

Review Article:

Journey of Red Ribbon Express (RRE) through Gujarat

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Generating mass awareness regarding HIV/AIDS is an important strategy under National AIDS Control Programme-III (NACP-III). It not only reduces the transmission but also aims to remove the stigma and discrimination towards People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA). This in turn, facilitates the PLHA to come out in open with their status, whereby they join the services of care, supports and treatment and are also empowered/ informed to prevent further transmission.

Red Ribbon Express (RRE) is an attempt to generate mass awareness, especially amongst youth and college students. It is a prestigious multi-sartorial programme for creating awareness about HIV/AIDS and other health related issues in the country. In the first phase, the RRE train was flagged off on 1st December, 2007, from New Delhi, which, after traversing through all the states, concluded its journey on 1st December, 2008. Gujarat's performance was No.1 in the country in terms of number of people reached with a total of 622027 having been covered in all.

A total of 127588 people visited the on-platform exhibitions of RRE. In the second phase, it was flagged off on 1st December, 2009, from New Delhi, by Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the Chief of UPA. Under the programme, the multi-theme train is mobilizing mass awareness across 22 State of the country before it returns to the national capital. The train will traverse 25000 km during which it will stop at 152 stations during its yearlong journey.

The train has 8 coaches: 4 Coaches have exhibition & IEC material on HIV/AIDS, including 1 coach for NRHM. There is 1 coach for Auditorium- cum-Conference Hall facilities. The project primarily focuses on rural areas with the objectives of disseminating information about primary prevention & services, developing an understanding about the diseases to reduce stigma & discrimination, strengthening people's knowledge about the measures to be taken to prevent getting HIV/AIDS and adopting preventative health habits and life-style.

After passing through Rajasthan, it entered Gujarat on 20th December, 2009, and left for Maharashtra on 3rd January, 2010. The arrival of RRE was preceded by a media conference, which was addressed by Shri Jayanarayan Vyas, Hon'ble Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Gujarat. He briefed the media about the special features, composition and schedule of RRE and involvement of various government and non-government agencies. He requested media to help the government in this programme by widely publicizing it, so that maximum people can take its benefit. Activities were taken up by Gujarat State AIDS Control Society and its district units to ensure the mobilization of crowds and coordination of various activities.

Red Ribbon Express: In Gujarat

- 6 Stations
- 4 Districts
- 13 Days
- Total coverage: 6.03 Lakhs
- 4.49 lakhs people in 4 districts were covered through the RRE Campaign including 1.20 lakhs directly reached
- Outreach coverage through Bus- Bike Carvan and Road shows 4.83 lakhs

Summary of Achievement through Red Ribbon Express Project in Gujarat

Sr. No	Date	District	City	Platform Activities			Outreach Coverage			Total
				No of Visitors	No. of Person Trained	HIV Testing	Bus Carvan	Bike Carvan	Road Shows	
1	20-Dec-09	BK	Palanpur	5473	238	140	3841	20800	23428	53542
2	21-Dec-09	BK	Palanpur	8263	207	202	3239	24844	7300	43646
3	22-Dec-09	Bhavnagar	Bhavnagar	7994	430	187	3535	6540	19573	37642
4	23-Dec-09	Bhavnagar	Bhavnagar	15637	183	151	4460	8640	31175	59912
5	24-Dec-09	Bhavnagar	Botad	16817	210	98	4463	11240	4970	37490
6	25-Dec-09	Bhavnagar	Botad	18723	394	122	2759	0	5080	26562
7	26-Dec-09	Rajkot	Wankaner	7176	197	64	3241	7000	2545	19962
8	27-Dec-09	Rajkot	Wankaner	7239	304	48	3173	6500	2950	19862
9	28-Dec-09	Rajkot	Rajkot	3328	244	40	3380	5300	3380	15388
10	29-Dec-09	Rajkot	Rajkot	7168	392	40	2899	7500	4079	21646
11	30-Dec-09	Rajkot	Rajkot	9374	284	44	3411	7500	3131	23416
12	31-Dec-09	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	4751	186	145	4754	6164	14284	29953
13	01-Jan-10	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	8179	338	172	4393	11237	14471	38280
Total-1				120122	3607	1453	47548	123265	136366	427301
14	02-Jan-10	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	0	0	0	0	13393	0	13393
15	03-Jan-10	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	0	0	0	0	3230	0	3230
16	04-Jan-10	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	0	0	0	0	5615	0	5615
Total-2				120122	3607	1453	47548	145503	136366	449539
	5th Jan. to 11th March	Rest of the Districts		0	0	0	154073	0	0	154073
Grand Total(1+2)				120122	3607	1453	201621	145503	136366	603612

During the RRE Campaign, overall, a total of 603612 people were covered in Gujarat, consisting of 449539 covered at 6 stations in 4 districts and 154073 covered by IDC bus carvans in rest of the districts between 5th March,2010 to 11th March,2010.

It was open to public in the state from 21st December,2009, to 1st January, 2010. During the 13-day campaign in and around 6 stations, viz. Palanpur (dist. Banaskantha), Bhavnagar & Botad (dist. Bhavnagar), Wankaner & Bhaktinagar (dist. Rajkot) and Ahmedabad (dist. Ahmedabad), a total of **427301 persons** were covered, consisting of 1, 20,122 visitors to on-platform programmes and 4, 83,490 persons reached through peripheral activities like Bus Caravans,

Motor Bike Caravans and Road Shows. While Bus Caravans covered 2,01,621 persons, Gujarat innovations like Motor Bike Caravan and Road Shows provided far more extensive coverage, having reached out to 1,45,503 and 1,36,366 persons respectively. Even after the Red Ribbon Express left Gujarat, the Bus Caravans continued till March, 2010, promoting awareness about HIV/AIDS in rest of the districts in the state. Under the training of stakeholders, a total of 3607 persons were trained on prevention and control of HIV/AIDS at the auditorium in the train. Integrated Counseling & Testing Center (ICTC) facilities were accessed by a large number of people. A total of 1453 persons were tested for HIV, while 229 were tested for STI. Also, voluntary blood donations were received from 183 persons.

Gujarat has set up a national record in terms of recording highest number of visitors to the train in a single day, with Botad registering 18,723 visitors to the on-platform RRE program on 25th December, 2009, beating its own record of 16817 visitors set up on 24th December, 2009.

It may be noted that like previous round, this time, too, RRE had very good response in the state. The RRE Campaign provided coverage to a total of 6.03 lakh persons in Gujarat, which is second only to Tamilnadu where it covered 7.18 lakh persons. It may be pointed out that RRE stayed for 13 days in Gujarat, during which it covered 6 stations while it stayed for 20 days in Tamilnadu, during which it covered 10 stations. This huge success of RRE journey in Gujarat would not have been possible without the active involvement of various state departments, District Collectors, District Development Officers, RDDs, CDHOs, District Programme Coordinators, District Programme Officers and District Supervisors.

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