

World AIDS Day 2009 at Global Science Academy (GSA)

As every year, the Global Science Academy (GSA), Basti (UP) India, and the District AIDS Control Society (DACS), Basti had organized a grand observance of the World AIDS Day (WAD) on this year theme "Universal Access and Human Rights" which included rally, debate and a thought provoking seminar.

As always, the preparation for the observance of the World AIDS Day (WAD) was started well in advance and the GSA had announced its event through local, national, regional as well as international web resources of premier HIV/AIDS institutions, newsletters, internet mediated HIV/AIDS forum and more than three dozen websites from almost all the continents of the planet and witnessed GSA's response to the AIDS epidemic.

GSA's HIV Vaccine Advocacy Unit (HVAU), in its WAD preparatory activities screened videos on AIDS awareness message for common people and "The Quest for a Vaccine" produced by International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) before the central administration of the GSA and members from GSA's advisory committees to add newer dimension during observances.

It is worthwhile to mention that the GSA had simultaneously announced its pre-consultation workshop on AIDS-vaccine research in India and due to requests from professionals the detailed workshop now to be held on January 29, 2010 at Basti with an added opportunity to have broader range of audiences in advocacy for AIDS vaccine efforts of the GSA. Since some of the professionals had especially participated the World AIDS Day event in the sake of knowing facts about AIDS Vaccine Research in India and GSA, towards building a supportive environment for AIDS vaccine development in India, had appropriately suggested various facts about the development of the AIDS vaccines and focused on ethical considerations by adopting ethical guidelines of UNAIDS pertaining to biomedical HIV trials. These efforts of the GSA were well documented by science writer of the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) Regina Mc Enery in November-December 2009 issue of the journal, "IAVI Report" under the title, "Progress and Promise" as well as in the December 2009 issue of "Vax" (The Bulletin of AIDS Vaccine Research) under the title, 'A Year of Progress: On World AIDS Day, scientists marked a promising year on both research and policy fronts'.

As the already announced activities were reached to the professionals around the globe, GSA was able to have support and inputs from many varied academicians, HIV/AIDS professionals and institutions as well as stakeholders in the field and got momentum in its event observances as well as in its advocacy for AIDS vaccine development. Supporters of GSA's this initiative elaborated in the attached Annexure No. 1.

The unforgettable WAD commemorations participated by the district administration, health department, National Cadet Corp. (NCC). Schools and colleges, intellectuals from GSA and its vast network of stakeholders, and many others.

As the sign of GSA's commitment to stop the AIDS epidemic and to remind the work that still need to be done in the fight against HIV/AIDS, the *red ribbon campaign* had highly been emphasized during the event observances. Since GSA has a full flagged Red Ribbon Club in place, the coordinators of which Ms. Shalini Bhatt and Ms. Jyoti Srivastava convened the ceremony of the Club Establishment Day in the pre-evening of the World AIDS Day at the *Shastri Chauk* of Basti city. In the GSA's WAD directives, red ribbon coordinators were assigned with the job to ensure the wearing of the ribbon to each and everyone who witness the observance and to make its highest visibility including on developed/distributed IEC materials, certificates and shields to honor students of debate, refreshment packets etc. Since within the system of the GSA it is mandatory to wear red-ribbon for its entire staff and other GSA people and in addition they had also worn, GSA developed caps with the mention, "Stop AIDS Keep the Promise".

The ceremony of Red Ribbon Club Establishment Day was later followed by the Candlelight Memorial at the same spot of *Shastri Chauk*. Before lighting candles, red ribbon was designed by an artist and candles were placed over it. The observance has provided an ideal space for GSA's community and media interactions, thereby disseminated to the wider audiences through media coverage. GSA head especially discussed and planned with the District Magistrate (DM) for convening candlelight memorial for remembering those who lost their lives due to the AIDS pandemic. GSA's this event has gained momentum by participation of district's higher health officials including Additional Director Medical Health Basti Commissionaire Dr. J.C Agarwal, Director Opec Hospital Kally Dr. R.P. Shukla, Divisional PMU, National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) Dr. Arvind Pandey, District Programme Officer In-charge-AIDS Dr. Nasir Kamal as well as social workers Dr. Iswar Sahay Srivastava, Dr. Anil Kumar Srivastava. Also, on invitation, several NGOs from within the vast network of GSA's "All India Networking of NGO Clusters on HIV/AIDS Issues (AINNCHI)" have also lighted candles.

