CHAPTER – 4

AGENCIES OF HIV CONTROL MEASURES

This chapter is an evaluation of the agencies of control measures towards the pandemic in Naga society. In a state like Nagaland, it has been considered necessary to look into the role of the religious organizations, the intervention by governmental as well as nongovernmental organizations, institutions of learning, the family and the individuals etc. These agencies are the backbone towards the controlling of the epidemic. A critical evaluation of the HIV control machineries has been undertaken to examine their contribution towards controlling HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS has become one of the key social problems in the present era. There are various mechanisms in the whole of the state through which efforts are made to ensure that the growth of HIV infection is controlled. These mechanisms have a pivotal role to play regardless of how their approaches or strategies are. In achieving spontaneous control of HIV, various major agencies of HIV control measures as indicated in the following figure 4.1, has adopted different strategies according to how their field demands.

Some of the agencies that have been working towards controlling the pandemic are the learning institutions like the schools and colleges, religious organizations, the police and the administration; Non- governmental organization, jails, hospitals, individuals etc. While NGOs have a critical role to play in implementing various intervention programmes among the different population groups, the governmental agencies too has an overall responsibility to plan, co-ordinate, mobilize and facilitate various HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment activities. While ensuring the utmost efforts to access new AIDS drugs for the PLWHAs and also other intervention programmes, the government needs to aim at providing major opportunities to the HIV infected fraternity.

Experiences in global HIV pandemic portrays that HIV can be prevented if sound, rational and effective strategies are used. Therefore the role of mass media in disseminating vital informatics to the general populace about the pandemic, the role of law enforcing agencies and the role of individuals are considered to be of high importance.
Figure 4.1: CONTROLLING AGENCIES OF HIV/AIDS

- Religious Organisations
  - Churches, Mosques, Mandir
  - LFA, Directorate of women Development
  - Newspaper, Radio, TV, Internet

- Institutions of Learning

- NGOs
  - Counseling, treatments, Care centres

- Schools, colleges

- Jails

- Police

- Hospitals
  - NSACS
    - Oversees all the works relating to the HIV/AIDS
  - Counseling, treatments

- Governmental agencies

- Mass Media

CONTROLLING AGENCIES OF HIV/AIDS

Oversees all the works relating to the HIV/AIDS
4.1 : THE ROLE OF THE RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS

Religious organizations are considered to be one of the important agencies to halt HIV/AIDS. At the present juncture, humans have acquired more knowledge than any other time in history. Science, medicine and education are going places never before imagined. Human have bigger jets and cruise liners, faster computers etc but when there is personal or national tragedy, people flock to religious organizations like the churches, the mandirs and the mosques for prayers and counsellings. In times of hardship and tragedy, people tend to find solace in it. The religious organization keeps people grounded by providing bedrock of faith and answers to humanity’s deepest needs. With all the weight and pressures of the world, people expect answers from them that no other institution provides. People’s spiritual and emotional needs are fulfilled by the religious organizations. Therefore, the religious organizations hold an important place in controlling the pandemic.

This study covered various religious organizations like the Nagaland Baptist Churches Council (NBCC), Ao Baptist Arogo Mungdang (ABAM), various churches of Nagaland, Hindu Shiv Mandir and Mosque etc in order to assess the knowledge, awareness and initiatives. Religious beliefs among the most emotional and deeply felt needs of human beings. In many cultures they come to form the most predominant influence in people’s response to crisis in life. When an individual is unable to overcome a difficult situation with human effort and energy, there is always a tendency to depend on God, a supernatural power, to get relief and comfort this is especially true in cases of diseases and calamities as well.

In the case of fatal pandemic like HIV/AIDS, the dependence on God can be more because dependence on others will be less due to stigma and discrimination. On being asked whether the PLWHA respondents believed in the existence of God, this study found that there were 78.2% who thought that religion helped them in coping with HIV infection. The remaining 21.8 % respondents were of the opinion that they did not believe in the existence of God and did not help in coping HIV infection. This clearly shows the importance of

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88 Thenpillil, Jose (2006) ‘Socio-Cultural dimensions of the HIV/AIDS affected’
religion and the roles of the religious organisations in the life of the PLWHAs and how it can be an important agency towards the control of the pandemic.

**Table 4.1: Classification of the respondents according to religion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian Baptist</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Catholic</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nagaland being a Christian dominated state, most of the respondents from religious organizations was Christians with a percentage of 84.8% and 1.9 percent Catholic Christian as projected in table 4.1. The remaining comprised of the Hindu, Muslims and others. In this study we wanted to know the role of the religious organisation in the field of HIV/AIDS and their approaches towards HIV/AIDS, they stated that various seminars and awareness programmes on HIV/AIDS, counselling the people, conducting health camps, special prayer support, vocational trainings, financial support to PLWHA were given and nutritional support were also extended to the PLWHA. This shows the concern and understanding that the religious organizations have towards the PLWHA by extending help and support.

