

Dear All

Media has the potential to influence public opinion and attitudes about HIV&AIDS, including attitudes towards people living with HIV&AIDS. An analysis of media coverage and public opinion over several decades concluded that there is a strong relationship between them. When the media focuses on a particular issue, there is a higher degree of public awareness and support to tackle that issue.

Media too have the capability to bring about transformation in the thinking pattern of the society in respect of PLHIV and thus sowing the seeds of attitudinal changes. The media can be a great facilitator for preventing process while imparting the need for a healthy behavior towards the section of the society and those individuals most vulnerable to HIV&AIDS and those individuals affected by it. Today we are sharing with you an article which highlights the role of media in preventing HIV&AIDS

## **Role of Media**

**An effective media can raise the awareness level and can also bring about sustainable behavior change thereby reducing vulnerability to the virus. Media is capable of performing the following roles in preventing HIV&AIDS:**

- **A Channel for communication and Discussion:** One of the roles of Media is to open the channels for communication and foster discussions about HIV and interpersonal relations. Addressing HIV&AIDS in the entertainment programs can have an enormous impact on the society at risk.
- **A vehicle for Creating a supportive and enabling environment :** Mass media can be instrumental in breaking the silence that envelopes the disease and in creating an encouraging behavior for combating with existing social norms and making positive changes in the society
- **Facilitator for removing Stigma and discrimination attached with the disease:** HIV&AIDS afflicted individuals besides the anatomical discomforts undergo the mental suffering of stigma and discrimination at the hands of the society. A number of media campaigns have focused on the need to overcome prejudice and encourage solidarity with people infected/affected by virus. WHO has various extraordinary stories of HIV people who are not only fighting the virus but are also playing an integral role in prevention of AIDS.
- **A tool for creating a knowledge base for HIV/AIDS related services:** The collaborative efforts of all modes of media in association with NGOs State organizations, service providers have brought to the lime light the availability and source of beneficial services like counseling, testing and condom provisions, treatment and social care. The broadcasters and print media have a specific role to play as their efforts have tremendous recall value. For instance, The Kaiser Family foundation in partnership with media companies have promoted dedicated toll free hotlines and has launched websites for educating the people about the HIV&AIDS.
- **Education through entertainment:** For creating an efficacious awareness about HIV&AIDS, the messages need to be informative, educative as well as entertaining as these are mutually exclusive.
- **The education of HIV&AIDS has to be spread as if we are selling the product.** Thus, a holistic approach for dealing with the emotional, psychological and physical realities is to be adopted.

- **Mainstreaming:** Broadcasters are mainstreaming the HIV issue across a number of programs, ensuring that the message permeates a diverse range of output , not just outlets and public service messages dedicated specifically to the issue. The fact that virus affects all sections of the society is reinforced in such a way that many people who might not pay attention to a traditional AIDS campaign or who do not choose to watch AIDS programming, are exposed to HIV&AIDS messages. A coordinated, multifaceted campaign has greater impact than a single Programme. Documentaries, New Items, concerts, public service announcements, competitions, hotlines, books and websites can be linked together to reinforce awareness, information and messages about HIV related attitude and behavior.
- **Putting HIV&AIDS on the News agenda and encouraging leaders to participate:** In recent years several leading broadcasters from around the world have found innovative ways to report on the epidemic. The more the leaders see about HIV in news the greater the resources they invest in anti-AIDS strategies, which in turn leads to increased media coverage of the issue and helps to sustain public awareness which again has an impact on leaders' priorities.
- **Sharing resources ad pooling material:** Several campaigns were successful as they fully utilized the opportunity of pooling the available resources with others by sharing expertise and material. As a part of the campaign the trust produced weekly, youth focused reality.
- **Capacity Building:** Successful partnerships need not be with other media outlets. Alliances of NGO, Government departments and foundations can bring significant benefit for both the parties. For instance , as a result of the KNOW HIV&AIDS partnership, the Kaiser Family Foundation have offered the broadcasters expertise in terms of pinpointing key messages, giving up to date information and building HIV Knowledge with creative media teams.
- **Media as an institution of oversight, restraint and collaborative efforts:** Media can play a important role in providing accurate and correct news coverage of HIV&AIDS facilitate eliciting and generating public response to state sponsored efforts. Such efforts have the potentials to awaken social and political leaders to review their strategies and take mid course corrections in regard to policy concerning

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