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National AIDS Control Programme: Response to HIV Epidemic in India

Targeted Interventions: National AIDS Control Programme, Phase-III, India

Condom Promotion: National AIDS Control Programme, Phase-III, India

Care Support & Treatment: National AIDS Control Programme, Phase-III, India

Red Ribbon Express: National AIDS Control Programme, Phase-III, India

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RED RIBBON EXPRESS

National AIDS Control Programme, Phase-III, India



National AIDS Control Organisation

India's voice against AIDS

Department of AIDS Control

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India
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CONTENTS



FELICITATIONS ON THE RRE CAMPAIGN

“Through the Red Ribbon Express useful information on HIV, AIDS, infectious diseases like swine flu and on health related issues is being taken to your villages. I appeal to you to spread information on these issues to your brothers and sisters in the villages.”

Dr. Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of India



“The Red Ribbon Express is a unique endeavor to take the message of HIV prevention to every corner of the country. Let us resolve to educate ourselves and our communities on HIV prevention. Let us promise to always practice safe behaviors. Let us make India healthy and vibrant.”

Smt. Sonia Gandhi
Chairperson, UPA and Chairperson Rajiv Gandhi Foundation

“With the help of the Red Ribbon Express train, information on HIV/AIDS is being disseminated in our villages and communities. I appeal to every citizen of this country to come forward and learn about HIV/AIDS so that our villages and communities stay free from the infection.”

Sh. Ghulam Nabi Azad
Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare



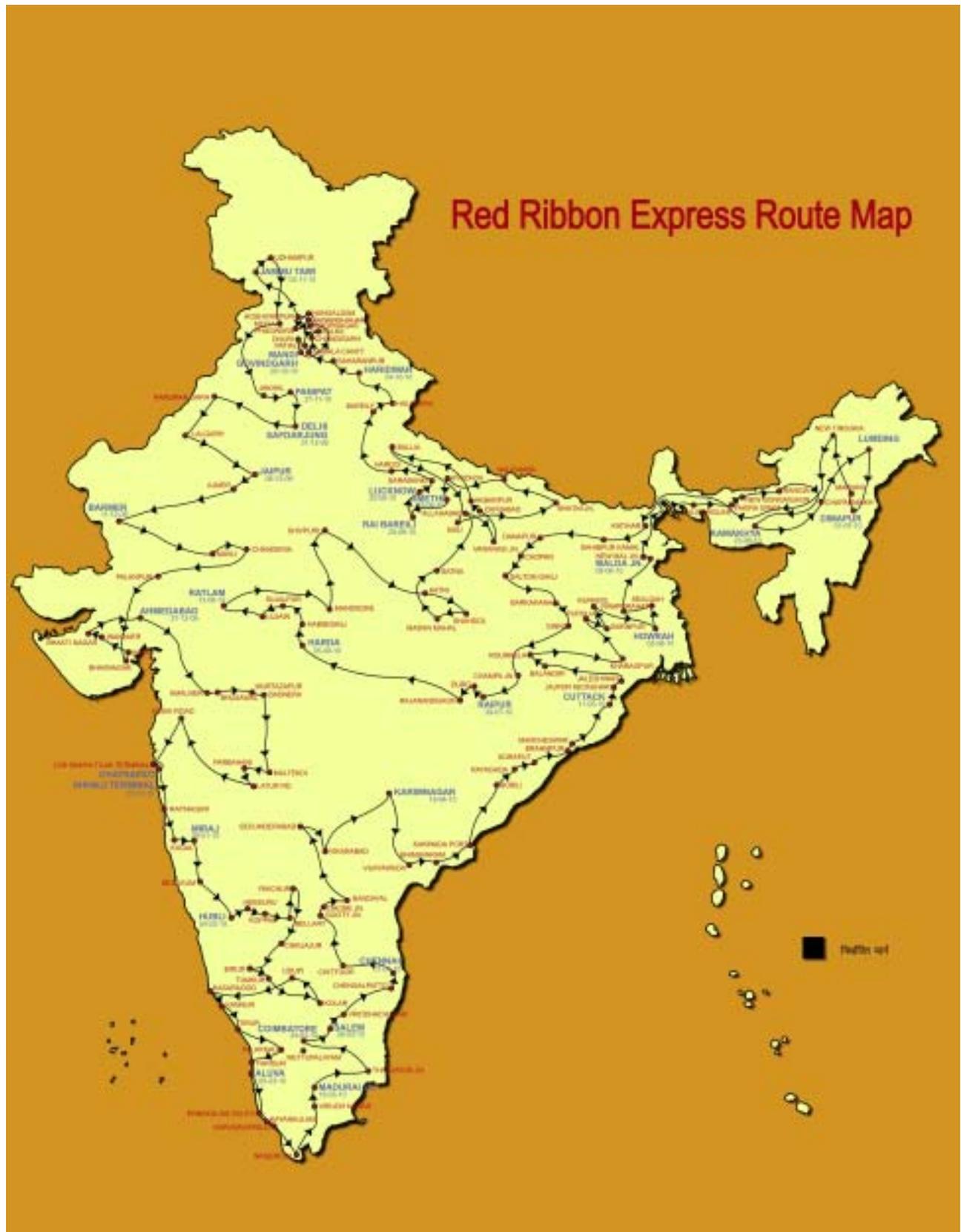
“The RRE is a symbol of a nation’s collective strength and resolve to fight HIV/AIDS epidemic. Local leaders have been involved at every halt to mobilize people and conduct outreach activities. The objective is to build up local capacity to deal with HIV infection.”

