

Reaffirming  
Political Commitment and Leadership  
for the prevention, care and support of  
HIV&AIDS in Karnataka

Southern Regional Consultation on  
HIV/AIDS  
and Launch of Karnataka Legislators Forum  
on HIV/AIDS

## Introduction

Across the globe various programmes are being implemented for the prevention, care and support of HIV/AIDS. The international response to the HIV/AIDS crisis revolves around the action of Inter governmental organizations, governments, civil society, and the private sector.

The agenda to eradicate HIV/AIDS is a nationwide one. It is both a commitment and a demand to tackle the growth of HIV/AIDS, if failed that would result in catastrophic harm to the social fabric of the country and further result in huge social and economic costs to the country. Parliamentarians and policy-makers are the most valuable allies to cultivate social mobilization against HIV/AIDS. Stigma and discrimination can be more easily overcome if members of parliament speak out on AIDS issues in parliament and beyond. These Policy-makers can review personnel regulations that may be working against persons living with HIV & AIDS and devise alternative measures that are more supportive.



Political Leadership is particularly needed in an HIV and AIDS context. In the struggle against HIV& AIDS, leaders could use their capacity to influence people in their constituencies in a positive way – to create a national social environment that curbs the spread of the pandemic and cares for people living with HIV. People's representative's personal involvement and actions are as effective as a strong statement about an issue or a cause. When others see commitment and courage in leaders,

they often try to emulate it.

**Political leadership and Advocacy for getting to zero HIV/AIDS in Karnataka:** Political leadership is essential and can facilitate to come out with political declarations on HIV/AIDS. Bringing Political stake holders on board and their leadership could intensify the efforts of getting to zero HIV/AIDS in the State.

Elected representatives are change agents and direction setters in bringing about change and reforms and breaking the silence as well as stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV/AIDS. They also play a huge role in mainstreaming HIV & AIDS into the operations of various departments too.



Advocacy is a key instrument for leaders to bring about change in the scenario of HIV/AIDS in the nation. Government of India has been taking remarkable measures for the same cause. Initiating Forum of Parliamentarians (FPA) is one huge step towards this. The FPA facilitates the utilisation of the capacity of the elected

representatives to influence in their constituents, in a positive way, towards getting to Zero HIV/AIDS in the country.

**Forum of Parliamentarians' on HIV/AIDS:**

The Forum of Parliamentarians on HIV and AIDS (FPA) was founded in 2002 by few concerned Parliamentarians who resolved to act constructively and address the issue of HIV in India. Today the FPA has more than 300 members across different party lines who are dedicated to provide leadership to the AIDS response in India. State-level forums called the Legislators Forum on AIDS (LFA) have also been formed in several states.

On the same line and with the support of FPA, Government of Karnataka also initiated the process of involving people's representatives and bringing them on board in the fight against HIV & AIDS in the state and in the region. This would ensure intensification of the efforts of getting to zero HIV/AIDS in the State. In this context two events took place, which are also remarkable mile stones in the journey towards making Karnataka a HIV free state. The events were **Southern Regional Consultation on HIV/AIDS held** at Banquet hall of Vidhana Soudha in Bangalore and **Launch of Karnataka Legislators Forum on HIV/AIDS on World AIDS day** at Suvarana Soudha in Belgavi.

Report of the Southern Regional Consultation  
on HIV/AIDS

28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2013  
at Banquet hall of Vidhana Soudha,  
Bangalore, Karnataka

Organized by

Forum of Parliamentarians on HIV & AIDS (FPA)  
and  
Karnataka State Aids Prevention Society (KSAPS)

in collaboration with  
Ministry of Health and family welfare, GOK  
& Department of AIDS Control, GOI

## Southern Regional Consultation on HIV/AIDS

**S**outhern Regional Consultation was organized by the Forum of Parliamentarians on HIV/AIDS (FPA) and KSAPS in collaboration with Department of Health and Family Welfare, GOK and United Nations programme on AIDS (UNAIDS) and the technical support for the same was provided by Department of AIDS Control. The forum has been organizing region wise consultations across the country to raise political awareness on HIV/AIDS and to ensure political leadership and commitment for the issue. The Southern Regional Level Consultation in Bangalore was part of the effort, which was aptly supported by KSAPS and GOK. The consultation was held on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2013 at Banquet hall of Vidhana Soudha in Bangalore, Karnataka.

