

## **Statement in solidarity with PLHIV demanding access to HIV/AIDS medications**

Date: 30 August, 2022

The Delhi Network of Positive People (DNP+), a network of people living with HIV (PLHIV), has been protesting for over a month outside the office of National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) in Delhi. They are protesting against the ongoing shortage of Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) medicines. The shortage has been raging for more than five months due to alleged discrepancies in the procurement of these medicines by NACO. As per the guidelines set out in the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP), NACO is responsible for supplying these medicines to 680 ART centres spread across the country.

For a large majority of 1.45 million PLHIV in the country, these medicines are critical to ensure their health and prevent fatal opportunistic infections. While there is no cure for HIV infection, ART aims to reduce the replication of the virus and bring the viral load to undetectable levels. If medicines are skipped, there is a possibility of the viral replication increasing and taking backwards the progress made in treatment. Most of the PLHIV are daily wage earners or belong to underprivileged sections of the society. They do not have the financial wherewithal to buy these medicines out of pocket and rely on the medicines provided by NACO free of cost.

The shortage is more critical in the case of medicines such as dolutegravir, a preferred drug for treatment of HIV-positive adults, adolescents and children and nevirapine syrup that is given to infants with HIV. According to DNP+ and other networks, there is a stockout of at least one or more medicines across 12 states, most facing problems with paediatric and second and third lines of antiretrovirals. Even though the ART centres themselves have been claiming stockouts and shortages, the central government responsible for the procurement and dispensing of ART medicines are in a state of denial. The Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare of the union government categorically denied shortage of medicines in the Lok Sabha.

The situation seems to be heading nowhere, even after repeated assurances by the officials of NACO to restore supplies of ART medicines. In the last few days, NACO officials have tried to stop the protests. This is highly uncalled for and will only exacerbate the issue.

We, the undersigned, stand in solidarity with the protestors demanding fair access to ART medicines and urge the NACO and concerned authorities to take immediate actions to restore the supply of these medicines. We also urge the government to take necessary action to streamline the procurement processes for ART medicines so that such situations can be avoided in the future.

Contacts:

Richa: +91 99108 87838;

Jyotsna: +91 9999332811

Muneer: +91 99997 98283

Signatories:

Jan Swasthya Abhiyan-Delhi

All India Drug Action Network

Initiative for Health and Equity in Society

Dr Antony R Kollannur, Independent Monitor, National Health Mission

Dr Mira Shiva, Public Health Physician

Anita Gupta, Bhojpur Mahila Kala Kendra, Bihar

R Srivatsan, Retired. Political theorist, committed to healthcare in India, Telangana

Sulakshana Nandi, Public Health Researcher, Chhattisgarh

Ritu Priya, Professor, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, JNU, Delhi

Dr. Amitranjan Basu, Shaheed Hospital, Chhattisgarh

Ravi Duggal, Independent Researcher and Activist, Maharashtra

Indranil, JSA Delhi, Delhi

Raghini, Public health Professional, Tamil Nadu

Siddhartha Das, Public Health Activist, Telangana

Chirashree Das Gupta, JNU

Vineeta Bal, Academic, Maharashtra

Prof.Mohan Rao, Former professor, CSMCH, JNU, Bangalore

Sunita Sheel, Vidhayak Trust, Pune and Health, Ethics and Law Institute, FMES, Maharashtra

Vandana Prasad, Doctor, Uttar Pradesh

Chinu Srinivasan, LOCOST, Gujarat

Jagdish Patel, Gujarat

Nachiket Udupa, Concerned individual, Delhi

Sunil Kaul, the ant, Assam

Amar Jesani, Doctor/Researcher, Maharashtra

Dr Akshay S Dinesh, HIV Physician, Karnataka

Sultan Ahmad, Director, Media and Governance, Gram Vanai, Delhi

Raman VR, Public Health Resource Network, Delhi

Randall Sequeira, Doctor, Odisha

Richa, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, Delhi

Sushanta Rayaguru, HOPE Foundation, Odisha

Hari Shanker Singh, Delhi Network of Positive People, Delhi

Jitendra Kumar Jha, Delhi Network of Positive People, Delhi

Aarti Bajaj, DNP+, Delhi

Navpreet Kaur, Medical Doctor, Maharashtra

Sundararaman T, All India Peoples Science Network, Pondicherry

Dewal, The Banyan, Maharashtra

Dr. Sejal Tambat, YuMetta Foundation, Maharashtra

Raj Shekhar, Right to Food Campaign, New Delhi

Vishnu E K, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Kerala

Lianzagou Hanghal, Manipur

Shishir Chand, PBT India, Delhi

Kamala Menon, Delhi Science Forum, Delhi

Dr R S Dahiya , HGVS Haryana, Haryana

Alok Mohan, Delhi Users Network, Delhi

Dharmendra Kumar, Janpahal, Delhi

Srajan Srivastava, PhD scholar, JNU, Delhi

Anjali Bhardwaj, SNS

Amrita Johri, SNS

Saibal Jana, Doctor, Shaheed Hospital, Chhattisgarh

Nidhin Joseph, Doctor

Shrinidhi Datar, Medical Doctor, Maharashtra

Dr Jyoti Puthran, Doctor, Karnataka

S.Krishnaswamy, Retired Senior Professor, ex Madurai Kamaraj University, Tamil Nadu

Anna G, Delhi

Maansi Verma, Lawyer

Nirupama Sarma, Public Health Consultant, Karnataka

Sanyukta Rajpurohit, Doctor working with Rajasthan Government, Rajasthan

Rahul Roy, Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi

Maimoona Mollah, All India Democratic Women's Association - Delhi, Delhi

Satyajit Chakrabarti, Professor, West Bengal

Amitabha Basu, Retired scientist, New Delhi

Blessina Kumar, The Global Coalition of TB Advocates (GCTA), Delhi

Amrita, TB survivor, Tamil Nadu

Wim Vandavelde, GNP+, South Africa

Ganesh Acharya, TB/HIV Activist, Maharashtra

Ashok Vish, Filmmaker, Karnataka

Aseem Chhabra, Film Festival Programmer, Uttar Pradesh

Saikhom, Travel designer, Haryana