

# News paper clipping from "Dawn" Dated 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2009

## AIDS threatens the textile city

FAISALABAD, April 19: HIV/AIDS is spreading in Ghareebabad and adjoining localities because of the presence of a sizeable number of sex workers and addicts infected with the disease.

More than 100 people were found infected with HIV/AIDS across Faisalabad during a screening in November and 35 of them were found in Ghareebabad. However, nobody bothered to isolate them from the healthy residents.

According to Dr Ali Razzaq, director of the Punjab AIDS Control Programme (PACP), infected sex workers are being provided treatment. He says another screening is on the cards within the next two weeks.

Nearly two dozen brothels in Ghareebabad are considered a major source of the disease, as female sex workers suffering from HIV/AIDS hide their ailment from their clients. It was noted during a visit to the locality that most people knew that they were suffering from HIV/AIDS, but they were reluctant to go for an examination because of the stigma associated with the disease and fear of losing their clients.

Jeena, who earns her livelihood by thrashing fabric waste at Al-Madina Market, says most of the Ghareebabad sex workers target the market, offering their services to businessmen at their

doorstep just for Rs100 to Rs200. She says a number of shopkeepers are regular visitors to brothels. She says a random screening of sex workers and people having links with them will show the number of those infected is far higher than the feared.

A sex worker, who wished not to be named for obvious reasons, said clients didn't like to use condoms or other methods to avoid infection. "If any sex worker offers them the facility, they mind it and leave the brothel," she says.

A woman, who has been counselling those infected with HIV/AIDS, says most women acquired the infection from their addict husbands or transfused blood. Ghareebabad, Factory Area and adjoining localities are prone to HIV/AIDS and scores of sex workers are working here with impunity.

A couple was recently tested positive for HIV/AIDS. They were informed about the disease, but the NGO that conducted their test did not provide them any medicines. They were told that their treatment would begin after a few months. The man in this case was an addict.

It is learnt that five people of a family two women and three men — are suffering from the fatal disease. The above quoted woman, who is also suffering from HIV/AIDS, said her mother-in-

law, brother-in-law, husband and father-in-law are also infected with the disease. However, she said: "We are hiding our ailment from neighbours and family to live a peaceful life."

Area people said the infected locality had no public dispensary and quacks were providing treatment to those infected. They said quacks were also contributing to the spread of the disease.

A union council nazim said 37 infected people had been registered and 27 of them were women.

Munir Ahmad, a shopkeeper at Al-Madina Market, said the government seemed least interested in checking the disease in Ghareebabad. He said the locality had nearly five dozen brothels.

Dr Razzaq says a surveillance centre is working under PACP's auspices at Allied Hospital. The centre is extending free of cost facility of tests. The hospital also has a voluntary counselling and testing centre for outdoor patients.

He says PACP is supplying free antiviral medicines to Mayo, Services, Shaukat Khanum and Jinnah hospitals in Lahore and Sargodha District Headquarters Hospital for those infected with HIV/AIDS. He says those suffering from HIV/AIDS cannot be isolated, as it will amount to violation of human rights. —MOHAMMAD SALEEM