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## Shared Thoughts

The challenge of HIV and AIDS can not be answered effectively by any sector or section of society working in isolation. All the sectors have their comparative advantages and shortcomings. In order to surmount the challenge, all the sectors need to come together and pool their respective strengths and expertise and forge alliances for efficiently working for the prevention and control of the disease in the general population. Mostly such partnerships are formed between public sector which refers to government and for non profit sector which consists of civil society organizations. Public Private Partnerships have proven the most efficient way of controlling the spread of HIV and AIDS in many countries. In Pakistan the concept of PPP is still in its nascent stages and has not yet taken any concrete shape. We need to analyze the different models which have been adopted in different countries and develop one for ourselves which should answer our specific needs of care and support, service delivery, policy reforms and advocacy. It is high time for us to think on these issues and develop consensus on them by initiating dialogues on them.

## Policy Dialogue on Public Private Partnership

A National Policy Dialogue under the theme of "Strengthening Public Private Partnership for HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment and care" was organized by Pakistan National AIDS Consortium on 18th May, 2006 in Islamabad. The objective of the seminar was to understand the new development paradigm of Public Private Partnership and to critically review the PPP envisaged in national response to HIV & AIDS. While delivering the key note address, Dr. A.R Kemal, renowned Economist of Pakistan, discussed the social and economical aspects of the spread of epidemic. Dr. Aldo Landi, Country Coordinator of UNAIDS said that civil society organizations should play a more proactive role and should not hesitate in raising their voice at all policy making forums. Dr. Asma Bokhari, Program Manager, National AIDS Control Program shared various aspects of government and civil society organizations partnerships in HIV and AIDS response. Mr. Michael Dale, Head of Operations Delegation of European Commission, while addressing the gathering, warned that Pakistan had very little time left to



Michael Dale while addressing the gathering



President PNAC Raja Khalid Mehmood, Madelin Wright SC UK, Dr. Aldo Landi UNAIDS and Dr. Abdul Hameed Rajaput are listening to the participants

respond to the challenge of HIV and AIDS. He emphasized that government should develop strong partnerships with civil society organizations for more effective response

To the threat of HIV and AIDS, Dr. Abdul Majeed Rajput, Director General Health while addressing policy dialogue said that government is determined to build strong partnership with civil society organizations to combat HIV and AIDS in Pakistan. President Pakistan National AIDS Consortium, Raja Khalid Mehmood, while addressing the dialogue, said that PNAC has initiated the dialogue process at national level in consultation with the government. Effect of this policy dialogue will definitely trickle down to provincial level. Many case studies were also discussed in the dialogue to get a better understanding of different models prevalent in our country.

## RBA Workshop for Technical Assistance

In the context of HIV and AIDS epidemic, promotion and protection of human rights in general and health rights in particular require utmost attention. Violation of human rights not only increases the vulnerability to HIV/AIDS but also worsens the impact of the epidemic. In order to promote right based approach in the context of HIV/AIDS, PNAC organized a workshop on Right Based Approach as the first step in Islamabad from 2nd May to 6th May 2006. The technical assistance for the workshop was provided by Aahung. The workshop was facilitated by Dr. Sikander Sohani and Ms. Fatima Haider with support of Ms. Arshen Premji. Staff members of PNAC's partner consortia and project implementing staff attended the workshop. The participants were introduced to the concept of basic human rights and the social, cultural, economic and political challenges in operationalizing RBA in HIV and AIDS related interventions. Through case studies the participants were introduced to different strategies of operationalizing RBA in specific interventions. The chief guest of the final session of the workshop was Michael Dule, Head of Operations Delegation of the European Commission. He lauded the efforts of PNAC in promotion of rights based approach and impressed upon the audience the need of acting quickly if Pakistan wanted to stop the epidemic from reaching the generalized epidemic level.

## Candle Light Memorial



Walk organized by NAC for Candle Light memorial



Candle Light Memorial organized by PAC

Every year on 21<sup>st</sup> May, Candle Light Memorial is organized to remember those who have lost their lives to HIV and AIDS related diseases. Candles lit on the occasion not only rekindles the memories of the departed souls but also remind the world of the need of responding to the epidemic more effectively. Four partner consortia of PNAC observed the Candle Light Memorial this year and used the occasion for raising awareness about the issue. Different activities were organized by Punjab AIDS Consortium in Lahore, PNAC Sindh Office in Karachi, AIDS consortium in Peshawar, and Balochistan AIDS Network in Quetta in collaboration with partner organizations. These included walks, discussions, and musical shows besides lighting candles and showing solidarity with people living with HIV and AIDS. These events were attended by large number of partner organizations, movement officials and representatives of print and electronic media. During the speeches the speakers emphasized the need for scaling up of care and support services in Pakistan. These events reiterated the commitment of PNAC to main stream HIV and AIDS in all developmental initiatives and to raise the voice of vulnerable and marginalized population at all policy making forums.



Walk organized by PNAC Sindh Office and partner organizations.

Adil Sheraz Provincial Manager BAN along with other participants during Candle Light memorial

## Spring Blossom Festival in Northern Areas

The Spring Blossom Festival 2006 was jointly organized by Tourism Department and Planning & Development Department of Northern Areas from April 25-29, 2006 to create coordination among government departments and NGO's & CBOs and to promote the culture of Northern Areas and provide entertainment opportunities for people of Northern Areas. NAACC participated in the festival to disseminate basic information about HIV/AIDS to the visitors and general population and to introduce NAACC and especially its interventions to large population. NAACC was awarded a stall by organizers of the Spring Blossom Festival 2006. This was a formal way of sharing information with the people in order to assess their responses about HIV/AIDS and its mode of transmission and ways of its prevention and control. Mrs. Fozia Quzi, Secretary Planning and Development Department Northern Areas chaired the opening ceremony. She visited the stall and appreciated the efforts of NAACC in spreading awareness about HIV and AIDS. The stall was visited by a lot of people who took keen interest in getting HIV and AIDS information.

