

## HIV & AIDS Awareness Programme

In its efforts to curb the HIV and AIDS epidemic, Sterlite has initiated an awareness drive that is aimed at truckers, contract & migrant workers and members of the local community. While education camps initially encountered resistance because of the social stigma associated with HIV and AIDS, repeated awareness activities have helped gain acceptance.

The government of India has taken significant measures to curb the spread of HIV, at both national and state levels. But much remains to be done. Businesses can play an important part, particularly in HIV prevention but also in the care and treatment of AIDS patients. Besides, more active engagement of the private sector is critical to achieve the scale of intervention needed to curb the HIV and AIDS menace. Partnerships with local NGOs and other agencies have proved critical to the success of ensuring that migrant workers are exposed to HIV and AIDS awareness programmes.

Sterlite consciously works with communities in and around its facilities and geographic radius of influence, with a clear goal - to give back to society in such a way that needs of the weaker sections are responded to and improvements made in the quality of their lives, especially primary healthcare.

### Realities on the ground

The Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli is composed of about 72 villages. The population in this area is almost 62% from the tribal communities. More than half the population did not have accessible primary health care services within

10 km of their residences. Beginning 2006, as part of its Sustainable Development Program, Sterlite has partnered with The Indian Red Cross Society to provide primary healthcare services via a mobile dispensary. The dispensary has had a significant impact on the lives of more than lakh beneficiary by providing reliable, easily accessible and free of cost primary medical care at the doorstep.

### HIV and AIDS Awareness Camps

Sterlite initiated the HIV and AIDS Awareness programme in August 2012, with the objective of protecting the health of the local communities in which it operates. In fact, the programme extends beyond the awareness camps being organized for the local community, and includes spreading awareness among drivers of commercial vehicles about HIV and AIDS.

Further, Sterlite has planned a set of activities that include the following:

- Generating awareness about HIV and AIDS.
- Reducing stigma (for example, destigmatizing HIV testing by promoting an HIV testing day).
- Providing referrals for counseling and testing

As a first step in this direction, Sterlite recently launched its HIV and AIDS monthly initiative at its units in the Union Territory of Dadra & Nagar Haveli. The basic approach in all three Sterlite units at Silvassa includes focused awareness programmes among high-risk groups in the community through HIV and AIDS awareness programmes. But to ensure commitment from those implementing the programme, the

company allows each unit to improve or modify the programme according to local needs.

In association with Dinbandhu Youth Welfare Trust, an NGO, Sterlite kicked off its new monthly initiative - an AIDS Awareness Camp by organizing a "Street Play". The first Street Play titled "VasuBhai Ki Chal" was held in Rakholi (Silvassa) and included distribution of IEC (Information, Education & Communication) leaflets by the NGO, which was sponsored by Sterlite. The units also conduct awareness programmes for truckers and contract workers through posters, audiovisual sessions, mass education activities, information booklets in regional languages, and interactions with the neighbouring localities. In line with this, a Truckers Camp was also organized in association with Dinbandhu Youth Welfare Trust. The focus of this camp includes the drivers of commercial vehicles coming to STL plants at Rakholi. The camp is being organized as a monthly activity.

Effectively, the programme draws on the local culture, adapting information, education, and communication material to local sensibilities and using cultural performances to convey HIV and AIDS messages. This strategy has helped broaden the appeal of its messages and gain acceptance for the programme among the local population.

### Measuring the effectiveness

The HIV and AIDS programme is spearheaded by Sterlite's CSR team and implemented through the NGO officers. All Sterlite units have



occupational health centers with basic health facilities to treat patients with support from government-designated medical institutions. To ensure the success of the programme at the unit level, each Sterlite unit integrates shop floor employees and managers into the core team, made up of the unit head, human resource personnel, shop floor manager, and a workforce representative. This core team is sensitized to HIV and AIDS issues at the beginning of the unit's programme. The team participates in the quarterly review of the programme undertaken in each unit and meeting with other partners if needed.

“As part of our corporate initiatives, Sterlite is strongly committed to ensure comprehensive healthcare programmes that cover

nondiscrimination, prevention education, access to counseling and testing, and care, support, and treatment to the population. As a step in this direction, we will be organizing camps for appropriate prevention and control of HIV and AIDS, and we will share this expertise across the supply chain and communities among which we operate,” says Major Rahul Goyal, Head – Admin at Silvassa.

Till date 5000 plus persons counseled on HIV, AIDs and related diseases in the rural areas of Silvassa esp. truckers, migrants, vulnerable communities etc.

### Lessons learned

The programme has several observations about the key factors in its success and challenges. Some of the key success factors include:

- Management-led initiative: Sterlite's management led initiative has been a critical factor in ensuring sustainability of the HIV and AIDS programme to date.
- Commitment at all levels: Allowing each unit to develop initiatives and providing budgetary support as needed ensure commitment to the programme at all levels.

### Future plans

Sterlite wishes to further extend its HIV and AIDS programme through its distribution network. The company has formed teams at every manufacturing location to assess potential projects and ensure their implementation, monitoring and sustenance. The management and the teams remain committed to the projects and will strive towards positive community impact.

