Support to National Efforts in Enabling Social and Legal Environments for Effective HIV Responses

Millennium Development Goal:
Goal 6 – Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Targets:
Halt by 2015 and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

Relevant India Development Goal:
The goal of the National AIDS Control Programme–Phase III (NACP - III) is to halt and reverse the HIV epidemic in India by 2011

Background

HIV-related stigma is one of the most daunting challenges faced by people living with HIV (PLHIV) and their families. Stigma usually stems from an inherent fear of contracting infection. This is a result of misinformation, prevailing myths and misconceptions, which is further compounded by socio-cultural norms and gender disparities. Despite large-scale advocacy and awareness generation activities, adults and children infected and/or affected by HIV continue to be subjected to a gross violation of human rights. The nature of HIV-related stigma is a result of very complex interlinked factors that require an informed strategic approach with firm evidence and practical solutions. These have to be well balanced to uphold human rights and embedded within community systems.

The effectiveness of HIV responses depends not just on the sustained upscale of HIV prevention, treatment and care, but also on whether the legal and social environment support or hinder programmes for those who are most vulnerable. Laws that reinforce HIV-related stigma and prejudice impede both HIV prevention efforts and access to treatment. They do so by making populations at particular risk of infection harder to reach, and by sustaining the social and economic exclusion of PLHIVs.

Objectives

- Generate evidence on HIV-related stigma, develop strategies and approaches to reduce it in multiple settings
- Generate evidence on laws and policies that impede effective HIV and AIDS response
- Undertake policy advocacy to influence, change/propose model legal frameworks
- Support the national programme and grassroots advocacy for stigma reduction interventions

Project Information

Area: HIV and Development

Budget: US$799,446

Duration: 2011

Implementing Partner(s): NACO

Other Partner(s):
Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)
International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW)
Population Council
Positive Women’s Network (PWN+)

Location(s):
National-level, multiple states
Results so far

- Strong evidence base built to enable better understanding of HIV-related stigma. Some examples include:
  - One-of-a-kind national study that examines stigma across 80 urban centres and 18 states with over 11,000 people including the general population, health service providers, key population and PLHIVs. The study is in the final stages of analysis and reporting.
  - Comprehensive compendium of knowledge, information and experiences of HIV-related stigma, in partnership with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, that has provided technical inputs to the development of programmatic framework for stigma reduction in the National AIDS Control Programme (Phase-IV).
  - Documentation of stigma initiatives and NACO-UNDP supported prototypes has helped demonstrate both strengths and weaknesses in the area of interventions to reduce HIV-related stigma. This report discusses lessons learnt and the potential of application of the approaches in upscaling interventions across multiple domains to reduce HIV-related stigma.

- Enabled stronger understanding of international agreements and policies that influence access to treatment and health through policy advocacy with the government on TRIPS flexibilities. A national consultation that brought together representatives of government, civil society, trade associations and a coalition of industries was organized in Delhi with more than 50 participants. In 2011, UNDP initiated analysis and strategy development on use of health-related TRIPS agreement flexibilities, and the impact of intellectual property rights enforcement on access to essential medicines.

- Strengthened community networks of PLHIV by providing support to leadership and governance initiatives.

Looking to the Future

- Key information, framework and operational guidelines available to feed into the next National AIDS Control Programme (Phase-IV) on issues of HIV-related stigma and its reduction.
- Support PLHIV communities in capacity and leadership development and engagement with the National Programme in areas of policy advocacy, planning, implementation and monitoring.
- Provide advocacy platforms to multiple stakeholders to address issues of laws that impede effective HIV responses and access to treatment.

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