Several state and central Ministers, Members of Parliament (MPs), Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs), Members of Legislative Councils (MLCs) and representatives of *Panchayati Raj* Institutions from Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Puducherry, and Tamil Nadu attended the two-day consultation along with representatives of people living with HIV and community representatives from key population groups, representatives from NGOs and from the Government and United Nations.

The consultation was aimed to promote better understanding of the HIV epidemic in the region among elected representatives and to encourage their continuous involvement in designing strategies to mitigate its impact. It was expected that the participants would discuss the scope and role of political leaders in the AIDS response in their respective constituencies and will come out with a Declaration of Commitment enumerating the priority areas where they will pledge their involvement.

The consultation was inaugurated at 4:00 PM on Monday, 28 October 2013 at the Karnataka Legislative Assembly campus. The inaugural function was graced by dignitaries such as Mr Oscar Fernandes, Hon'ble Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways & President, Forum of Parliamentarians on HIV and AIDS (FPA), Mr J.D. Seelam, Hon'ble Minister of State for Finance (Revenue) & Secretary General, FPA, Mr Siddaramaiah, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Karnataka, Mr Lov Verma, Secretary & Director General, Department of AIDS Control (DAC/NACO), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, and Mr. Oussama Tawil, Country Coordinator, UNAIDS India.



With over a thousand participants from the eight participating states, the Bengaluru consultation emerged as a unique opportunity and a platform for initiating dialogue amongst the State Governments in the region, relevant central ministries, Department of AIDS Control and State AIDS Control Societies, Legislators' Forums on AIDS (LFAs), Community representatives and NGOs for better coordination and synergy.

During the two-day consultation, there were sessions briefing the trend of HIV prevalence and incidence in the Southern states, state level presentations, discussion on achievements and challenges, and interactive sessions where the elected representatives interacted with community representatives and government officials. In addition, the consultation also discussed social protection measures: policies and programmes that can address the vulnerabilities of the poor and marginalised groups in the society, including people vulnerable to HIV such as transgender people, and sex workers, as well as people living with and affected by HIV.

**Bangalore Declaration to Re affirm the Political Commitment to the AIDS Response** emerged as an outcome of the two day consultation. The participants committed and declare that they all will work towards adequate budgetary allocations, social protection mechanisms, prevention of parent to child transmission and integration of HIV related issues with health and social welfare programmes of the state. **(Annexure-I)**

There were 8 stalls put up by the eight Southern states displaying IEC materials on Infection, Prevention, Stigma and discrimination and services being provided by the respective SACS during the consultation.

## Program:

**H**onorable Chief Minister of Karnataka **Sri. Siddaramaiah** inaugurated the two-day Southern Regional Consultation on HIV and AIDS. **Sri. Oscar Fernandes**, Hon'ble Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Govt of India & President, Forum of Parliamentarians on HIV & AIDS (FPA), presided over the function. Mr. Fernandez urged the political leaders to reaffirm their commitment for the response to HIV/AIDS. **Sri U. T. Khader**, Hon'ble Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Karnataka, delivered the Key Note address. Special Addresses were also delivered by **Sri. J.V.R. Prasada Rao**, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, **Mr. J.D. Seelam**, Hon'ble Union Minister of State, Ministry of Finance, **Sri. LovVerma**, Secretary and Director General, Department of AIDS Control, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt of India, and senior political leaders from the Southern States.

Honorable Chief Minister of Karnataka Sri. Siddaramaiah stated the measures adopted by the State Government towards adequate HIV/AIDS response. In 2004, the HIV prevalence in the state was 1.5% and in 2011 it has been reduced to 0.69%. In order to get it down to zero, the Government is taking many steps to control the spread of HIV/AIDS. In the Primary Health Centers of the State, arrangements have been made for testing and over 21 lakh people have been tested so far.