In response to whether there was a separate branch/cell to deal exclusively with the pandemic in their Church/organization/association set up, interesting answers cropped up. Table 4.2 depicts the response that they gave. While 15.1 opined that it is not necessary, a majority of the respondents with a percentage of 37.7% responded that they do have a separate cell followed by 28.3% respondents that it was under planning. These responses somehow portrays a mixed picture, while it is important to have a separate cell particularly
for the HIV infected, on the other hand it may look like they are put into isolation and segregated by the religious organizations.

Table 4.2 Setting up of a separate cell

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinions of having a separate cell</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, we have</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under planning</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not necessary</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to put it into motion</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never thought of</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2: Can PLWHAs be termed as Sinners?

The figure below projects the answers given out by the respondents and it somehow shows the attitude of the religious fraternity toward the pandemic as majority of the respondents i.e 82% opined that they are not sinners and should be welcomed and should not be discriminated at any costs. In the recent years, the participation level of the PLWHAs in religious organizations is on an upward trend. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the state is in its 24th year and the presence of PLWHA in the society and to get them involved within
the fraternity of the religious organization is quite a new experience. Through this study it was revealed that the religious organization play a vital role in moulding up an infected emotionally down HIV person. To cite an example, the Chang Baptist Church Tuensang along with the Khiamnungian Baptist Church, Sangtam Baptist Church, Yimchunger Baptist Church and Ao Baptist Church take various initiatives to bring the HIV infected within their fold. They organize various programmes, seminars etc in order to see that the HIV infected people are not left out and see that they live a life as an unaffected person lives.

Prayers and other religious practices are signs of religiousity. People usually depend on the divine when there is no other way to escape from their physical ailment or any other difficulty. In order to know how far the respondents practiced their religion, questions were asked on prayer and religious practices. 72.8% of them said that they were comforted through prayer and religious rites and practices. The increased of the beliefs in prayer by the PLWHA respondents show that in the face of fatal disease, there is always a tendency to pray for God’s intervention. Since there is no possible cure medically with regard to HIV/AIDS, the utter dependence of human beings on the divine protection is seen here.

In our attempts in discovering the opinion of the religious organization towards controlling the pandemic, the interviewer put a query how can bring the HIV+ community to the fold of the church/organizations/associations etc. In response to this, they have suggested the following:

a) Accept and accommodate them with empathy.

b) Religious organisations must plan and make programmes for their welfare.

c) Shun stigmatization and discrimination.

d) Encourage the PLWHA’s to come forward without having an inferiority complex.

e) Proper health care delivery through the organisation’s initiative.

f) Provide social support and encourage positive living.

g) Give guidance and hope through counseling.

89 The Chang Baptist Church Tuensang plays a very important role in reaching out to the HIV population in Tuensang. The broad mindedness of the Pastor and the members of the church were noticed during the course of field work. So far no other church has taken initiatives like this church has taken.
h) Religious organisation should conduct seminars and programmes on HIV/AIDS
i) Let the PLWHA participate and invite free opinions and involvements in the church
j) Positive people are members of the religious organization as well.
k) Opportunities and equal privileges should be given in decision making and in worship too.

The PLWHAs have specific needs which the other members might not have. They may be afraid ashamed and afraid of active participation in the organisation’s activities. Therefore the study suggests that they need to go forward and extend emotional and financial support as well in order to curb the pandemic.

The churches in Nagaland has started with a programme known as ‘True Love Waits’, where youths are given a platform to sign a pledge to abstain from sex till one gets married. This is in a way contributing to control the menace of HIV/AIDS in society.

Out of the 400 respondents, there were 50 respondents from religious organizations who were included in this research study from all over the state. 70% of them opined that they conduct seminars, awareness and advocacy programmes on HIV/AIDS and 80% of them were found to be actively involved in providing health, economic, physical and emotional support to the infected people. Setting up of a separate cell was found discouraging as 84 % of the respondents that that setting up of a it will hamper the social life of the HIV infected and it will instead ignite the fire of stigmatization. Though the religious organization did not deny the prevalence of stigma within the church fraternity, they were satisfied by 58% towards performing and contributing towards the control of the pandemic.

It is found that various religious organizations are actively participating in organizing seminars, awareness programmes and advocacy programmes. In addition to this, they also organises varied charity programs in aid of the people living with HIV/AIDS and contribute financially to the uplift of the PLWHA fraternity. Through this study, it is portrayed that religious organisations are so far responsive and are taking up various steps by conducting seminars, prayers, counsellings etc.