## Workshop on Gender and HIV and AIDS



The closing ceremony of workshop

Gender today is an important issue related to HIV and AIDS. The gender discriminations prevalent in patriarchal societies make women highly vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. Punjab AIDS Consortium organized an eight day training on Gender and HIV/AIDS in Murree. The workshop was attended by 23 participants from different partner organizations. Dr. Rehana from Shirkat Gah facilitated the workshop. She was assisted by Mr. Pervez Mohabat. Different aspects of gender issues were discussed in detail. The closing ceremony was chaired by Raja Khalid Mehmood, President PNAC. He appreciated the efforts of PAC for capacity building of the participants and emphasized that if we want to control the spread of HIV and AIDS in our society, we will have to address the gender issues very urgently. If women are not given their rights, their vulnerability will keep on increasing and the risk of spread of HIV and AIDS in general population will increase manifold.

## Annual General Body Meeting and Elections of Punjab AIDS Consortium

The annual general body meeting of PAC was held on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2006 in Islamabad. The meeting started with elections of PAC Executive Body. Elections were conducted by an independent and impartial election commission, which was headed by Muhammad Ali Katal. The elections commission ensured that elections were held in a transparent and fair manner. Elections were held on 10 seats of executive body. Mr. Ishtiaq Ahmed General Secretary NAACC was present as independent observer to ensure transparency. Raja Khalid Mehmood was elected as the chairman of PAC. All the office bearers took oath in the general body meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> May. After taking oath all the elected members assured that PAC will continue to work for the noble cause of prevention and control of HIV and AIDS. The new constitution of PAC was also approved by General body during the meeting.



The elected members of PAC executive body are taking oath

The chairman Raja Khalid Mehmood emphasized that civil society organizations needed to work together and to enhanced mutual collaboration if they wanted to achieve their collective goal of control of HIV and AIDS. He thanked the members of general body for the confidence which they had shown in him and assured that he would keep on serving PAC to the best of his ability.

## Training Workshop for Peer Educators in Gilgit

Two days workshop on HIV and AIDS and STIs Prevention was conducted for peer educators of Out of School Youth Project in Gilgit. The workshop was organized by SSDC and Al-Khair Welfare Society on 25th and 26th April 2006. The objective of the workshop was to build the capacity of 20 peer educators to enable them to work in their surroundings and to train their fellow youngsters. The workshop was facilitated by Shakeel Ahmed, Zeeshan Ejaz, Ishtiaq Ahmed and Dr. Ejaz Tahseen. The closing ceremony was attended by Nayat Karim, Project Director Family Health Hospital. He appreciated the efforts of NAACC and PNAC in capacity building of partner organizations. He said that implementing organizations are working on real humanitarian issue. He assured the organizations of all his support for the success of the project. Peer education plays very important role in all HIV interventions specially those which are targeting youth. They need to have skills and training of Behavioral Change Communication to influence their peers for adopting safe behaviors.

## Training Workshop on Project Cycle Management

A training workshop on Project Cycle Management was organized by PNAC Sindh office for SNNHA partner NGOs. Project Cycle Management is an important component of capacity building of partner NGOs and helps the partner organizations in effective implementation of their projects. The five day workshop was attended by 20 participants from partner organizations and was facilitated by Shadman Aziz, Program Officer, Punjab AIDS Consortium. Chief guest of the final session was Dr. Salman from Provincial AIDS Control Program. He praised the efforts of PNAC for supporting the civil society organization in their struggle against HIV and AIDS. He said that PNAC has been playing a very important role in national response against HIV and AIDS. The participants thanked PNAC for organizing training for partner organizations. They said that PNAC has been playing a very important role in capacity building of civil society organizations. The workshop was coordinated by Dr. Ifikhar Somorou, Program Officer, Sindh Office.



Certificates being distributed among the participants of the workshop

## Some Facts

### Factors which contribute to HIV/AIDS-related stigma:

- HIV/AIDS is a life-threatening disease
- People are scared of contracting HIV
- The disease is associated with behaviors (such as sex between men and injecting drug-use) that are already stigmatized in many societies
- People living with HIV/AIDS are often thought of as being responsible for becoming infected
- Religious or moral beliefs lead some people to believe that having HIV/AIDS is the result of moral fault (such as promiscuity or 'deviant sex') that deserves to be punished.

AIDS killed an estimated 3.1 million people in 2005. If everyone had access to ARV therapy then the death toll would be much lower.

Treatment for HIV/AIDS has been shown to be effective and feasible in even the poorest parts of the world. Political momentum is building and governments are beginning to show their willingness to help alleviate the suffering. Definite targets have been set which are both ambitious and entirely attainable.

Unfortunately, progress so far has been disappointingly slow, and the current rate of treatment scale-up is not nearly sufficient to achieve the "all by 2010" target. The world's leaders must now demonstrate real commitment, if they are to have any chance of keeping their promises. Millions of lives are at stake.

There are many challenges to be overcome on the road towards universal access, including a shortage of resources, infrastructure and skilled staff, but none of these problems is insolvable. We have to join hands to combat HIV/AIDS.

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