To prevent mother to child transmission it is compulsory for pregnant women to undergo tests. For those availing of ART treatment, transport costs are met. This Consultation would help and encourage the Elected Representatives to do better, more effective work.

Sri. LovVerma, Secretary and Director General Department of AIDS Control, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India reassured that Government of India has already given approval to the National AIDS Control Programme, phase four (NACP-IV) with substantial increase in governmental share in the budgetary allocation, and that it will be rolled out shortly.

He also updated the status of the draft HIV Bill and expressed hopes that it will be tabled during the upcoming winter session of the Parliament. He stated that India ranks 3rd in the world in the incidence of HIV/AIDS and this is a cause of grave concern. A Bill regarding all aspects of HIV/AIDS will be presented in the Lok Sabha. In the 4 metros, new Blood banks are being planned. He urged Private companies to reserve 2% funds for Corporate Social Responsibility and HIV/AIDS should be on their agenda.

Honorable Union Minister of State for Finance, Sri J. D. Seelam stated that political differences must be set aside for this cause and there should be a concerted effort to tackle this issue. MLAs, MPs, Gram Panchayat representatives should unite and work towards controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Honorable Speaker of the Vidhana Parishad Sri D.H. Shankar Murthy expressed that young people getting affected is a cause for concern. All MLA, members of the Vidhana Parishad must take personal interest and lead in spreading awareness. Sri Oscar Fernandes, Honorable Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways and President of the Parliamentarians Forum on HIV/AIDS urged the political leaders to re-affirm their commitment in the AIDS response as any complacency at this stage could be detrimental to the success achieved so far. Reducing the incidence of HIV is a nationwide exercise and it is every elected representative's duty to contribute towards this. He also suggested that the discussions of this Consultation should be recorded.



Honorable Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Karnataka Sri U.T Khader said HIV treatment is being eased through the reimbursement of transport fare for those availing the treatment. Efforts to provide nutritious food are on the anvil. In future, NGOs should conduct awareness camps to disseminate the messages.

Sri J V R Prasad Rao, United Nations Secretary- General's special envoy for AIDS in Asia and the Pacific stated that India ranks 1st in its efforts to control HIV. If the issue is ignored now it will have a tremendous impact in the future. So in addition to prevention, it is absolutely essential to spread awareness. He appreciated the efforts undertaken by Karnataka towards this. The combined effort of the Government and NGOs has resulted in a 70% decline in the incidence of HIV.

Addressing the gathering, Sri OussamaTawil, UNAIDS Country Coordinator, said that he was humbled by the rich experience and strengths of all stakeholders from the region including the community based organizations and NGOs. It is important for the country to continue drawing from these strengths.

Sri R. V. Deshapande, Honorable Minister for Higher Education, Government of Karnataka announced the Government's commitment to provide free education and scholarship support for children living with HIV.

Honorable Vidhana Sabha Speaker Sri Kagodu Thimappa, Andhra Pradesh Speaker Sri Nadendra Manohar, Tamil Nadu Speaker Sri. Gopinath, Orissa MP Sri. Kalikesh Singh Deo, Goa Deputy Speaker Sri Ananta Shet were present on the occasion. Also present were Principal Secretary of Health and Family Welfare Department Sri M Madan Gopal, KSAPS Project Director Sri Manoj

Kumar Tripathi. Elected Representatives of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducheri, Goa, Maharashtra, Orissa and Kerala attended the programme along with representatives of NGOs and Community Based Organizations.

