



Regional Office for South Asia

IND/J16 - Coordinated HIV/AIDS Response through Capacity Building and Awareness (CHARCA)

Budget: US\$ 571,700 (Phase 2)

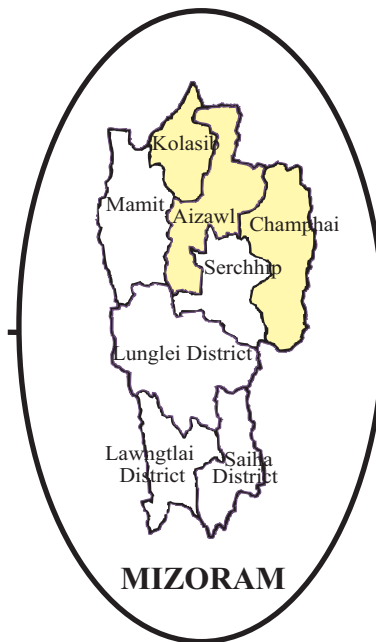
Duration: 1 year (2006-2007)


Funded by: 
UK

Background: Mizoram is one of the states in India which is hardest hit by drug-abuse-driven HIV. Proximity to the Myanmar border, from which heroin is sourced, is the main contributor to the prevalence of DU/IDU. But perhaps the greatest current problem in terms of the spread of HIV and AIDS, is the absence of sufficient awareness among the youth (and especially young women) about the risk they run from contracting HIV through unprotected sexual intercourse and sharing contaminated injecting equipment. Latest surveillance shows 6% HIV prevalence among IDUs and 14% among FSWs.



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



 Districts with CHARCA operations

Raising awareness on HIV among young women: The essence of the problem and the basis for UNODC's outreach approach using Peer Educators (PEs) is as follows. Girls in Mizoram are almost universally unprepared to protect themselves from contracting HIV. While NE India is renowned for its relatively high levels of education, nonetheless, because there is severe social stigma attached to HIV and drug use, there has been hardly any content related to these issues in the school curriculum in recent years. Teenage girls thus know little about their physiognomy, or their reproductive health, or what HIV/AIDS is or how to protect themselves against it.

CHARCA Peer Educator in Champhai district (April 2007)



Master trainer from CHARCA facilitating a Peer Group meeting in Aizawl (2006)

UNODC response: For this reason, UNODC has been implementing the CHARCA project in Mizoram. The main outcome of the project has been to recruit and train (via NGOs) some 300 young women to carry out outreach to peers in the community. In this way messages about the essentials of HIV prevention and drug abuse prevention reach out into the community well beyond the district level to blocks and villages. The net result is a considerably higher level of preventive awareness than existed before. UNODC is thus providing an essential "bridging" role between the onset of HIV (depicted in the statistics above) and the response time of the communities' formal mechanisms such as schools. The PEs operate in three districts: Aizawl (152), Kolasib (50) and Champhai (92). These young women are trained in the following areas: (1) women and drugs (2) women and HIV (3) reproductive health (4) mental health (5) legal literacy (6) micro-credit (7) self help groups. They are given refresher training in each of these areas once every 4-6 months. Each training subject is given over a period of 3-5 days.