

# Mizoram leads the way in community response to HIV

## Bureau Report

Aizawl, Oct 1: Over the past few years, there has been a significant improvement in community response to HIV affected people in Mizoram.

"Owing to tireless efforts of several social organisations and the churches, stigma and

discrimination against drug users and HIV affected people have considerably reduced," said Jimmy Lalitlanmawia, coordinator of Community Health Action Network (CHAN).

The Mizoram State AIDS Control Society has engaged the state's largest and most influential organisations – Young Mizo Association, Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (women's body) and Mizoram Upa (elders) Pawl – and the churches in the battle against HIV/AIDS. This is mainly attributed for the significant public awareness.

NGOs from Nagaland and Assam, funded by UNAIDS and SIDA, on an exposure visit to Mizoram to get insights into the highly successful community based approach of CHAN, during Sept 29-Oct 1, were impressed by what they saw.

"CHAN approach is significantly related to the AIDS competence process, promoted by the constellation of AIDS competence, that people are the principal actors of their own change," Jimmy said.

The approach is to build a relationship, discuss the community concerns, encourage them to identify their strengths, find appropriate solutions for their problems, helping them implement their solutions, evaluate their action and outcomes, and come up with new action.

Here are a few examples of how

communities have taken over the ownership of the programme in and around Aizawl. The number of dressing in the ITI clinics dropped but as a result of community outreach the dressings drastically increased. In Dinthar locality, the joint action committee of local residents runs a 'half-way home' for drug users. The salary of the counselor is paid by contributions from the entire community.

On care and support, the programme has promoted awareness of services, and referrals. On the HIV prevention front, the programme promote self-risk perception, an understanding of what constitutes risk, and an informed adoption of safe behaviour.

The workshop and the field visits were an eye-opener for the participants from other states. "I have not seen or heard AIDS competence process (ACP) until I came here," said Fr Joe, director of People in Need Foundation, Dimapur, which organised the workshop. The event was hosted by CHAN.

Other NGOs from Nagaland were Kekhrrie Foundation, Dimapur Network of Positive People, AIDS Prevention Society from Assam, Mizoram Network of Positive People, FXB-Mizoram, YARD-Nagaland, Network of Nagaland Drugs & AIDS Organisation (N NagaDAO), SIAAP from Chennai and Samraksha from Bangalore.