Sh. Dinesh Trivedi
Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare

“As a nation we are committed to a collective vision of an India where everyone is safe from HIV and people living with HIV have all the necessary support.”

Sh. S. Gandhiselvan
Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare





BACKGROUND

A train on a year long mission, spreading messages on HIV and AIDS across India has become an icon of hope and possibilities for the masses in rural and semi-urban India. Bright, colourful and painted in local and traditional flavour, the train is a story of partnerships, collaborations and a practical demonstration of a nation working together to achieve common goals and objectives.

The journey that began on 1st December 2007 with the launch of the first phase of Red Ribbon Express (RRE), as the specially designed exhibition train on HIV and AIDS was named, has now metamorphosed into a mass campaign against HIV and AIDS. During RRE's year long journey in the Phase-I, 180 stations were covered across 24 states, 6.2 million people were directly reached with information on HIV and AIDS and over 68,000 grassroots level functionaries were trained in the districts through which the train passed.

Building up on the success of the first phase, RRE Phase-II was flagged off on 1st December 2009 from New Delhi by Smt. Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and Chairperson, United Progressive Alliance to commemorate the World AIDS Day. Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, Union Minister of Railways, Mr. Dinesh Trivedi, Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare and Delhi Chief Minister Mrs. Sheila Dixit were present at the gala function organized on the occasion.

“RRE, flagged off on 1st December 2009, will traverse through 22 states halting at 152 stations”



Red Ribbon Express flagging off function

During its one year journey, the RRE-II will traverse over 25000 kms. halting at 152 stations in 22 states. In addition, outreach programmes and activities will be held in about 10,000 villages. The Project is being implemented by National AIDS Control Organisation in partnership with Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Ministry of Railways and UNICEF.

During the second phase, apart from three exhibition coaches on HIV and AIDS, a new exhibition coach on NRHM was added to the train providing information on common diseases such as H1N1, TB, Malaria and Reproductive & Child Health (RCH) services. The purpose is to have convergence with the larger health system. Further, the services for free HIV testing have been added in the service coach of the train along with the general health checkup facility both inside the coach and on the platforms, wherever possible.

Campaign Objectives

- Disseminating information regarding primary prevention services
- Developing an understanding about HIV to reduce stigma and discrimination against People Living with HIV (PLHIV)
- Informing people about H1N1, TB, Malaria and Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) issues
- Promoting preventive health habits and lifestyles.

Focus of the campaign is on youth and women in semi-urban and rural areas.

