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PRESS NOTE

Roll back decision to close down the Department of AIDS Control

New Delhi: A shocked community of AIDS experts in the country have severely condemned the decision of the Government of India, to close down the Department of AIDS Control (DAC), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

This decision comes a month after the Health Minister's controversial statements against sex education and condom use.

The proposed merger of the AIDS response with the National Health Mission threatens to dilute the specificity of community based responses and will make invisible marginalized groups within a generic HIV response.

AIDS workers and activists from across the country demand an immediate roll back of this decision, and appeal that any such action by the Government be taken based on broad based consultations in order to ensure that the HIV response of the country does not receive a serious setback.

Such actions by the Government of India will not only push back the progress made on HIV prevention and care, but also tarnish its global image as a leader in this area. India has the third-highest number of people living with HIV in the world.

Noted Lawyer and AIDS expert, Anand Grover says, "There is need for Department of AIDS Control to address issues of drug stock-out and stigma against the community. It should certainly not be dismantled."

Manoj Pardeshi of National Coalition of People Living with HIV in India says, "India has been able to make progress on HIV because of the exclusive programme excellently managed by DAC. If DAC is dismantled at this juncture, the decision will boomerang and HIV can come back severely."

Anandi Yuvaraj, Member of the International Community of Women with HIV says, "India's HIV program is lauded globally because of its shared vision developed with the involvement of people affected by HIV including key affected groups. Communities have a strong voice in holding programs accountable to those in need over the years. A merger of DAC with the NRHM program is a shocking news for communities like us especially when NACP-IV is progressing towards achieving its programmatic goals for both prevention and treatment."

Ashok Row Kavi of Humsafar Trust says, 'This is devastating for the community of men who have sex with men; there will be no space for them under the big umbrella of the Health Ministry.'

Bharti De, President Indian Network of Sex Workers says, "This decision is like bringing back HIV to India."

Abhina Aher, Transgender and HIV/AIDS Activist says, "This news is a huge disappointment. The impact of this merge will create a huge vacuum in HIV response towards marginalized community and bring back HIV vulnerability more strongly."

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, the organisation 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.

For details, please contact: Bini Philips: +91-95-4062-1333 at media@allianceindia.org

For more information, visit:

Website: <http://www.allianceindia.org/>

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