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## Section –7

### Programmes and Schemes

# **Schemes for prevention of HIV/AIDS amongst alcohol and drug dependents – role of National Aids Control Organisation (NACO)**

The nexus between substance abuse and spread of HIV/AIDS is now well established. Substance abuse with its mood altering impact leads to deviant behaviour and lifestyles with greater possibilities of relations with multiple sex partners. Substance abuse leads to loss of self-control and unsafe sex. Injecting drug use through needle and sharing of injection paraphernalia leads to spread of HIV/AIDS. With target groups and convergence in high-risk geographical areas, interventions for prevention and management of HIV amongst substance abusing population and rehabilitation of the affected is a matter of great concern.

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## NATIONAL AIDS CONTROL ORGANISATION (NACO)

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National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) is the nodal organization for formulation of policy and implementation of programmes for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in India. In a scenario with no vaccine or drug for cure in sight, information, awareness and education are the best ways to prevent the disease from spreading. **Some of the important programmes of NACO are:**

### ♣ **BLOOD SAFETY PROGRAMME**

The major objective of the Blood Safety Programme is to ensure the easily accessible, adequate supplies of safe and quality blood and blood components for all irrespective of economic or social status. This objective translates into the following responses:

- ***To ensure organized blood-banking services at the State/district level,***
- ***To educate and motivate people about blood donation voluntarily; and***
- ***To enforce quality control of blood***

In order to achieve the goal a strategic plan was prepared on the basis of the National Policy framework on blood transfusion services recommended by the Central Council of Health and Family Welfare. The strategic plan under NACO lays down the following strategies.

- ***Strengthening the National Blood Transfusion Services.***
- ***Ensuring an adequate supply of blood to all blood centers.***
- ***Ensuring safety of blood products.***
- ***Developing facilities for the production of components.***
- ***Developing and strengthening facilities for plasma fractionation.***
- ***Strengthening quality control of blood and blood products.***
- ***Undertaking research on blood transfusion services operations to improve safety, efficacy and supply.***
- ***Developing and strengthening of effective management, monitoring and evaluation of blood transfusion.***

### ♣ **CONDOM PROGRAMMING**

Among the probable source of HIV transmission in our country, heterosexual promiscuity constitutes the major route. The most successful and practical way to prevent the transmission is the use of condoms according to experience from all over the world and in India. While the use of condom is easy, making a programme to cover the whole country needed careful planning on certain issues. These issues are mainly related to the question that how to:

- ***Sensitize people for using condoms not only for the sake of family planning but also as the best preventive step against HIV and STD.***

- ***Convince the clients and the commercial sex workers, about the importance of use of condoms as a means for preventing the HIV transmission.***
- ***Make available low cost and good quality condoms to the people all over the country easily at the time and place when they need it.***

Considering the above issues National AIDS Control Organisation has prepared a comprehensive Condom Programme by outlining clear strategies in the National AIDS Prevention and Control policy. The objective of the condom programme is to ensure easy access to good quality, affordable and acceptable condoms to promote the safe sex encounters. The following strategies have been laid down under Condom Programme:

- ◆ ***Making provision for technical assistance to companies to manufacture condoms in conformity with the International specifications laid down by the WHO and to improve the quality assurance system;***
- ◆ ***Strengthening the existing social marketing structure in the Department of Family Welfare with a view to fulfilling the needs and requirements of the AIDS control programme;***
- ◆ ***Introducing an exclusive social marketing scheme of condom promotion by NACO;***
- ◆ ***Strengthening the management ability of PVO/NGOs that promote and make available condoms for STD/HIV prevention, and effectively plan, coordinate, monitor and evaluate their activities;***
- ◆ ***Collaborating with the existing IEC programme of the Department of Family Welfare for promoting the use of condoms for achieving the dual purpose of averting conception as well as protecting from STD/HIV infections;***
- ◆ ***Strengthening programme management and monitoring systems;***
- ◆ ***Supporting and strengthening the ICMR and Population Research Centres for undertaking research studies on all matters related to the use of condoms and increasing its use particularly among high-risk groups.***

## ♣ **INFORMATION, EDUCATION, COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MOBILIZATION**

Communication continues to be one of the most important strategies in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In the absence of a vaccine or a cure, prevention is the most effective strategy for the control of HIV/AIDS. In India, the majority of the population is still uninfected. It, therefore, becomes imperative to continue intensive communication efforts that will not only raise awareness levels but also bring out behaviour change. NACO is giving the highest priority to an effective and sustained strategy to bring about changes in behaviour to prevent further infection.

The objectives of the IEC strategy in the National AIDS Control Programme are:

- ***To create a supportive environment for the care and rehabilitation of persons with HIV/AIDS***
- ***To raise awareness, improve knowledge and understanding among the general population about AIDS infection and STD, routes of transmission and method of prevention.***

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- o ***To promote desirable practices such as avoiding multi partner sex, condom use, sterilization of needles/syringes and voluntary donation of blood.***
  - o ***To mobilize all sectors of society to integrate messages and programmes on AIDS into their existing activities.***
  - o ***To train health workers in AIDS communication and coping strategies for strengthening technical and managerial capabilities.***

The IEC strategic plan for AIDS prevention and control programme in India includes, a variety of communication strategies for raising awareness, behavioural change and social mobilization. The IEC strategic plan has the following components:

