

Vihaan, a support project for people living with HIV (PLHIV), will be launched in Pune on the occasion of World AIDS Day (December 1). Aimed at improving the quality of life of PLHIV, 35 care and support centres have been set up across Maharashtra and Goa, including two centres in the city.

Dr Anjana Palve, Programme Manager, said as part of National AIDS Control Programme–IV, care support centres (CSCs) had been set up across the country. "In Maharashtra and Goa, the centres have been set up since August. However, the project will be officially launched in December," Palve said.

Vihaan will complement NACP– IV's plan to put in place a quality care and support system by setting up 350 centres in India. These CSCs will be linked to high–burden Anti Retroviral Treatment (ART) centres in a phased manner.

"There is still a great deal of stigma and discrimination that PLHIV have to face. Though access to clinical services has improved under the NACP–III programme, not all infected people receive comprehensive care and support that address psycho–social needs," she added.



Till March 2013, out of 7,39,102 people tested positive for HIV, only 3,22,023 people had been registered for care and support, said Manoj Pardeshi, General Secretary of National Coalition of People Living with HIV in India.

"The CSC will serve as a comprehensive unit for treatment, support and positive living for PLHIV," Pardeshi said. CSCs will be run by civil society partners, including district–level

networks and non-government organisations. Manavya, an orphanage that takes care of 57 HIV positive children, has been identified as one of the CSCs.

Palve added that though there were various schemes under the Women and Child Department and Social Welfare Department, PLHIV found it difficult to avail its benefits. We will integrate the PLHIV into the system so that they can avail the services, she added.

NACP-IV is aimed at zero infection, zero stigma and zero death. At present, there are 2.39 PLHIV in the country with a prevalence rate of 0.31 per cent, Palve said.

Vihaan is supported by Global Fund and implemented in collaboration with Alliance India Network of People living with HIV in Maharashtra, Maharashtra State AIDS Control Society, among others.

**Source**

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