

Mumbai AIDS and health education gets major boost

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Picture Gallery

India's fight against AIDS received additional support today with a sponsorship from global reinsurer Swiss Re, under their Sharing Solutions programme, for an HIV education project in Mumbai.

The project will be managed by the NGO PCI (Project Concern International) and locally implemented by CCDT (Committed Communities Development Trust).

In India, an estimated four million people are infected with HIV. The project will focus on promoting HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention and support, as well as sustainable improvements to the overall health, economic and educational status of people in the Dharkhadi area north of Mumbai.

This community is home for more than 10,000 people, many of whom arrived as migrants in the 1970s, seeking work in Mumbai. Problems faced by this community include over-crowding, a lack of basic amenities such as water, sanitation and electricity and limited access to schools, doctors and other formal health care.

The Swiss Re sponsorship will fund a variety of initiatives, starting with a thorough needs assessment study to gather information on HIV awareness, health status, child care practices, water and sanitation systems, community organisation, economic activity and other facts. Findings will be used to design an integrated health and development project that can be sustained by the local population after the two-year sponsored project ends.

"We are proud to be making a contribution to this international cooperative initiative to deliver practical interventions to minimise the spread of HIV in Mumbai and other areas," said Mr. Jean-Michel Chatagny, Member of the Life & Health Executive Board of Swiss Re. "Challenges presented by areas such as Dharkhadi can only be met through sustainable solutions that take a comprehensive view of issues affecting the life, health and economic situation of the population," he added.

In line with this focus on sustainability, an impressive programme is planned for training 200 health workers and 50 community promoters on HIV/AIDS and reproductive/primary health, who will help educate Dharkhadi residents. Also, the project will fund four informal education centres for children, as well as adult education and vocational training for women and adolescents.

A part-time doctor and clinic staff will also be installed to provide primary health care for up to 3,000 people.

In addition, PCI will train CCDT teams on strategic planning and financial management so that this knowledge can be passed onto other CCDT beneficiary organisations involved in HIV/AIDS education, reproductive health, micro-enterprise development, and community mobilisation.

Under its Sharing Solutions programme, Swiss Re is a major supporter of initiatives fostering sustainable development. Supported projects range from efforts to expand drinking water supply in Brazil and Haiti, to piloting a programme for an International Water Management Course, and data-gathering in Chinese hospitals to track health and mortality trends. For more information, please see www.swissre.com (About Us/Corporate Sponsoring).

About CCDT

The Committed Communities Development Trust is a Mumbai-based organisation that started working with leprosy patients in Mumbai in 1990. CCDT has developed a strategy of networking with government and non-government agencies to bring about an overall uplifting of economically disadvantaged groups. Today, it is active throughout greater Mumbai implementing health and social development programmes to target groups of leprosy sufferers, slum dwellers, sex workers and their families and those affected by HIV/AIDS.

CCDT has worked with the community of Dharkhadi since 1994, adopting the Mumbai Municipal Corporation's health post to deliver primary health care as part of a programme of integrated health and education initiatives.

About PCI

Project Concern International is a 41 year-old global charitable organisation based in San Diego, USA. PCI provides support to vulnerable communities around the world, principally in healthcare and integrated development, targeting the needs of vulnerable women, children and families. A registered NGO in India since 1998, PCI gives technical and financial assistance to 12 Indian groups in seven states, reaching more than 232,000 people at risk of contracting AIDS. In New Delhi, for example, PCI assists homeless, orphaned children affected by AIDS. In Maharashtra, PCI provides people living with HIV/AIDS with health care, nutritional support, counselling and better life options by fostering micro-business opportunities. It has been working with CCDT since 1997.

About Swiss Re

Swiss Re is one of the world's leading reinsurers with over 70 offices in more than 30 countries. For 2001, Swiss Re reported a net loss of CHF 165 million, largely due to the 11 September event. Gross premiums in 2001 were CHF 28.5 billion. At the end of June 2002, Swiss Re's shareholders' equity amounted to CHF 18.3 billion and the total balance sheet stood at CHF 168 billion. Swiss Re is rated "AA+" by Standard & Poor's, "Aa1" by Moody's and "A++" by A.M. Best.

Swiss Re opened its representative office in Mumbai in 1998. The company also operates a separate unit in Bangalore, which provides back office processing services to various Swiss Re operations throughout Asia, the Middle East and Australia/New Zealand.

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