- ***Use of Mass Media***
- ***Advocacy at various levels***
- ***Inter-Sectoral collaboration***
- ***Training***
- ***Involvement of NGOs***

## ♣ **TARGETED INTERVENTIONS**

The basic purpose of the Targeted Intervention programme is to reduce the rate of transmission among the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. One of the ways of controlling the disease from further spread is to carry out direct intervention programme among these groups through multi-pronged strategies, beginning from behaviour change communications, counselling, providing health care support, treatment for STDs and creating an enabling environment that will facilitate behaviour change. Targeted intervention is, therefore, one of the most important components of the National AIDS Control Programme. It envisages a comprehensive and integrated approach to marginalized and vulnerable populations such as sex workers, intravenous drug users, men having sex with men, truckers, migrant labour and street children. The basic purpose of the Targeted Intervention programme is to reduce the rate of transmission among the high-risk behaviour practising population.

In order to plan for implementation of this programme, NACO evolved the following strategy.

- ***Decentralization of implementation to the State AIDS Control Society.***
- ***Transparent and streamlined procedures for selection of NGOs.***
- ***Capacity building of SACS and NGOs for implementing and monitoring TI Projects.***

The **State AIDS Control Societies (SACS)** are fully empowered to provide funding support to the NGOs for Targeted Interventions. Every State AIDS Society has appointed an NGO Advisor, who is a professional in the field of social work, to manage and guide the Targeted Intervention Programme. Detailed guidelines have been formulated by NACO for the short-listing of NGOs and for their training and orientation in Targeted Interventions.

In order to ensure cost effective and comprehensive Targeted Interventions, NACO has formulated a costing pattern for each of the Targeted Interventions in the identified marginalized group. This costing pattern will provide

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a guiding framework to the States in sanctioning projects. The Targeted Interventions are being monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure that the maximum impact is created at the grassroot level.

## ♣ **NGO'S ACTIVITIES**

The National AIDS Control Programme has undertaken various schemes to address specific areas for the prevention of HIV/AIDS in the country in which NGOs are being involved. NGO guidelines have been formulated to provide for an open and transparent system of selection of NGOs. The Funding of NGOs (except for setting up of Community Care Centres in the low prevalent states) has been completely decentralized to the State AIDS Control Societies. These schemes are:

- ***Targeted Interventions***
- ***School AIDS Education***
- ***Community Care & Support***
- ***National AIDS Helpline and Telecounselling***
  
- **Targeted Interventions**  
Already described in the previous section.
  
- **School AIDS Education**

The School AIDS Education scheme is being taken up in classes IX and XI. The teachers and students organize a number of extracurricular activities in schools, which aim at raising awareness among the students. The issue of HIV/AIDS is dealt as a part of the larger issue of family life education. The national scheme has therefore been developed which aims at integrating HIV/AIDS education in the life skills education programmes in the schools in sustainable and cost effective manner. HIV/AIDS education has also been introduced in the curriculum of secondary schools. The Scheme advocates a co-curricular approach.

This scheme is being implemented through trained NGOs. The salient features of the plan are:

- ***Advocacy for HIV/AIDS Education among community leaders, media professionals, religious leaders, policy makers, government officials, parents, principals, teachers etc.***
- ***Training of teachers for successful integration of HIV/AIDS education in schools.***
- ***Training of peer educators, students who have leadership qualities and communication skills.***
- ***To create an environment where free and frank discussions between teachers, peer educators and students can take place.***
  
- **National AIDS Helpline and Tele-counselling.**

The National AIDS Control Programme has set up telephonic counselling centres. The demands of counselling centre makes it essential that trained NGO should be in charge of running the center, with active support of the State AIDS Control Society. Telephone counselling services are useful as they maintain the confidentiality of caller

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and help the caller to open up and express his/her doubts freely. The tele-counselling services is being provided in two ways:

- ***Setting up a tele-counselling and drop in centre.***
- ***Installation of computerized voice response system linked with the telephone hotline (1097).***

## ♣ **VOLUNTARY COUNSELLING AND TESTING**

Voluntary HIV counselling and testing is the process by which an individual undergoes counselling enabling him or her to make an informed choice about being tested for HIV. This decision must be the choice of the individual and he or she must be assured that the process will be confidential. However, in concurrence with the Supreme Court decision, Partner notification is necessary and this makes it imperative for the attending physician to disclose the HIV status to the spouse or sexual partner of the person. In spite of this, attempts must be made to counsel the person for disclosure of HIV status to the spouse or sexual partner.

The potential benefits of VCT are:

- ***Improved Health status through good nutritional advice***
- ***Earlier access to care and treatment***
- ***Prevention of HIV related illness***
- ***Emotional Support***
- ***Better ability to cope with HIV related anxiety***
- ***Awareness of safer options for reproduction and infant feeding***
- ***Motivation to initiate or maintain safer sexual practices***
- ***Motivation for drug related behaviour***
- ***Safer blood donation***

The VCT process consists of the following-

- ***Pre test Counselling***
- ***Post test counselling***
- ***Follow-up counselling***

The contents and approach of each type of counselling may vary and should be adapted to the needs of the clients and may be different for individuals, couples, families, men, women etc. Contents and approaches may also reflect the context of intervention, e.g. counselling associated with specific interventions like MTCT.

## WHOM TO CONTACT

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## LIST OF STATE AIDS CONTROL SOCIETIES

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