



PLUS

December 2009 Network of Maharashtra People with HIV

Strike continues; networks help

NMP+ has written to Mr Devkar, Project Director at MSACS, asking for him to use his influence to bring an early end to the dispute which has been causing disruption to services.

Staff at ART and ICTC centres throughout Maharashtra have been on strike since the 1st December. They are seeking better salaries and conditions including permanent contracts (at the moment they are on one year contracts). The strikers are mainly counsellors and lab technicians. Blood tests are not being taken and counselling not given. PPTCT tests have not been taken. Among the districts most affected have been:

Akola. At the start of the strike the ART centre shut down completely. Akola district with NMP+ support appealed to the Civil Surgeon at the local hospital. The ART centre re-opened with district staff and volunteers working in support.

Kolhapur. Stock of medicines were so low that people were only being given 15 days supply. NMP+ helped organise a transfer of stock from the Bharti ART Centre in Sangli. A Treatment outreach worker from Sangli collected the stock and took it to Kolhapur. People there are once again receiving monthly supplies.

Gadchiroli peer convention

Attracted some good press coverage:



AGM poll result

Prashant Yende from Ahmednagar (pictured below) was elected to the vacant position on the NMP+ board at the well-attended AGM on the 17th December. Representatives of all district networks in Maharashtra attended and voted.



Other news from the AGM

The meeting approved the proposed name change. The network's correct title is now:

The Network of Maharashtra People with HIV

The website was launched;

www.nmpplus.net

The biggest discussion of the day was about the length of time the boards should serve. It was decided that boards at state and district level should serve for three years **from the next round** (current boards will serve for two years). Also, that the district Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) should all be the same. There is a model from INP+ which the NMP+ board will discuss at their next meeting, with a view to introducing the new MOU from the next round.

After the meeting, delegates returned to the NMP+ offices for the inauguration of the terrace, which has been painted in preparation for income generation. See pictures on following pages.

World AIDS Day report

Events were held all over Maharashtra on 1st December, World AIDS Day, to inform people about HIV

CHAHA at Pimpri

One hundred people attended a rally at Pimpri on the 2nd December, organised by the CHAHA sub sub recipient branch of CHAHA. After the rally, Dr. Vaishali Lone gave information about Cotrimoxazole which should be given to all children who are affected or infected. It should be given after birth up to age five. It helps prevent children from catching opportunistic infections such as pneumonia and diarrhoea, and ensures normal growth. Cotrimoxazole is available free of cost for all, so district networks need to ensure it is given to all children.

Three CHAHA beneficiaries spoke in public of their experiences. **Below:** the rally



CHAHA at Sangli and Karunya Trust

At another big CHAHA rally, organised by **Sangli Mission Society and the municipal corporation of Miraj**, 17 schools and a few colleges sent young people to hear the messages of hope for the future and the need to respect positive people.

As well as the need for cotrimoxazole for children born to positive mothers, people were reminded of the importance of good nutrition for children, who can benefit from government schemes such as the Integrated Child Development Scheme.

The same themes of use of cotrimoxazole and good nutrition were the subject of a panel discussion by **The Karunya Trust** in Mumbai on 11th December. It was attended by 74 people.

A street play performed in the community publicized the stigma suffered by positive people and the violation of the rights of positive children.

Hingoli president Alka Ranvir was featured as a case study in a newspaper for World AIDS Day.



Nagpur rally a big success

For this World AIDS Day Rally **pictured below** the district network cooperated with the Nagpur AIDS Control Society and NGO Sanjeevan Bahuuddeshiya Samaj Seva Sanstha. Pamphlets folders and caps were distributed, and doctors, nurses, social workers and students joined HIV positive people on the march. There were poster, rangoli and candle competitions, awareness programmes, and other events.



Nashik and Community Care Centre Rally

This rally produced a splendid rangoli:



More WAD coverage

Param Prasad Charitable Society branches in Satara and Solapur CHAHA sub sub recipients, both organised rallies in the morning followed by lectures on youth and its issues, and the role young people can play in reducing stigma. In Satara, there was an advocacy meeting on the following day to sensitise corporators and other influential people. Forty-five CHAHA beneficiaries attended to tell of their difficulties. **Below, coverage from Lokmat, 3rd December**



Wardha PLC has a full day

A rally in the morning involving other NGOs, doctors, and college students, started events. There was a stall in a busy public square, where staff from the PLC gave information about HIV and distributed leaflets. There was a separate session for Auto drivers who were given a condom demonstration. In the evening, there was a positive marriage by two local people. The event was attended by NMP+'s Vijay Bhende, who himself married on World AIDS Day in 2008. This year's wedding was of Ravi and Shubhangi from Chandrapur **See below**



Alliance India, NMP+, Plan International and **Sarva Seva Sangh** organised an awareness rally in Pune city and Pimpri Chinchwad on 2nd and 3rd December 2009. Staff and clients went to the ART Centres to felicitate the ART staff of the area. On 3rd December there was an Advocacy and Linkages Group Discussion with concerned Government Authorities.

