



MNP Plus, Manipur, observing the World Cancer Day with a two day camp for cervical cancer screening for WLHIV



A stitch in time

Manipur Network of Positive People (MNP Plus), observes the World Cancer Day on 4th February every year by organizing a two-day health-camp for cervical cancer screening. The theme this year was, **“We can, I Can”**, to raise awareness about the disease, promote early screening and save women living with HIV (WLHIV) from this preventable type of cancer. WLHIV have four to five times higher risk of HPV and cervical cancer. Around 100 WLHIV availed Pap smear tests. They were also provided free blood sugar and blood pressure testing. 2 women were diagnosed with cervical dysplasia and 47 were identified with inflammatory smear; they were referred for further treatment. Imphal East and West CSCs are following up these clients closely.

Shri Th. Biswajit, Member of Legislative Assembly and Thongju AC, inaugurated the camp. Dr. Lucy, Deputy Director, Care Support and Treatment Division from Manipur SACS explained the importance of Pap smear testing for all women and particularly for WLHIV. She spoke about the benefits of timely detection and dangers of ignoring warning signs, such as, abnormal vaginal bleeding and cervical pain; women ignore these signs for various reasons, such as, fear, denial or lack of knowledge, but timely detection and treatment is crucial in preventing untimely deaths.

The camp was therefore a step forward in the right direction, raising awareness and access to cervical cancer screening among women who are at a higher risk.

To see is to believe

On 24th February 2017, Christoph Benn, Director of External Relations, Global Fund, along with a US Congressional delegates visited Hope Care and Support Centre, Hyderabad. The purpose of the visit was to learn how the Global Fund investment in India for HIV is making a difference in the lives of PLHIV. Community members shared their stories and expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the visiting team, whose generous support along with the Government of India's initiatives made ART freely available. They shared how ART has transformed their lives, enabling them to live with dignity and respect. For some, their CD4 count ranged from 26 to 200. Today their CD4 count ranges from 600 to 1100, demonstrating how it has effectively improved health due to the treatment, care and support services.

The Project Director of the CSC highlighted the significant role of the Global Fund in Vihaan programme

in strengthening the Indian Government's HIV programme. He further highlighted the important task to track lost to follow up clients and bringing them back to ART and addressing the stigma and discrimination against PLHIV. The outreach workers and peer counsellors shared with great enthusiasm their experience of using eMpower, the tablet based application that has improved the efficiency of identifying clients who need support, prioritize critical cases, successfully bring LFU clients back to ART and supporting family members of PLHIV to get their HIV testing done.

The visiting delegates were overwhelmed with the compelling stories of young women, men and adolescents and their journey of living with HIV. They appreciated the good work being done for PLHIV in India and encouraged to continue the initiative. They thanked the community for sharing how the Global Fund has impacted their lives for the better.

This happens only in Vihaan!

Sham Dev and Katri Devi are husband and wife from a remote village in Jharkhand who migrated to Ahmedabad in search of work in 2016. Sham and Katri started to fall ill and visited the Chandkheda health center. Ms. Neema Dhabi, the counsellor at the Integrated Counselling and Testing Centre counselled them. When they tested seropositive, she helped them register with the ART centre in B. J. Medical College in Ahmedabad. Two weeks later, Ms. Neema found out that they had returned back to Jharkhand and became lost to follow-up cases. She tried to contact them with the help of the labour contractor but was unable to. She forwarded the case details to Dr. Sudhir Chawla, Joint Director, CST, Gujarat State AIDS Control Society for follow-up. The case details were then shared with the Vihaan team in Jharkhand.

The Vihaan team traced them back to Palariya village in Jharkhand. Manoj, the outreach worker from the Palamu CSC, Jharkhand, visited their house but only found Sham's father there. He visited the village again after a few days and met Sham but was unable to convince him to take treatment. Next day, Mr. Ranjan, Project Coordinator, Palamu CSC, along with Manoj visited the village and Sham avoided them by hiding in the field. In the meantime, Katri was pregnant; unable to talk to Sham or Katri, the PC met the village headman and explained the importance of institutional delivery for Katri. The village headman asked Sham to take Katri to the hospital the very next day.

Finally, after several visits and continuous dialogues Sham along with his wife registered in the Daltoganj ART centre; Dr. Sudhir transferred the case immediately. The CSC team also oriented the hospital staff in Daltoganj for Katri's institutional delivery. Unfortunately, Katri delivered at home a week before the scheduled date. The CSC team coordinated with nearest ICTC in Hariharganj, for Nevirapine doses for the new born and counselled her on safe breast feeding practices. When Katri left for her mother's house in Bihar, the CSC team contacted her there to suggest a blood test for the new born. As advised, Katri took her child for the blood test and she too is regular with her ART medications. Sham and Katri's story is a testimony of team effort and partnership between community, organisations and government – this happens only in Vihaan!

(Names have been changed to maintain confidentiality.)

Vihaan Updates

- 11,16,623** PLHIV received care & support services
- 4,75,174** PLHIV and family members linked with social protection schemes
- 1,07,209** Family members and partners of registered clients linked to ICTC
- 2,82,194** Lost-to-Follow-Up PLHIV tracked and returned to ART services
- 8,19,690** PLHIV screened for TB

(Through February 2017)