Details of RRE Coaches

The RRE consists of eight coaches as follows:

1. **Coach I:** This has displays on bio-medical aspects of HIV/AIDS including interactive touch screens and 3-D models.



Dignitaries at Delhi Safdarjung Station after flagging off the RRE

2. **Coach II:** This has exhibits and educational material with focus on HIV/AIDS from the perspective of care, support and treatment services.
3. **Coach III:** This has exhibits focusing on HIV/AIDS as a social and developmental issue to promote creation of an enabling environment free from stigma and discrimination (inter-sectoral/ mainstreaming approach).
4. **Coach IV:** This displays information on general health, hygiene and communicable diseases such as swine flu, TB and malaria and RCH services.
5. **Coach V, Auditorium-cum-Conference:** This has arrangement for orientation/ sensitization of groups such as women self help groups, members of Panchayati Raj Institutions (Institutions of Local Self Governance), teachers, government officials, police personnel, NGOs, youth leaders etc. A group of 60 people can participate in one session. Three sessions are organised every day.
6. **Coach VI, Counseling-cum-Medical Services:** This has provision for counselling, HIV testing, STI treatment and general health check-ups. These are supplemented by additional health services on the platform.
7. **Coach VII, Sleeper Coach:** In this coach crew members, monitoring staff, visiting NACO and SACS officials travel.
8. **Coach VIII:** It has office, dining-cum-pantry facilities.

“RRE consists of 4 exhibition coaches, 1 training coach and 1 service coach”



An inside view of the exhibition

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The vision of the RRE project is to promote a multi-sectoral response by which HIV/AIDS could be mainstreamed within the context of overall socio-economic development rather than treating it merely a medical and public health issue. It is in keeping with this vision that converted a train into a symbol of hope, connecting people from different backgrounds and cultures to come together on one platform for an open dialogue on HIV/AIDS prevention, care, support and treatment.

While the project aims at reaching the general population, special focus is on reaching out to youth and women in rural and semi-urban areas. At least three days before the train rolls into a station, news of its arrival is announced in the local radio, television and print media.

The train generally stops for 2 days at every station. The first day starts with the welcome function followed by opening of the train exhibition and the service coach to the public. The visitors are guided through the exhibition coaches by the trained volunteers who explain the exhibition panels and also answer queries of the visitors.

Stalls and information booths are also set up at the platform by the NGOs and partners. Performances by folk troupes disseminating messages on HIV keep the platform alive throughout the day.

Simultaneously, training/sensitization sessions are conducted in the training coach of the train at every station with the objective to build up permanent capacity of the district to respond to the epidemic. About 180 grassroot level functionaries from the concerned district are trained in 3 sessions of 60 persons each per day. It is ensured that there is also a positive speaker present in these sessions



Students queue up to see RRE exhibition

to address issues of stigma and discrimination. The people thus trained are expected to take the messages into their villages and communities during village and community meetings.

The service coach of the train has trained doctors and counsellors. Services for HIV counselling, testing, STI treatment, and general health check-up are provided in the coach. These are supported by additional health services at platform and through mobile health vans.

Those who are not able to come to the station are reached through the outreach programme of the train which include mobile IEC vans with exhibition on HIV/AIDS and folk troupes. The outreach programme in rural areas continues even after the train leaves the station/district.

“Along with information through exhibition coach services are provided at service coach and platform”

The response so far....

As the RRE cruises through the Indian heartland and rural and peripheral areas demystifying HIV transmission & prevention, the response has been overwhelming. A large number of people gather at every station from morning to see the exhibition and avail services for free HIV counseling and testing, STI treatment and general health check-ups. Platforms wear a festive look. People wait patiently in queues to see the exhibition.

The entire project is backed by a strong political support. The Chief Ministers of the States, Union and State Ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of State Legislative Assemblies, Mayors and senior officers of the State and District Administration are taking part in the inaugural functions and leading this mega campaign. They also help in mobilizing people to visit the train.

