



Tuesday, December 8, 2009

World AIDS Day

Used syringes major cause of hepatitis, HIV

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ISLAMABAD - National AIDS Control Programme (NACP), Monday, organised a seminar as part of its month-long campaign to mark World AIDS Day. The World AIDS Day is observed every year on December 1, since 1988 all over the world. The seminar was organised with an aim to engage all stakeholders to commit themselves to yearlong activities to halt, prevent and control the HIV-AIDS epidemic throughout the world. People suffering from HIV also attended the seminar and shared their experiences with the audience and highlighted the issue.

People from different walks of life suffering from HIV and AIDS were provided opportu-

nity to share their experiences with others regarding stigma and discrimination they are forced to face due to their HIV positive status.

The seminar was well attended by senior official from government, UN system, civil society, youth and representatives from media.

Addressing the gathering DG Health Dr Rasheed Jooma stressed the need to address the issue of unsafe use of syringes as extremely large quantum of syringe are being used in Pakistan. According to independent statistics 1.2 billion syringes are used per annum in Pakistan. "The main reason for spreading hepatitis B and C and AIDS is due to the unsafe use of syringes" he added.

He opined that resources

must be utilised to minimise the impact use of unsafe syringes on health sector. He appreciated the efforts of the National AIDS Control Programme for preventive and curative work done for various targeted audience throughout the country. He highlighted the efforts of the Ministry of Health through the National AIDS Control Programme for utilizing all the channels and vehicles of communication for creating awareness on HIV-AIDS throughout the country for prevention and control of HIV-AIDS.

Speaking on the occasion Dr Hasan Abbas Zaheer, National Programme Manager, NACP said that despite many efforts, the HIV infection rate has increased significantly over the past few years and the

country has moved from a low prevalent situation to concentrated epidemic with HIV prevalence of more than 5 percent among injecting drug users (IDUs) in at least eight major cities.

However, the country still has a window of opportunity as the current estimates using different prevalence estimation models indicate that the HIV prevalence among general adult population is still below 1 percent i.e. 97,400 cases. "The theme of this year is "Universal Access and Human Rights", which is related to the importance of treatment and that is everyone's right" he added. He said the commemoration of World AIDS Day throughout the Pakistan is also a part of this response.