Programmes at the Red-light/slum area also organized by the GSA. Since GSA is the implementer of anti- AIDS Targeted Intervention Project amongst Female sex Workers (FSWs) of Basti and at one of its programme hot-spots GSA initiated a full flagged Self-Help Group of FSWs named "*Shabira Mahila Utthan Samuh*" which had made voice against human rights violations by observing, with the help of GSA, Human Rights Day in the past, took their enthusiastic interest in the

GSA's commemorations of the World AIDS Day (WAD) 2009 and led a step ahead in order to advocate for Universal Access to services of their need and to protect human rights as they were highly marginalized from rest of the society. GSA has also screened a documentary film "*Subah hone tak*" produced by Chander Khanna for State AIDS Control Society during commemoration of WAD with FSWs in the view to increase HIV/AIDS awareness amongst gathered people. This programme was well coordinated by the Project Manager Mr. Vivek Kumar Maurya. . Beside, outlet centers under the project had distributed AIDS awareness materials and condoms in the context of World AIDS Day observance.

Signature Campaign for having peoples' commitment in the fight against AIDS simultaneously organized by the GSA and DACS on World AIDS Day. The DM, CMO and Secretary GSA were first who signed before community people and stakeholders.

On World AIDS Day, a four kilometer rally for the entire city was flagged off by the District Magistrate, Basti Mr. Pankaj Kumar. Banners, Posters, flags & wooden-cards relating Universal Access & Human Rights, AIDS-awareness, access of available services as well as on Vaccine Message were widely displayed by GSA during the rally in which beside organizers teachers and students of Indian Public School, GRS Inter Collage, Government Inter College, Government Girls Inter College, NCC Cadets were taken multiple AIDS awareness banners, cards etc. of the GSA.

In the GSA's WAD commemorations, posters/ cards as were provided by the UNAIDS under World AIDS campaign relating World AIDS Day 2009, displayed authentically after replicating the same by using its digital formats from the campaign website. These included, "Everyone deserves to live their rights-I am safe", "I am living my rights- I am well", "I am living my rights- I am accepted", "I am living my rights- I am getting my treatment", "Right to live", "Right to health" etc. along with flags and large banners as were especially prepared by GSA for its WAD commemorations in which a range of message (with nicely designed pictorials) right from basic information on HIV/ AIDS, meaning of red-ribbon, motivating masses for the access of available facilities and human right concerns of the issue were widely adopted. Also, for the first time in the state, GSA used HIV Vaccine related messages on flags and wooden-cards in the rally "Experimental Vaccine Does NOT Cause HIV-infection or AIDS", "Experimental HIV Vaccine Does NOT Cause Any Physical Side Effects", "As There is NO Effective AIDS Vaccine But World Need Urgently", "When Discovered, Effective AIDS Vaccine will Protect From HIV Infection" etc.

There was also a strong demand for IEC materials carried by the GSA during the rally which were given to equip the general audiences with right information on

the pandemic.

In the gathering of seminar at Mahila PG Collage, Principal of Mahila Post Graduate Collage Ms. Kanak Lata and GSA Director Dr. Anil Pratap Singh honored debate (essay/ painting) participants of different schools and colleges by giving those shields and testimonials. These debates were organized by GSA at different collages and six excellent competitors (students) - Ms. Reema Agarwal, Mr. Swapnil Ranjan, Ms. Priya Suri, Mr. Ahmad Sarik, Ms. Roli Srivastava and Mr. Ayush Ojha were felicitated by honoring through shields and certificates. Participation certificates were issued to all other competitors.

Showing his concern on this year's theme GSA head Dr. Anil Pratap Singh disclosed that in 2009 he had actively contributed in the UNAIDS Secretariat's e-dialogue on '*Universal Access (to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for all people in need) by 2010*' to which UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibe called for a renewed commitment and said that there was critical need to protect human rights not only in terms of freedom from discrimination, autonomy and privacy but also for the right to health towards attaining access for all to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. He also highlighted social aspects of AIDS vaccine development and Indian efforts on new prevention technologies (NPTs) for HIV/AIDS.

WHO consultant Dr. Kunal in his speech admired the outstanding leadership of GSA in responding to HIV and AIDS and said that its (GSA's) anti- AIDS efforts will lead in greater engagement with significantly built capacities and increased coordination within nongovernmental organizations, people living with HIV networks, communities, as well as researchers and stakeholders in the AIDS Vaccine Research & Development Programme in India in a supportive environment and will reduce controversies and gaps in terms of information and service accessibility.

District Tuberculosis Officer (DTO) and Programme Officer (In-charge) –AIDS, Dr. Nasir Kamal elaborated in detail about basic facts of HIV infection and current treatment options pertaining antiretroviral drugs (ARVs).

