

Business Standard

In association with

e-NGO opens office in city

FRIDAY 10 JUNE 2005

SOHINI MOOKHERJEA

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a germ which can leap eighty feet in the air and infect a person, this was the response from a truck driver when asked about his awareness about HIV/AIDS (acquired immuno deficiency syndrome) during a survey conducted by Sukriti Foundation, the only eNGO (non-government organisation) in the country formally launched in the city. The survey also revealed that the 85 per cent of the truck drivers in the state, the community most at risk from HIV/AIDS were not aware about the killer disease.

Sukriti Foundation classifies themselves as a combination of professional people from various backgrounds, including media and communication have formed this organisation, the first of its kind which will focus only on television as a medium for social communication focusing on healthcare and education.

According to a TAM India survey released by the foundation the reason for choosing television as a medium to reach out to the unreachable is that 59 per cent of the television audience in the country are people who do not work, another 22 per cent of the others fall into the category of unskilled

workers and only the top 10 per cent comprise professionals, executives, industrialists and businessmen.

The foundation has already started pilot programmes on such topics in 11 districts of West Bengal in association with a channel called Bangla Akhon which reaches out to the district people, stated Abhijit Dasgupta, founder member of Sukriti.

The programmes are socially purposive including an update introduced for the first time on television on blood stock availability in the government blood banks in the city and a helpline to for con-

tacting in case of emergency requirements.

The foundation has also orchestrated live and interactive programmes on HIV/AIDS, use and misuse of blood, thalassaemia, mental health and child psychology with each of the programmes on an average receiving 10 patient calls per minute. The joint efforts of Sukriti Foundation along with the Thalassaemia Foundation and West Bengal Voluntary Blood Donors Forum, the programme on thalassaemia has led the state government to launch a special prevention programme on this disorder and blood bank recommenda-



tions have materialised with 50 per cent implementation.

More than 40 per cent of the country's HIV/AIDS population are below 35 years with 67 per cent urban concentration, therefore we will focus on creating programmes which deal with not only preventive issues but cases of discrimination from various districts, Dasgupta said.

The foundation's aim is to have a 24-hour live and interactive television channel which will have specially designed programmes for target groups with healthcare and education focus initially. The channel will have 24 hour helplines for marginalised sections of society like the transgender community and HIV/AIDS patients.

There will be empanelled doctors, counsellors and social workers with advocacy cells and linkages to state departments.

Our healthcare programmes will deal with preventive and primary healthcare and contradictions in healthcare delivery and issues of health economics and basic education including sex education and adult education for self employment, concluded Bhaskar Ghosh, retired secretary of information and broadcasting, and a founder member.