Since the RRE started its journey it has passed through Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, and West Bengal during first six months reaching out to about 3.8 million people through platform and outreach activities. The number of grassroots functionaries trained during the period is 47,281 while 21,093 people have been tested for HIV. The major state-wise highlights are as follows:



Red Ribbon Express in Kerala

Rajasthan: The RRE after being flagged off from Delhi on December 1, 2009, first entered Rajasthan and completed its journey through the state on 17th Dec, 09. The train stopped at 7 stations in the state which include Hanumangarh (Shri Ganganagar), Bikaner, Jaipur, Ajmer, Barmer, Mavali (Udaipur) and Chanderi (Bhilwara).

Gujarat: While Rajasthan set the trend, Gujarat built on it. During the 13 days in Gujarat the train covered 6 stations which include Palanpur (Banaskantha), Bhavnagar, Botad (Bhavnagar), Wankaner (Rajkot), Bhaktinagar (Rajkot) and Ahmadabad. The response to the train was tremendous in the state with very high turnout both at the platform and during outreach activities. Botad registered over 18,700 visitors to the train on a single day with about half of them being women. It looked like as if the whole town turned up to see the exhibition with over 35,500 people visiting the train during 2 days in Botad. The state took up innovative outreach activities through motorbikes and camel carts apart from regular IEC vans and folk troupes.

Maharashtra: The state deployed mobile testing vans and linked them with the RRE outreach programme during the journey of the train through 13 halt points in the state which included Amalner (Jalgaon), Bhusawal (Jalgaon), Murtazapur (Akola), Badnera (Amravati), Maltekadi (Nanded), Parbahani, Latur, Nasik, Lokmanya Tilak Terminal in Mumbai, Chatrapati Shivaji Terminal in Mumbai, Ratnagiri, Kudal (Singhdurg) and Miraj (Sangli). State Ministers, MPs, MLAs, Mayors and Bollywood stars received the train and visited the exhibition at the halt points.

Karnataka: The RRE covered 11 stations in the state during 18 days journey namely Belgaum, Kolar, Hubli (Dharwar), Hebsur (Dharwar), Koppal, Bellary, Raichur, Chikjajur (Chitradurga), Birur (Udipi), Tumkur (Mysore) and Udipi. Chikjajur, a small station created the state record with 25,358 people visiting the train in a day.

Kerala: “God’s own country”, as Kerala is popularly known, hosted the RRE for 18 days with the train stopping at 9 stations including Kasargod, Kannur, Tirur (Mallapuram), Palakkad, Thrisur, Aluva (Ernakulam), Ernakulam, South Kayankulam and Karunagapalli (Quilon).



Young visitors inside exhibition coach of the train

Tamil Nadu: The RRE remained a mass passion throughout the state during its 20 days journey stopping at 10 halt points. On its way the train stopped at Nagercoil, Virudhnagar, Madurai, Rameshwaram, (Ramanathpuram) Tanjavur, Coimbatore (Nilgiri), Salem, Vridhachalam (Tirucherapalli), Chengalpattu (Kanchipuram), and Chennai. The skyline in the state capital Chennai had extensive display of hoardings welcoming the RRE. 75,000 people thronged the station during 2 days in Chennai which was the maximum number of visitors the RRE had witnessed as the crowd passed through the exhibition coaches, took part in various activities planned out in the 100 stalls that were put up on the station.

Andhra Pradesh: The train halted at 11 stations during 25 days journey through Andhra Pradesh which include Chittoor, Gooty (Anantpuram), Dhone (Kurnool), Nandyal (Kurnool), Secunderabad, Vikarabad (Ranga Reddy), Karimnagar, Vijayawada (Guntur), Bhimavaram (W. Godavari), Kakinadaport (E. Godavari) and Bobbili (Srikakulam). Over 25,000 people visited the train exhibition in Karimnagar during 2 days, highest in the state.