Dr. Jamal said that Anti Retroviral Therapy (ART) which having life-enhancing qualities need to be made available urgently to the 6.7 million people worldwide who had still not gained their access.

Many others also spoke on the occasion and a vote of thanks was proposed by GSA head Dr. A.P. Singh while concluding the event.

Sincerely yours

Dr. Anil Pratap Singh
Secretary & CEO,
Global Science Academy,
Satyawanpuri, Block Road,
Basti-272 001 (UP), India
Telephone Nos.: +91 5542 247186, 287060
Fax No: +91 5542 247186
Mobile No.: (India) 9336785696
Email: globalaps@rediffmail.com / global_aps@indiatimes.com
Websites: www.gsaindia.org.in / www.ngogateway.org/gsa

Annexure No. 1

Support Received so far:

1. Technical Support:

International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), India technically supporting us.

2. AIDS Vaccine Info-kits:

Tuberculosis Research Centre (TRC), Chennai, India supported GSA by 150 Nos. of AIDS Vaccine Information kits intended to be provided amongst workshop delegates which contained 'AIDS Vaccine FAQs', HIV/AIDS FAQs', 'Trial Organisers (Information on AIDS Vaccine Trial Organizers)' and relevant flyers.

3. Support for Paper Publication in highly indexed medical journal:

"Electronic Physician International Medical Journal" (being a peer reviewed journal indexed and listed in several data base including Index Copernicus Journals Master list) willing to accept 10 of the best papers of the workshop for full text publication and up to 3 of our reviewers are offered to be in their editorial board member list. Also, they are interested in publishing abstract book of our workshop accepted works in electronic format.

4. Programme Announcement Support:

Workshop has widely been announced not only through organizing body's website (www.gsaindia.org.in) but also through dozens of relevant websites, forum, newsletters etc., noteworthy amongst them are:

1. IAVI Report 2009 International AIDS Vaccine Initiative;
2. NGO Gateway of UNAIDS (United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS);
3. Sci. Dev. Net. (Science and Development Network of United Kingdom) weekly update (12-18 October 2009);



4. South Asian Development Newsletter (Pro Poor . org , 15 October 2009) and its Blog;
5. HIV & AIDS Forum (e-health forum);
6. The Greek Medical Site about HIV/AIDS (HIVAIDS.gr);
7. Health Industry Today;
8. HIV & AIDS Atlas;
9. Conference Alerts;
10. Indian Education Blog (Chalo Campus);
11. Internet mediated, AIDS India e- Forum;
12. Healing Well. Com Forum (Community, Information Resources on diseases, disorders and chronic illness, UK);
13. Health.einews.com;
14. Research Group of HIV Molecular Epidemiology & Virology, China
15. Clanderio Eventi, Poloinformativo HIV AIDS, Italy
16. Vizagdaily.info;
17. Scribbed
18. HIV Vaccine Trial Network (HVTN) Washington, USA, being an international collaboration of scientists and educators searching for an effective and safe vaccine.
19. AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition
20. Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise
21. Indian Educational Events & Conference Explore (ieeexplore)
22. The Body Pro being a service of Body Health Resources Corporation, New York, USA
23. Ethiopian AIDS Resource Centre (www.etharac.org)
24. CDC's (U S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) National Prevention Information Network (www.cdcpin.org)
25. Global HIV Monitoring and Evaluation Information
26. The HIV/AIDS Newsletter of YRG Care (Volume 2, Issue 3, November 2009)
27. Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise New York USA (<http://www.hivvaccineenterprise.org/content/world-aids-day-2009>)
28. YRG Care The HIV AIDS Newsletter, November 2009 (A quarterly newsletter from YRG Centre for AIDS Research & Education for professionals)
29. PKIDS Online (Parents of kids with Infectious Diseases) Vancouver, WA
30. Leapfish AIDS Vaccine, California, USA
31. Wellsphere (Health knowledge made personal) California, USA and others.
32. Schick Foundation, California, USA
33. Sexual Health Information Center (SHIC) E-mail Update No. 133, Dec 1 – 15, 2009
34. IAVI Report-13 (6) Vaccine Briefs 2009
35. Vax 7 (12) December 2009 and others.



5. Paper Contribution Support:

Several abstracts have been received so far, for presentation and publication in the Workshop proceedings.

6. Support from Targeted Intervention (TI) Partners of the state (UP):

Since the workshop organizing body- Global Science Academy (GSA) is one of the targeted intervention (TI) partner of the UP State AIDS Control Society (UP SACS)/ National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), its other fellow partners are supporting to the cause.