Shabana Patel

General Secretary of Thane, gave a talk to government staff in an HIV awareness programme organised by MSACS and UNICEF to mark World AIDS Day. Shabana highlighted the issues of 2nd line and the need for Free Bus Passes.

Thane staff also took part in activities in support of Avert Society and Astiva.



- About 170 people, mainly women and children, attended the **Pune PLC rally** on World AIDS Day.
- **SMS Dilasa Sangli**, and **Solapur District Network** also held World AIDS Day rallies.
- **SMS Kolhapur** held a whole week of activities including a rally, presentation of double nutrition to children and caregivers, sensitisation visits to villages, and an awareness programme in schools.

AGM and inauguration of the terrace

The Annual General Meeting of NMP+ took place on the morning of the 17th December. It was followed by a special ceremony to inaugurate the terrace, which is being prepared to be used for income generation projects to benefit people who are HIV positive.

Each district was asked to donate a plant for the terrace. The plants were potted up and have significantly enhanced the NMP+ offices.

The afternoon also gave visitors a chance to see the new decorations sponsored by HLPPT, NACO and USAID. A selection of pictures is included here.



Below: Somnath Jawale from Latur entertains and informs the crowd.



Above, Kunda Mujumle, Treasurer of Pune Network and Peer Counsellor registers her vote.



Below, delegates hear the opening speeches.



Above; Bhandara. **Below,** Sindhudurg



News



Above, NACO consultant Dr Rekha Jain on a recent visit to Solapur District.

- **Shashikant Todmal** who has been responsible for the Migrant Workers project for NMP+ has moved to lead the CHAHA project in Pimpri Chinchwad. He replaces Dipti Ghone who left in November.
- In **Sindhudurg**, local cable operator *Shradha Konkan cable* has been broadcasting information about the district network and recommending their services. They also visited the network to make a film of their work.
- Eight staff members from NMP+ went on an exposure visit in December to **Vanchit Vikas**, an NGO who do excellent work in the red light district of Pune.
- At the **Latur district AGM**, the following board were elected by 50 voters present. President, Sheila Chavan. Vice President Kanta Musle, Secretary Sudharkar Kambale, Vice Secretary Punam Hanchale, Treasurer Maroti Sonkamble, Members Somnath Jawle and Bhagwan Jadhav.
- **Sanju Kale** has joined the NMP+ ACT team as State MIS Officer and **Pritam Bhatale** as State Finance Officer. Sanju previously worked at Parbhani district as a Social Worker as well as Regional social worker for the ACT team.

New UN guidelines for treating HIV

The United Nations has issued new guidelines on how to fight HIV. The main recommendations are:

- an earlier start to treatment for adults and adolescents. Treatment should start when the CD4 count reaches 350, not 200 as was the earlier UN guideline. In India, the 200 threshold is still used.
- HIV-positive mothers and their infants to take antiretroviral drugs while breastfeeding to prevent transmission, starting at 14 weeks of pregnancy.
- countries should phase out Stavudine, or d4T, still widely used in India and other developing countries due to its low cost and widespread availability, because of long-term irreversible side-effects. Zidovudine or Tenofovir are recommended as less toxic and equally effective alternatives.

http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_51902.html

HIV quick test

A new HIV test is reducing the waiting time for results to 4 days from 10. The NAT Test (Nucleic Acid Testing) will detect HIV, and hepatitis B and C. It can detect very low levels of the virus. Not only does it allow early HIV detection, enabling early treatment, it also prevents transfusion of infected blood.

The tests currently cost 800 rs through some private hospitals. In next month's newsletter we will report on which private hospitals are offering it.

Government hospitals are expected to introduce the test free for all blood donors eventually. It is already in use in some other countries for this.

NACO would like to see more widespread use of the test to help fight the infection.

Stars of the month ☆

All staff members, peer counsellors, and volunteers in each district who have worked so hard to keep minimum services going despite the strike of ICTC and ART centre staff. The bad affects of the strike would have been so much greater without their contribution.

Please send contributions or suggestions for the newsletter to Vincent McDonald, Communications Adviser, at vjmcd@hotmail.co.uk, or to NMP+, 401-403 Ganga Prestige Arcade, Nana Peth, Laxmi Road, Pune 411002, e mail: nmpplus@gmail.com, phone: 020 – 26336084/87. Web: www.nmpplus.net