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## PRESS RELEASE



## Affected Communities Run to Show Solidarity on World AIDS Day

*Celebrities, government representatives, activists, students and supporters from all walks of life observed World AIDS Day this year with a run to promote equality, justice and empowerment among marginalized communities that are affected by HIV in India*

**New Delhi:** In observance of World AIDS Day, more than 1,000 people from all over India joined together in a community run to raise awareness about the continued support needed to address HIV among high-risk groups and to celebrate the diversity of affected communities. The All-India Run & Cultural Event was organized by India HIV/AIDS Alliance in New Delhi on Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2012. The programme was co-sponsored by Population Council, Citibank, UNDP, Delhi Front Runners, CFAR and Blind Relief Association.

An estimated 2.4 million people are living with HIV in India. The government, civil society and donors have collaborated to develop a strong response to the epidemic, but shortfalls in resources for AIDS as well as stigma and discrimination continue to hinder HIV prevention efforts and impede access to services. The global theme for World AIDS Day 2012 is "Getting to Zero: Zero New HIV Infections, Zero Discrimination and Zero AIDS-related Deaths." In keeping with this theme, the Delhi event celebrated health, life and creativity through athletics, musical performances, drama and speeches by leaders from affected communities.

James Robertson, Country Director of India HIV/AIDS Alliance, noted, "World AIDS Day is an opportunity for us to unite and renew our commitment to stopping HIV in its tracks. The All-India Run & Cultural Event is raising awareness about the epidemic and the urgent need to maintain our attention on high-risk groups: sex workers, people who use drugs, transgenders, men who have sex with men, and people living with HIV. Today we recommit to this cause and celebrate affected communities living lives in good health and free from stigma and discrimination."

Participants included hundreds of people from affected communities, including transgenders, hijras, men who have sex with men, people who use drugs, sex workers, and people living with HIV. Other motivated stakeholders joined the run, including friends, families, students, the private sector, government representatives, and nongovernmental organizations.

The All-India Run began at 9am from Safdarjang Tomb, Lodi Estate, and ended at the Delhi Blind School, near the Oberoi Hotel. It was followed by a series of cultural performances celebrating life and creativity in the face of epidemic. These included musical performances by music groups that include members of affected communities and a series of skits highlighting issues of at-risk populations, demystifying HIV/AIDS, and celebrating the power of the community action.

The Run was flagged off by Dr. P.M. Nair, Director General, National Disaster Response Force & Civil Defence, Ministry of Home Affairs. In attendance were celebrities, including: Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, the renowned hijra activist and actress; Manvendra Singh Gohil, a member of the royal family of the former princely state of Rajpipla; Kalki Subramaniam, a transgender rights activist, actor, writer and celebrity from Tamilnadu; Luke Samson, a prominent player in India's harm-reduction movement; Shasi Kumar, a well-known activist working for the rights of drug users in Manipur; and Daxa Patel, president of Gujarat State Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS.

Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Nair said, “This solidarity run is an appropriate opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of and encourage all stakeholders—including government, civil society and the private sector—to intensify efforts to ensure a continuum of services for affected communities. Engagement and empowerment of these communities will prove to be not only an effective strategy to address vulnerability to HIV but will also serve to improve the health and wellbeing of all concerned and spread the mission of improved quality of life and dignity for all.”

***About India HIV/AIDS Alliance:***

*India HIV/AIDS Alliance (Alliance India) is a diverse partnership that brings together committed organisations and communities to support a sustained response to HIV in India. Complementing the national programme in India, it works through capacity building, knowledge sharing, technical support and advocacy. Through our network of partners, Alliance India supports the delivery of effective, innovative, community-based HIV programmes to key groups affected by the epidemic.*

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