



A Partnership of Strengths: Model Collaboration between Government, NGO and the PLHIV Community for Comprehensive Care & Support

Experience from the Vihaan Programme in India

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Background

In India, there are an estimated 2.12 million people living with HIV (NACO 2015), of whom 1.17 million are registered with ART Centres across the country. These facilities are the primary Government service delivery sites for ART and associated treatment linkages. Complementing the Government HIV programme, the Global Fund-supported Vihaan Care & Support programme, implemented by India HIV/AIDS Alliance and partner organizations, promotes care and support for PLHIV to improve their uptake and efficacy of treatment. As a core component of India's national HIV strategy, Vihaan offers community-based outreach services such as follow-up, counselling, and referrals for PLHIV in order to strengthen treatment adherence, increase retention and improve their overall quality of life.

Methods

Vihaan was initiated on April 1, 2013. A total of 350 Care & Support Centres (CSCs) have been established, of which 80% are implemented by PLHIV networks and the remaining 20% by other civil society organisations. CSCs promote treatment adherence, enhance positive living and create an enabling environment to increase the effectiveness of the HIV response in India. Linked to all 520 ART Centres in India, CSCs foster PLHIV retention in HIV care and strengthen their linkages with other health services and social welfare schemes.

To effectively manage program implementation, a robust coordination mechanism has been established at the national, state and district levels. One element is the National Coordination Committee, which is chaired by the Deputy Director General of Care, Support and Treatment division of NACO. There are also thirty-two State Oversight Committees in the different states, which conduct quarterly meetings and also organize ART-CSC monthly coordination meetings, which form the backbone of the programme. Such coordination forums are crucial for programmatic reviews and strategic decision-making for programme implementation and quality services.

Results

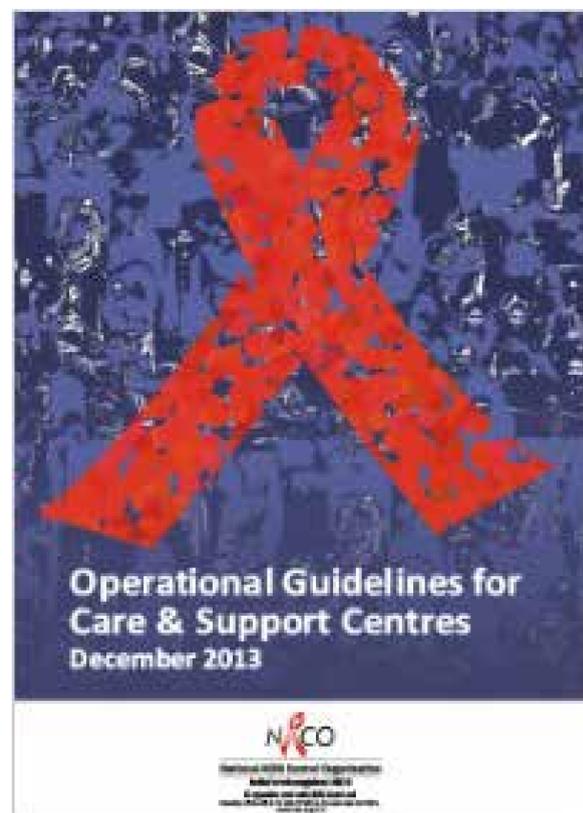
Effective coordination and active involvement of all stakeholders, including the National AIDS Control Organisation, State AIDS Control Societies, state and district PLHIV networks, NGO and Alliance

India, at each stage of the project cycle has enabled Vihaan to achieve the following key results through March 2016:

- Registered and provided effective care and support services to 965,515 PLHIV, representing 81% of the PLHIV registered in the national ART programme.
- 171,622 Lost-to-Follow-Up PLHIV have been tracked and returned to ART services.
- 344,652 PLHIV have been linked with various social protection schemes.

Conclusions

Effective partnership between Government, NGO and the PLHIV community takes commitment from all. It is imperative that such partnerships are actively supported to bridge existing gaps in care, support and treatment services and complement the important work done by each stakeholder to collectively enhance the national HIV response.



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