Orissa: The state Chief Minister Mr. Naveen Patnaik was himself present along with a number of his cabinet colleagues at the state level function in Mancheshwar to welcome the RRE. The Red Ribbon Express which entered through Rayagada halted at Koraput, Berhampur (Ganjam), Mancheshwar (Bhubaneshwar), Cuttack, Jajpur Keonjhar, Jaleshwar (Balasore), Bolangir and Rourkela (Sundargarh) in the state during its 21 days run. Over 31,000 people visited the train exhibition in Berhampur.

West Bengal: The Train halted at 10 stations during 20 days journey through the state which include Kharagpur (Midnapore), Purulia, Burnpur (Bardhaman), Asansol (Burdwan), Howrah, Sealdah (Howrah), Rampurhat (Birbhum), Malda Jn (Malda), New Mali Jn (Hawrah) and Alipurduar Jn (Koochbihar). About 20,000 people visited the train exhibition at Sealdah, which was the highest in the state.

Assam: The State Chief Minister Mr. Tarun Gogoi along with his cabinet colleagues was present at Kamakhya Railway station in Guwahati to receive the RRE. The train stopped at 8 stations namely Fakiragram, New Bongaigaon, Rangia, Kamakhya, Chaparmukh, Lumding, Mariani and Tinsukia during 18 days in journey through the state. The outreach programme in the state received very good response and covered hilly and remote villages.

“In Botad it looked like as if the whole town turned up to see the exhibition with over 35,500 people visiting the train”



Village Head at a RRE function in Orissa

Nagaland: The hill state had one station Dimapur where the train stopped for 2 days. The outreach programme of the RRE project in the rural and hilly areas of the State is continuing through exhibition vans and folk troupes.

At the time of writing this document, the RRE had entered into the state of Bihar with huge public response continuing everywhere. It still had to pass through Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Chandigarh, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir before concluding the second phase of its journey in Delhi on the World AIDS Day on 1st December, 2010.

The Highlights of RRE-II coverage* (till 16th June, 2010)

	State	No. of persons directly reached through train and outreach	No. trained	No. counselled	No. tested for HIV
1	Delhi	1,29,952	3665	2409	1000
2	Rajasthan				
3	Gujarat	7,96,248	3810	2317	1453
4	Maharashtra	2,83,956	5680	9.27	4153
5	Karnataka	4,68,438	5741	3658	3183
6	Kerala	1,78,891	3559	2173	855
7	Tamilnadu	7,18,315	7556	2751	2362
8	Andhra Pradesh	2,63,188	6935	4505	3684
9	Orissa	3,49,008	4049	2795	1981
10	West Bengal	96,967	4196	1519	1271
11	Assam	209149	2090	1206	1151
12	Nagaland				
	Total	3809202	47281	32360	21093

*The data is provisional as the RRE outreach activities continue in some states even after the train left the state



Exhibition Bus with Bhavai artists at Surat, Gujarat

IMPACT

A robust monitoring and evaluation system has been established to assess the impact of the Red Ribbon Express. Rapid Assessments and Impact Evaluation studies are being used to measure response of the Target Audience.

