



## **Corporate Social Responsibility and the Role of Pharmaceutical Sector in Response to HIV and AIDS & TB in India: The FICCI – Connect Initiative**

Project Connect, funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the period of 2006 – 2011, seeks to leverage and build public-private partnerships (PPP) to increase the use of prevention care and treatment interventions that will prevent/mitigate the effects of HIV and AIDS & TB in India. Project Connect plays a facilitating role to encourage leadership and networking between the organized and unorganized private sector, NGOs and government facilities to provide the prevention to care continuum of services. The project focus geographies include Karnataka, Coastal Andhra Pradesh and six port towns Mumbai, Vashi, Mangalore, Tuticorin, Chennai and Visakhapatnam.

Project Connect is a consortium of like-minded, experienced organizations like FICCI-SEDF, Population Services International (PSI), YR Gaitonde Center for AIDS Research (YRGCARE) and Education and Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT).

One of the roles of FICCI-SEDF, under Connect, helps create platforms for meaningful engagement with the Indian corporate sector. Connect has been organizing large-scale advocacy programs such as workshops, conclaves and round-table discussions at the national as well as regional levels. This approach helps in the mobilization and sensitization of the corporate sector in a planned manner to make meaningful contributions in the response to HIV and AIDS & Tuberculosis.

FICCI-SEDF and PSI, under Project Connect, organised a National Symposium to highlight the role of the pharmaceutical sector in Mumbai in April 2010, to explore new opportunities to accelerate the impact in the response to HIV and AIDS & TB. The National Symposium on “Corporate Social Responsibility and the Role of Pharmaceutical Sector in the Response to HIV and AIDS & TB in India” was conducted as a response to this need, which addressed these specific objectives:

1. Orienting the organizations to the current scenario vis-à-vis HIV and AIDS & TB
2. Helping them establish the connect and relevance to their core operations (making a strong business case) as well as advocating it as part of their CSR
3. Orienting them to Project Connect and the approaches and interventions being advocated
4. Inviting their views on proposed models of collaboration as well as any potential innovative models of addressing the issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS & TB.
5. Solicit support and identify a high potential group from among the participants to take some these initiatives forward on a one to one basis.

The Symposium was attended by some of the leading players in the Pharmaceutical Industry and other stakeholders interested in the cause of HIV and AIDS & TB. Present at the inaugural session were Dr. S. S. Kudalkar, Program Director – Mumbai District AIDS Control Society (MDACS), Mr. S. D. Joag- Honorary



General Secretary, Indian Pharmaceutical Association and Mr. Anand Rudra, Project Management Specialist of United States Agency for International Development (USAID).



**Mr. Paresh Tewary**, Director- FICCI Socio Economic Development Foundation, explained that the objective of the symposium was to ascertain and prioritize the current needs of HIV and AIDS & TB programs where the Pharmaceutical sector can contribute and discuss successful models which saw the involvement of the pharmaceutical sector to strengthen the HIV and TB programmes in India

**Mr. Atul Kapoor**, Project Director- Connect, highlighted the successful involvement of pharmaceutical companies like Aurobindo, Emcure, Johnson and Johnson, and Roche in mitigating AIDS and TB in India. He went on to explain the need for such private industry involvement to strengthen the health sector partnerships in India, specifically in HIV and AIDS and TB prevention and as well as treatment for Tuberculosis.

The second session of the symposium discussed the role being played by pharmaceutical sector in its response to HIV/AIDS, and their corporate social responsibility initiatives. **Ms. Nafisa Khorakiwala** Founder and Trustee Wockhardt Foundation (WHARF) said, "that WHARF has focused constantly on awareness programs that aimed to dispel the myths associated with HIV and AIDS & TB". Also present was **Col Nair** of Lupin who explained how Lupin implements a three way approach to community service by identifying an area and then focusing on economic, social and infrastructural development in that area.

In the third session, moderated by **Dr. Suniti Solomon**-Director YRG Care, the role of the pharmaceutical sector in making ARV drugs more affordable for PLHIV was deliberated. The open forum discussed how and why the pharmaceutical sector should come forward in support of PLHIV. There were eminent speakers like **Mr. Anand Grover** from the Lawyers Collective and **Ms. Leena Menghaney** from Medecins Sans Frontieres(MSF) who discussed the pricing and patent related issues for ARV medicines.

**Mr. Anirudh Deshpande**, Sr. Vice President - Matrix Laboratories represented the pharma sector in this discussion and shared insights on Matrix's efforts in making treatment more affordable for people living with HIV and what more can be done in this area. He also shared the challenges that the sector confronts in coming forward and supporting HIV and AIDS & TB programmes.

The symposium concluded on a positive note with the representatives from the pharmaceutical sector asserting their support in future to fight against HIV and AIDS & TB. To carry the work forward on the issue, a report has been put together for wider dissemination amongst those in the pharmaceutical industry who could not be present. Specific areas of concern are being taken forward with a group of stakeholders, passionate about the role that the pharmaceutical sector can play in the response to HIV and AIDS & TB.