to Treatment, the demands of PLHA were put forth for Accessible, affordable Generic Anti Retrovirals, Care at the Primary Health Centres, Medicines for Opportunistic Infections, and Increase in Health Expenditure.

At the India Social Forum (ISF) 2006, activists organised a ‘Positive Rally’, which was the biggest at the ISF and had more than a thousand activists demanding for access to treatment for PLHA. Supporters of the cause wore white ribbons on their foreheads with the message ‘STOP AIDS. KEEP THE PROMISE’. The rally was joined by cultural teams from across the country. The Delhi Network of Positive People,

(DNP+), a partner of ActionAid which actively lobbies for access to treatment of PLHA, organised and mobilised people for the rally.

### ■ Budget Tracking to Analyse Fund Flow for HIV&AIDS

As part of its global campaign for ‘unblocking resources’ and undertaking advocacy efforts to ensure effective fund management for HIV&AIDS, ActionAid and The Action Research Unit (TARU) conducted a process of examining the feasibility of periodic tracking and analysis of government HIV&AIDS related budgets in three South Indian States (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu).

- The State-level feasibility studies provided information on the total funds committed annually at the State-level; the various sources of funds, and utilisation of funds.
- The analysis shows that all efforts by most agencies were focused on targeted prevention.



- The findings are being used as a tool for advocacy and were presented as a poster presentation at the International AIDS Conference in Toronto. A study on Out of Pocket Expenses and budget analysis in the three South Indian states was initiated in October 2006.

#### ■ **Advocacy against Government Policies**

ActionAid along with Lawyers Collective, People's Health Movement and All India Drug Action Network and the partner organisations actively protested the inclusion of data exclusivity in the Drugs and Cosmetics Act by signature campaigns and sending protest letters to the Prime Minister. Protests against Glaxo Smith Kline and Novartis were also held through rallies.

A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to provide at least two CD4 machines in each of the four hospitals in Manipur which have the Anti-Retroviral Therapy roll out programme was filed by the Manipur Network of Positive People in collaboration with Human Rights Law Network (HRLN), with support from AAI-I.

#### ■ **Strengthening Primary Health System**

A health convention was organised in Shimoga district of Karnataka to strengthen the Primary Health Care System in Shimoga. MGRDSC, an ActionAid partner is working with communities by forming user committees to improve the existing available facilities, services, medicines and ensuring free and affordable treatment to all those who need it.

#### ■ **Creation of Charter of Demands on Access to Treatment**

Across the country, Charter of Demands were generated and submitted to the local health authorities, state and national Governments. A National Charter of Demands of PLHA developed in consultation with numerous PLHA was displayed at ISF and was signed by more than 2,000 people.

In Kolkata, a Charter of Demands was presented to the Special Secretary to the Chief Minister on World AIDS Day. Following this event, on 12 January 2007, for the first time the Chief Minister of West Bengal declared in the West Bengal Bidhan Sabha that the state can no longer be claimed as a low prevalence state as it is estimated to be the home of 2,30,000 PLHA. This was the first official statement by the Chief Minister in West Bengal on the issue of HIV&AIDS. It was seen as a success that the Chief Minister's statement came a little over a month after the Charter of Demands was presented.

#### ■ **Advocacy on the Draft Legislation on HIV&AIDS**

ActionAid supported Lawyers Collective in promoting and creating awareness on the Draft Legislation on HIV&AIDS which is due to be presented at the Winter Session of Parliament. Understanding of ActionAid staff and partners has also been built on the draft Bill.

#### ■ **Public Hearing on HIV&AIDS**

A Public Hearing on HIV&AIDS pressed the local Governments to provide legal support and protection to PLHA in the face of human rights violations during the Global Week of Action. Eight men and women living with HIV testified before the jury and the audience on denial of





property rights, discrimination in health care settings, abandonment from homes and lack of pediatric formulations of ART, based on their own traumatic experiences. The case studies were also presented before the National Human Rights Commission.

### ■ Candle Light Memorials

Candle Light Memorials were held to commemorate all those who have succumbed to AIDS and to show solidarity to those living with HIV&AIDS. At the ISF, nearly four thousand people lit candles and observed silence to show their support to People Living with HIV&AIDS and their dear ones. During the Global Week of Action, candle light memorials were held in ten states across the country on the same day to demand attention to the rights of PLHA.

### ■ FILMS++ – A Film Festival on HIV&AIDS

‘Films ++’, a film festival on HIV&AIDS was held in collaboration with Open space–CCDS in Bangalore (May), Kolkata (December) and Chennai (December). The film festival showcased a number of feature films, documentaries, advertisements, music videos and awareness messages. The ActionAid produced film on HIV&AIDS, *Ek Alag Mausam*, was also screened. The film festival in all three cities generated much public and media interest. Interspersed with the movies were discussions on the issues highlighted in the films and experience-sharing of PLHA, transgender and MSM.

### ■ Positive People’s Assembly – India Social Forum

Positive living and demands for a life of dignity echoed through the Positive People’s Assembly. Over 20 PLHA spoke on the themes of women living with HIV, vulnerable communities, access to services in different states in India, children and HIV, etc. Interspersed with the positive speakers were role plays, songs, dances and music, all giving messages of hope.



*AIDS Activists Demand Accountability during the Positive Rally*



## Our Publications

- The documentary '*Suffering in Silence*', features the experiences of PLHA, particularly women and children in the regions of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Nagaland and highlights issues of Access to Treatment, particularly pediatric formulations and stigma and discrimination.
- '*Candles of Tuensang*', a documentary, focuses on the rise of HIV infections in the city of Tuensang in Nagaland and the causes for this. The documentary highlights issues of women living with HIV in the region.
- The booklet, '*Access to Treatment – A Distant Dream*' illustrates the problems faced by women in accessing treatment and demands accountability from state and civil society.
- '*Courage on Edge*', a booklet, presents the lives of women living with HIV&AIDS in Andhra Pradesh.
- Study on Vulnerability of Women in Resource Poor Communities to HIV&AIDS was developed and field tested with the Violence Against Women partners of the Bangalore Regional Office (SWARAJ network) in six districts of Karnataka. The findings of this study helped in developing strategies and setting priorities in HIV interventions in resource poor communities across India.
- '*Tarangagalu*' (Ripples of Learning) is a tool to enable peer educators to take HIV related issues into the communities. These six Peer Education Modules on HIV&AIDS have been developed by AKP-Abhaya. The modules are on sexual and reproductive health; learning to communicate issues around STI, HIV, testing and counselling; care and support; forming and strengthening people's institutions; rights and advocacy; towards alternative employment and project sustainability.

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