

‘WIPING OUT AIDS BY 2030 WILL NOT BE EASY’

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India's long battle against AIDS is not likely to end any time soon, if the latest figures released by the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) on Friday is any indication. The data revealed that, as of 2017, there were still around 21.40 lakh people living with HIV in India, with the prevalence among adults stood at 0.22 per cent.

There were around 87,000 new HIV infections and over 69,000 AIDS-related deaths (ARDs) in 2017. Around 22,675 mothers needed Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

“HIV Estimations 2017 corroborates the previous rounds in terms of the characteristic of the HIV epidemic in India -- national prevalence and incidence remains low, but the epidemic is high in some geographical regions and population groups. The report has noted that the rate of decline in annual new HIV infections has been relatively slower in recent years,” noted a release from the Health Ministry.

India's 2017 figures also do not show a significant positive shift from 2015, the previous year for which when such a survey had been carried out. In 2015, India had reported 86,000 new HIV infections. Of these, children (<15 years) accounted for 12 per cent (10,400) while the remaining (75,000) were adults (15+ years). In 2015, the total number of people living with HIV in India was estimated at 21.17 lakh, while the same figure was 22.26 lakh in 2007.

The 2017 estimation report also indicates that there is no place for complacency as the country aims to achieve the ambitious goal of ending AIDS in India by 2030. It adds, however, that the impact of the HIV/AIDS control programme has been significant, with more than an 80 per cent decline in estimated new infections from the epidemic's peak in 1995.

“Similarly, estimated AIDS-related deaths declined by 71 per cent since its peak in 2005. As per UNAIDS 2018 report, the global average for decline in new infections and AIDS-related deaths from peak (sic) has been 47 per cent and 51 per cent respectively,” noted NACO.

The objective of HIV estimations is to provide updated information on the status of the HIV epidemic in India at the national and State/Union Territory level.

“Estimations of adult HIV prevalence, annual new infections (HIV incidence), AIDS-related mortality, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) needs are produced as outcomes of HIV estimations. The modelled estimates are needed because there is no direct reliable way of measuring these core indicators, which are used to track the epidemic monitor and evaluate response around the world,” noted the release.

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