

QUETTA NEWS

Role of media vital for prevention of AIDS

By Saeed Chohan

QUETTA: HIV/AIDS is a serious issue and as such collective efforts on part of the civil society are needed to combat this epidemic before it spreads and takes heavy toll of the human life in the country.

The deadly virus should be controlled at the low epidemic stage when it is below five percent in vulnerable groups, to prevent a generalized epidemic.

Media has a very effective role to play in preventing the deadly disease by creating much needed awareness among the masses.

One should hate the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) disease, not the carriers, as they are the victims and are human beings.

Responsible reporting on part of the media is required to report the cases of the HIV/AIDS in the print and electronic media with the care that the very focus should be on the prevention, not the persons infected with the disease or their personal life. Irresponsible behaviour of the society could not contribute in the cause, rather they could create more problems for those living with the deadly virus.

This and similar views were expressed by the speakers and participants at an interactive Media Seminar on Combating the challenge of HIV and AIDS in Pakistan, organized by the Pakistan National AIDS Consortium and Balochistan AIDS

Network in collaboration with the European Commission (EC).

The objective of the seminar was to discuss the role of media in controlling the epidemic.

The speakers pointed out that the spread of epidemic is a signal of danger for Pakistan. Because all the factors, which caused its spread, are also prevail in Pakistan.

So, they stressed to adopt comprehensive strategies to prevent the spread of epidemic in the country.

They said that there is a need to adopt a multi-sectoral approach to control the HIV/AIDS in Pakistan.

Winding up the debate on the role of media in controlling the disease, the President PNAC Raja Khalid Mehmood stressed that the civil society organizations, media and the government need to work in collaboration for effectively controlling the epidemic in the country.

He said that we should create such a conducive environment for those the HIV/AIDS carriers so that life is not agonizing for them and in this regard media could play a very positive and effective role.

National Manager PNAC Qadeer Baig on the occasion briefed the participants about the situation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the world and then in Pakistan.

He informed that presently some 40.3 million people are living with the HIV/AIDS in the world with 2.3 million under 15 years children.

He also informed that some 4.9 million including 700,000 children (under-15) are newly infected.

Similarly, referring the situation in Pakistan, he said that some 3,200 cases of HIV/AIDS have been reported

in the country with maximum cases (1109) reported in Sindh. While according to an estimate there are an estimated 100,000 people infected with the deadly virus in the country.

In Balochistan, the number of cases reported in the province are 212, he maintained.

Mr. Baig also shared with the participants the factors responsible for its spread and also highlighted the mode of transmission of the virus.

He said that there are three major mode of transmission i.e., unprotected sex, reuse of syringes (IDUs) and unscreened blood transfusion.

He on the occasion also talked about the key risk factors to HIV/AIDS in the country i.e., poverty, illiteracy, gender inequality, mobility and migration, commercial sex industry, low condom usage, inadequate blood transfusion, high number of commercial blood donors and low level of awareness among health workers.

The deputy Programme Manager Balochistan AIDS Control Programme, Dr. Rasool Bakhsh Zehri highlighted the steps being taken for prevention of the HIV/AIDS in the province.

The seminar was also attended by Media Advisor EC Shahzad Badar, Chairman Balochistan AIDS Network Sirbuland Khan Jogezi, senior journalist Professor Irfan Ahmed Baig, and other media persons and representatives of various non governmental organizations working in the AIDS sector.



Balochistan Aids network Sirbuland Jogezi addressing the participants of Aids media workshop organized by Balochistan Aids Network and European Commis-