As an outcome of the two day consultation the Elected representatives from the Southern Region of India adopted a Declaration of Commitment reaffirming their continued leadership in the AIDS response. The “Bengaluru Declaration” enumerating the priority areas, was drawn from the two-day regional consultation of elected representatives. Identified priorities include adequate budgetary allocation; social protection mechanisms for people living with and affected by HIV; prevention of parent to child transmission of HIV; and integration of HIV and related issues with health and social welfare programmes of the government, among others. A drafting committee which included government officials and community representatives assisted the elected representatives in coming out with the Declaration.**(Annexure 1)**



## Annexure-I:

### Southern Regional Consultation on HIV and AIDS 28-29 October 2013

#### Declaration of Commitment

We, the elected representatives from the Southern Region of India,

**Reaffirm** that as political workers and members of different bodies of government, have a critical role in the Southern Region's AIDS response and Health in general;

**Commend** all stakeholders for the Southern Region's achievements in the response to HIV, and at the same time, **Acknowledge** the emerging behavioural, epidemiological, ethical and cultural trends in the region that require concerted attention;

**Recognize** the need to sustain and intensify the efforts for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, since any complacency and reduction in resources at this stage can undermine and reverse the successes thus far; and

**Remain Convinced** that through collective action, with all stakeholders including Government and Civil Society, we can achieve by 2015 the goals committed through the political declaration at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) in June 2011, and reaffirmed at the All India Elected Representatives' Convention on HIV & AIDS at New Delhi in July 2011;

Have assembled at this Regional Consultation of Elected Representatives today on 29 October 2013 at the Banquet Hall, *VidhaanSoudha*, Bengaluru, to reaffirm our commitment to leverage resources, and mobilize communities in reducing new HIV infections as well as to mitigate the impact on people infected and affected by HIV. We solemnly and emphatically declare to:

- **Ensure** continued commitment and leadership in our respective areas of work, and at all tiers of governance including *Panchayati Raj* Institutions and Legislative Bodies towards achieving HIV and related development goals;
- **Recommit** to the earlier resolves of elected representatives in eliminating parent to child transmission of HIV, and improving overall maternal and child health, by ensuring institutional deliveries and through health system strengthening and other integrated measures, such as Adolescent Education Programme (AEP).
- **Review**, and take stock of the earlier commitments particularly in the areas of Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission (PPTCT) and ending Stigma and Discrimination towards people living with HIV, and those vulnerable to it;
- **Mobilize and Leverage** different sources of funding including Local Area Development Funds of MPs, MLAs, MLCs, and local bodies to ensure that HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support services will not face setback due to lack of resources and budgetary allocation; and include closely related issues in the regions such as the welfare of people

living with HIV, transgenders / *hijras*, and addressing issues faced by sex workers and their children, people who use drugs, and men who have sex with men;

- **Coordinate** with relevant government ministries and departments to strengthen and scale-up social protection mechanisms so that people living with HIV and key population groups vulnerable to it can utilize government schemes and services to ensure a healthy and productive life with dignity;
- **Strengthen** our engagement with civil society organisations and people infected and affected by HIV, and **Safeguard** their Human Rights in policy formulation, programme planning, and implementation including access to affordable treatment at every level;
- **Advocate** for the continuity of successful services whenever externally funded projects are concluded, by mobilizing resources and seeking governmental commitment to allocate adequate budgetary support;
- **Enable** an HIV-sensitive legal and policy environment where people infected and affected by HIV, as well as key populations who are vulnerable to HIV, do not face stigma and discrimination based on HIV status, behaviour or gender; and commit to support the HIV bill and review laws such as section 377 of the IPC, which are discriminatory to communities;
- **Facilitate** regular collaborations and sharing of experiences between the States even while acknowledging their diversities;
- **Constitute** new Legislators Forum on AIDS (LFA) where they do not exist in Southern States, including a Southern Regional Forum, and **Reinforce** the existing LFAs so as to further widen the scope of work through local self-government bodies including *Panchayats, Gram Sabhas*, and Legislative Bodies; and
- **Monitor** the commitments made through this declaration, at periodic intervals and ensure through mid-course actions in our respective areas of responsibility that we achieve the global goals of Zero New Infections, Zero AIDS-related Deaths, and Zero Discrimination.

Signed in Bengaluru, on Tuesday, 29 October 2013

Department of AIDS Control, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Gol.	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Karnataka
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV & AIDS (UNAIDS)	Forum of Parliamentarians on HIV & AIDS (FPA)
Civil Society / Community	

