

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE). The signing ceremony involved National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) and the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (DoSJE), with the primary aim of improving HIV/AIDS outreach to vulnerable populations.

Objective and Expected Outcome

The foremost objective of MoU is to lessen social stigma and discrimination against victims of drug abuse, children, and People Living with HIV/AIDS. It hopes to craft specific strategies and action plans for HIV and AIDS prevention, along with mechanisms for drug addiction treatment. Importantly, it intends to expand social protection schemes to vulnerable sections of society.

The AIDS Scenario in India

NACO, a division of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, leads the HIV/AIDS control programme in India through 35 HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Societies. Integral to India's combat against HIV/AIDS, NACO has contributed to a noteworthy decline in HIV/AIDS prevalence at a rate quicker than global rates. Since the epidemic peak in 1995, estimated new infections have reduced by more than 80% and AIDS-related deaths have declined by 71% since its maximum in 2005.

According to the UNAIDS report of 2018, the global average for decline in new infections and AIDS-related deaths sits at 47% and 51% respectively from their respective peaks. UNAIDS, set up in 1996, guides global, regional, national and local leadership initiatives to relegate HIV to history.

India's Contribution to Global Fight against AIDS

Of the 2 million new AIDS infections annually, Indian pharmaceutical companies manufacture the drugs reaching 66% of the world population currently undergoing antiretroviral therapy. Consequently, these companies have a critical role in the global fight against AIDS, due to their ability to produce high-quality, affordable medicines.

The global Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) market was estimated to be worth .48 billion in 2018, and is projected to reach .83 billion by 2025.

Antiretroviral Therapy

Following table represents some facts about Antiretroviral Therapy:

What is ART?	The combination of drugs used to treat HIV, a retrovirus
Standard ART according to WHO	A combination of at least three antiretroviral drugs
The purpose of ART	To suppress the HIV virus and halt the progression of the disease

Impact of ART

Significant reductions in death rates and suffering, particularly in the early stages of the disease

Source: PIB