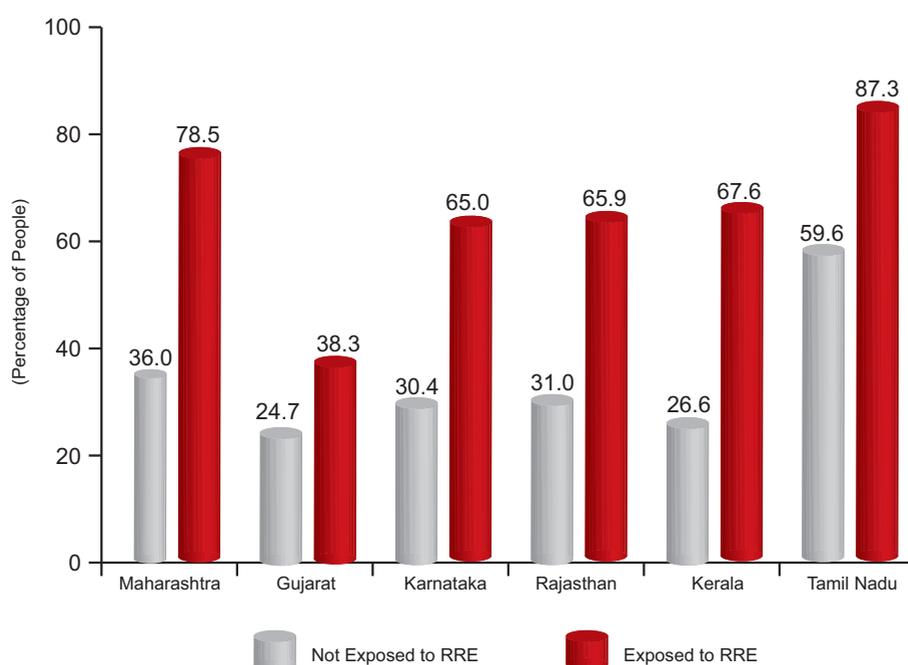
To assess the impact of RRE activities a random household survey is conducted at 50% of the halt points in each state within a month of departure of the train. The key indicators assessed during the evaluation include knowledge about HIV transmission, prevention, condoms and services. Various other indicators including stigma and discrimination are also studied during the survey. The sample is drawn from groups both exposed to the RRE compared to those not exposed.

The findings from six states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu indicate considerably higher knowledge of HIV/AIDS issues among respondents exposed to the intervention.

The comprehensive knowledge of three routes of HIV transmission, three methods of prevention, condom use, STI prevention and treatment and other services such as ICTC, PPTCT and ART was significantly higher among respondents exposed to the RRE project as compared to those not exposed to the project as shown in the following graph:

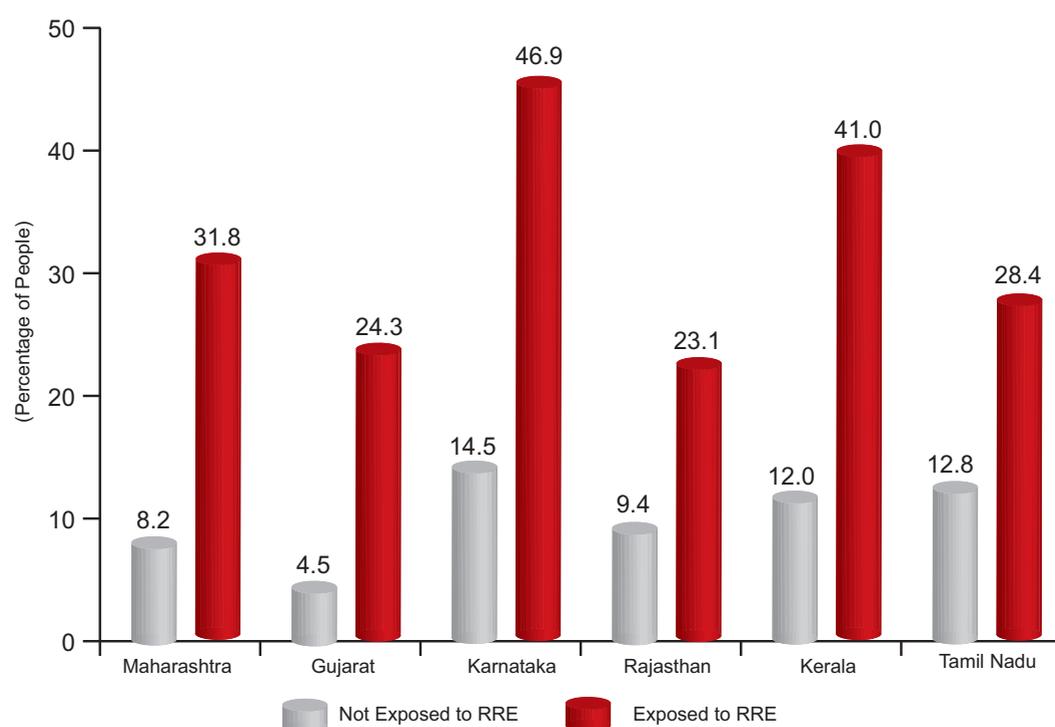
“Concurrent monitoring is done through rapid assessments and impact evaluation”

Percentage of people who know three routes of transmission



The above data indicates that among the RRE visitors there is a significant increase in the knowledge of the three routes of transmission and prevention. Almost 50 percent more number of respondents reported comprehensive and correct knowledge of HIV transmission and prevention. This also indicates that RRE messages were interesting, easy to comprehend and engaging.

