

World Vision India urges for the passage of pending HIV bill

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Year after year stories of people living with HIV (PLHIV) being discriminated, tortured and going through unspoken sufferings had surfaced and documented by many including social activists, NGOs and media. In 2006, their hard struggle and cries of many PLHIVs were recorded in the consultations and finalisation of an important bill yet to be passed, the 'HIV pending bill'. The fight to make it pass in the parliament has been tougher since than generating the reasons to formulate it. There has been a step forward in the year 2006 when it was agreed that HIV and AIDS has long gone past being a medical problem and is now an issue that cuts across social, economic, psychological, medical, and human rights parameters and needs to be addressed at a war footing.

On December 01, yet again World Vision India reinforces along with communities and PLHIVs to not only observe World AIDS Day, but amplify our voices to urge national leaders to 'Walk Together' with PLHIVs and pass the HIV Bill that will protect their rights. It is time we respect and give proper direction to the Bill that was drafted after nation-wide consultations with different stake holders including PLHIVs, communities at risk of HIV, healthcare workers, children's organizations, women's groups, trade unions, lawyers, and State AIDS Control Societies.

Stating the urgency of the need for the Bill, Dr. Jayakumar Christian, National Director, World Vision India said, "Statistics don't bleed, but people bleed. In our work with around 40,000 children affected by HIV and AIDS across the country, we have seen them and their families denied their right to dignified life and treatment because of the stigma attached to the disease. A legal protection would go a long way in ensuring that these children are able to access their rights".

World Vision India along with partners have been conducting grassroots level consultations as well as state level forum to discuss the bill and create empowered voices for community based solutions and work towards Zero discrimination towards PLHIVs. "The passing of the long pending HIV and AIDS bill in its original form will contribute to reducing the epidemic and will also protect the rights of people living with HIV, including children affected and infected. The PLHIVs in this country are not legally protected which means we do not have a legislation/Act passed yet to protect their rights. The greatest need of the day is to pass the bill incorporating all the provisions necessary for the protection of their rights." Mr. Reni Jacob, Advocacy Director, World Vision India, further added.

Let's Walk Together

WThis December 1, 2013 on World Aids Day, Let's take a walk together and meet Daisy David, the first woman in India to raise her voice for free distribution of ART, Anti-Retroviral Therapy.

Hear her story:

Daisy David is a loving mother, an advocate, counselor, social activist and a PLHIV. While working in the Gulf region as a Lab Technician in 1998, she was accidentally diagnosed as HIV+. Staying in a far way and different country, she battled the trauma all alone. Back home she was alienated from her family. But after her husband died she was reunited with her daughter. Today, she takes care of her college going daughter and also her in-laws.

Daisy: "I stay alone and not with them. Because I am (HIV) positive, my relatives and those in my neighborhood keep a distance from me. I don't want my daughter to feel discriminated against because her mother is positive. That is why I stay away. I long to live with my daughter; hug her, kiss her, but I keep a check on all my emotions. When I am with other HIV+ people like me, I feel happy and confident but once I face the outside world, I lose all my confidence. Many women who are afflicted with HIV virus face such discrimination. They are denied their husband's property, they are not allowed to attend family functions, and they are abused. At the same time, they have to bear the burden of the family."

"When we first started talking about the HIV/AIDS Bill, we were talking about how our children needed to be taken care of. Today, those children are adults waiting to be married, and have a different set of problems, but there is no law yet," adds Daisy David.

There are thousands of Daisy's who wait in anticipation that this Winter session of Parliament will bring a ray of hope to those affected and infected with HIV and AIDS.