

To Mr. Alok Saxena  
Director General, National AIDS Control Organization, India

The International Network of People who Use Drugs expresses our concern over the ongoing stockout of Antiretroviral medicines (ARV) in India. We further express our solidarity with the Delhi Network of Positive People (DNP+) who have been protesting indefinitely in front of the NACO headquarters in New Delhi, demanding resumption of a 30-day supply of ARV.

The impact of the ARV stockout in India has been severe. People living with HIV have been forced to ration doses and make frequent, inconvenient trips to pick up more ARV. Many have been offered pediatric formulations in lieu of adult formulations, while children living with HIV are completely deprived medicines. These disruptions to treatment pose a significant risk of death to the 72,500 people living with HIV affected by the stockout.

Networks of people living with HIV across India anticipated the stockout in December 2021 and immediately began reaching out to NACO requesting prompt action. While a fresh tender for procurement was floated in March 2022, contracts were not awarded in time to prevent the stockout and shortage of HIV drugs such as Dolutegravir, Lopinavir/Ritonavir and Abacavir. Interim measures in Uttar Pradesh, Maharastra and Himachal Pradesh have further come too late to prevent shortages.

This crisis highlights the urgent need for a streamlined procurement process which ensures an uninterrupted supply of life-saving HIV medications. The millions of people living with HIV in India should not be forced into a life-or-death situation due to a lack of urgency by the government even as the community raises the alarm. Ensuring access to antiretroviral drugs for treating HIV without disruption is a human rights obligation under the right to health, as emphasised by UNAIDS, the World Health Organization and the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights.

As the agency responsible for centralized procurement of Antiretroviral drugs, we urge NACO to listen to the demands of DNP+ and all networks of people living with HIV to ensure procurement processes are completed well in advance and to ensure buffer supplies of at least 6 months.

Sincerely,



Judy Chang  
Executive Director, International Network of People who Use Drugs