

## General Studies-2; Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

### Towards AIDS Free India

#### 1) Introduction

- The UN Sustainable Development Goals include ensuring good health and well-being for all by 2030.
- This includes the commitment to end the AIDS epidemic.

#### 2) Present Status

- India has the third largest HIV epidemic in the world.
- HIV-related deaths declined by 71% between 2005 and 2017.
- India has an estimated 2.14 million persons living with HIV.
- Drug treatment of HIV is now well founded with an array of established and new anti-viral drugs.
- Throughout India, numerous non-governmental and community-based organisations have joined hands to spread awareness of HIV/AIDS at the local/State and national levels.
- Over the past decade, India has made significant progress in tackling its HIV epidemic, especially in comparison with other countries in the region.
- National AIDS Control Programme has been particularly effective at targeting high-risk groups
- India has announced a contribution of 22 million US Dollars to the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFTAM).

#### 3) Positive Developments

- Much success has been achieved in the past 20 years in the global battle against AIDS
- HIV-related deaths fell due to Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART).
- Generic versions of the drugs were generously made available by Indian generic manufacturers
- Ignorance and stigma were vigorously combated by coalitions of HIV-affected persons supported by enlightened sections of civil society and the media.

#### 4) Concerns / Challenges

- Risk factors for cardiovascular disease are high among survivors as they age.
- Other infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis can co-exist.
- Mental health disorders are a challenge in persons who are on lifelong therapy.
- Given the wide diversity of the HIV virus strains, development of a vaccine has been highly challenging
- The stigma and discrimination hinders access to effective HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care services amongst high-risk populations.
- Despite free antiretroviral treatment being available, uptake remains low as many people face difficulty in accessing clinics.

#### 5) Tapping the potential of communities to end AIDS

- Success is being achieved where policies and programmes focus on people, not diseases, and where communities are fully engaged from the outset in designing, shaping and implementing health policies.
- By signing the 2016 UN Political Declaration on Ending AIDS, countries affirmed the critical role that communities play in advocacy, coordination of AIDS responses and service delivery.

- Communities have been the most trusted and reliable partners for the National AIDS Control Organization and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS.
- They are fully engaged in many aspects of the National AIDS Response, including prevention, care, support and treatment programmes.
- Our communities present us with a lot of untapped potential.
- Unleashing this is the key to gaining the momentum we need to make faster progress towards reaching UNAIDS Fast-Track targets.
- The more we invest in communities, the closer we get to ending the AIDS epidemic.
- The theme of the World AIDS day this year (“Ending the HIV/AIDS Epidemic: Community by Community”), which is communities make the difference, is a timely reminder that community wide coalitions are needed.

### 6) Way Forward

- The Indian experience has been more positive but still calls for continued vigilance and committed action.
- The strength of India’s well-established National AIDS Control Programme, with a cogent combination of prevention and case management strategies, must be preserved.
- The road map must include higher budgetary allocation to public health care and increasing AIDS awareness
- There is a need for greater access, analysis and applied use of data within the national HIV response.
- Success in our efforts to reach the 2030 target calls for resurrecting the combination of political will, professional skill and wide-ranging pan-society partnerships.