Percentage of people who know about three ways of HIV Prevention



Further, an analysis of visits to the Integrated Counselling and Testing Centres (ICTC) at 10 project intervention districts in the state of Tamil Nadu shows 11% increase in the visits to these centres during and after the RRE journey.

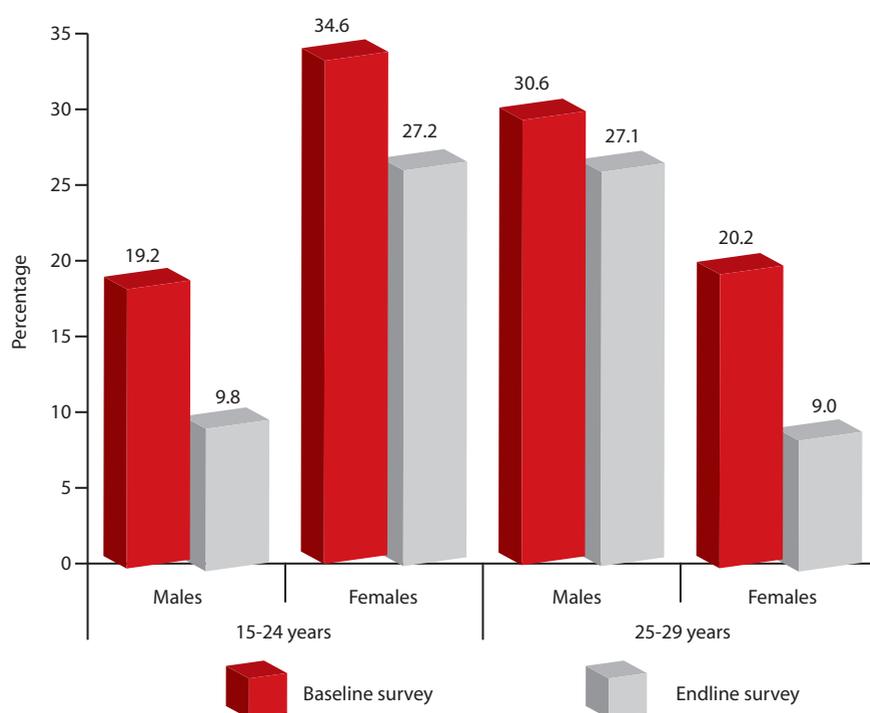
In addition, to the rapid assessment, an Impact Evaluation of Red Ribbon Express is also being undertaken in selected states. This evaluation is a population based survey using quantitative research methodology.

A staggered survey is conducted at baseline and endline among general population around the RRE halt stations to measure the achievements of RRE. The baseline survey (BLS) is conducted one month prior to the arrival of the train and endline survey (ELS) is conducted two months after the departure of the train. During the impact evaluation various indicators concerning knowledge of HIV prevention, related services, myths and misconceptions, and attitudes and perceptions of people about people living with HIV are studied. The data of the western zone consisting of three western states of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra has already been obtained and analysed. The following table shows positive impact of the campaign:

Indicator	15 – 24						25 – 29					
	Males		Females		Total		Males		Females		Total	
	Expo- sed	Not Expo- sed										
N	433	611	262	761	695	1372	397	664	208	853	605	1517
Knows at least three modes of transmission (%)	91.5	79.1*	96.2	82.5*	93.2	81.0*	95.7	80.6*	91.8	74.2*	94.4	77.0*
Knows at least two methods of prevention (%)	83.1	71.5*	87.8	64.9*	84.9	67.9*	88.9	72.7*	88.0	61.8*	88.6	66.6*

In all, 34 percent of youths and 29 percent of respondents were exposed to any of the RRE event in the west zone. Among both these categories, the exposure was higher among males compared to their female counterparts. 21 percent of the youths and 17 percent of adult respondents in west zone visited the RRE train, while around 15 to 12 percent of them, respectively were exposed to both train as well as outreach events. Overall it appears that the RRE contributed to increase in awareness levels among general population, more among females.

