

## Media should disseminate proper information about HIV/AIDS



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A State Level Advocacy workshop was organized by Assam State AIDS Control Society (ASACS) in association with Guwahati Press Club on 22nd September 2009 at the press club auditorium, where good number of media persons took part and participated in interaction programmes.

Inaugurating the workshop V.S. Bhaskar, IAS (Commissioner & Secretary to Health & F.W. Department, Government of Assam) appreciated the role of media in making people aware of HIV/AIDS. He further requested the media persons to continue playing the proactive role and disseminating the proper and correct information regarding different aspects of the sensitive issue. Though he admitted that Assam is a low prevalence state, it has more vulnerability, he asserted. "Primarily Assam is the gate way to the Northeast, and more and more people from high prevalence neighboring states come here for various regions," Bhaskar pointed out. He however claimed that because of the government efforts and satisfactory media support, the awareness level is increase among difference section of people in the society. The senior official expected continued media engagement to make more people aware of the issue.

Addressing the gathering Ms M. Hagzer Barman, IAS (Project Director, ASACS) informed the media about the free transportation scheme of Assam Government) for the benefit of the HIV infected people to the Anti Retroviral Therapy (ART) centre. "Under this scheme the government bears the travel expenditure of the HIV infected persons who come to the ART centre for treatment," she also said.

Ms Barman also requested the media to spread the information about the Integrated Counseling & Testing Centre (ICTC) and Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission (PPTCT) centers, which are being empowered to function for the respective causes.

Participating as a resource person, Ms Rakhi Chakravorty (Consultant CSM, ASACS) highlighted about various activities of the society. She revealed that a total number of 3,308 persons have been detected as HIV Positive in Assam, and over 900 people are diagnosed as AIDS patients. She insisted for more people coming to the Voluntary Blood Testing centers and hence expected for media's support. "The HIV Positive persons have the same right to leave a dignified life like others in the society. Hence the society should provide care & support to the infected and affected HIV persons," Ms Chakravorty said.

Talking about voluntary blood donation programme, Dr. N.N. Tishya (Deputy Director, ASACS), said that any healthy person of age 18 to 60 years with more than 45 kg weights or equal to 45 kg weight can donate blood without any problems. He advocated for voluntary donation to make ensure that safe and sufficient blood in need.

Dr. N.N. Sonowal (Assistant Project Director, ASACS) suggested for frequent media awareness programmes and appreciated the Guwahati Press Club for its initiative. Vote of thanks was offered by GPC secretary Nava Thakuria.

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