Percent of Respondents having misconception that HIV can spread through mosquito bite



The findings suggest that RRE was able to reduce the misconception regarding transmission from mosquito bites by about 7 percentage points among young female population and around 5 percentage points reduction among adult male population.

Concurrent monitoring has enabled mid-course corrections. For example, initial low 21.5% female turnout in the first state of Rajasthan was addressed at subsequent states through additional mobilisation efforts resulting in average increase in female turnout to 40%.

Large turnout of people at every station, people queuing up for HIV testing and that too without hesitation, strong political support, grassroots level functionaries turning up voluntarily for training sessions, open discussions on sexual health and condoms during outreach activities in villages, all these are definite signs of changing attitudes and perceptions.

While sustaining present interventions through ground mobilisation using IEC vans and folk troupes and through trained resource persons in the districts, the large amount of data and evidence gathered on various indicators will be used as an entry point for designing local interventions to sustain and extend the impact.



Red Ribbon Express in Tamil Nadu

VOICES

“Between friends we have discussed that we should not fall into risky behaviour of any kind. This train strengthened that resolve. We liked the way the information was presented in this train. It tell you that only you are in-charge of your health and life.”

— **Vinayak, Sridhar and Suraj, Kolar, Karnataka**

“Messages are in local language in every state. This is helpful for better understanding.”

— **G. Gomes, Orissa**

“Red Ribbon Express train is very effective tool to reach out to people particularly like us from rural areas.”

—**Pratap Kumar, Orissa**

“We used this opportunity to clarify our doubts on HIV with the counsellors. We also decided to get tested to clear our doubts.”

— **Shilpa and Pavithra, second year students from a local college, Karnataka**

“The response to the condom promotion campaign is good. Men and women are picking up condoms.”

— **Ramachandriah, Field Officer, PSI**

“I did not know that one could get tested at VIMS Hospital. I shall also ask my husband to get tested.”

— **Shalini Durgashree, Self Help Group Member, Karnataka**

“Many of us experience Sexually Transmitted Infections but do not know that it increases risk to HIV. Such clear information and training can help many women to get treatment.”

—**Amudha, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu**

ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
NACO	National AIDS Control Organization
NACP	National AIDS Control Programme
NRHM	National Rural Health Mission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RRE	Red Ribbon Express
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection



NACO envisions an India where every person living with HIV has access to quality care and is treated with dignity. Effective prevention, care and support is possible in an environment where human rights are respected and where those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS live a life without stigma and discrimination.

NACO has taken measures to ensure that people living with HIV have equal access to quality health services. By fostering close collaboration with NGOs, women's self-help groups, faith-based organisations, positive people's networks and communities, NACO hopes to improve access and accountability of the services. It stands committed to building an enabling environment wherein those infected and affected by HIV play a central role in all responses to the epidemic - at state, district, and grassroots level.

NACO is thus committed to contain the spread of HIV in India by building an all-encompassing response reaching out to diverse populations. We endeavour to provide people with accurate, complete and consistent information about HIV, promote use of condoms for protection, and emphasise treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. NACO works to motivate men and women for a responsible sexual behaviour.

NACO believes that people need to be aware, motivated, equipped, and empowered with knowledge so that they can protect themselves from the impact of HIV. We confront a stark reality - HIV can happen to any of us. Our hope is that anyone can be saved from the infection with appropriate information on prevention. NACO is built on a foundation of care and support, and is committed to consistently fabricate strategic responses for combating HIV/AIDS situation in India.



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