

## **Times of India**

### **Swiss NGO takes up cause in Punjab**

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CHANDIGARH: Albina du Boisrouvray, a French-Swiss Countess, accompanying French president Nicolas Sarkozy's official delegation, on her visit to India announced the launch of Rs 14 lakh project by her Switzerland-based NGO, Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) in league with Nabha Foundation, Patiala to cater to general health, risk and protection from AIDS/HIV. The programme will be taken up in 10 villages, where 60 AIDS affected patient will be looked after. Besides this, Ludhiana too is in her scheme of things as she feels the need to spread the awareness about AIDS/HIV.

FXB leads 87 programmes in 19 countries and has 600 personnel to fight AIDS, poverty and rescue work of orphans and vulnerable children of the AIDS pandemic. It's Indian version is known as India Suraksha, which constitutes an integrated package of complementary components: care and support initiatives for AIDS orphans, other vulnerable children and people living with HIV and AIDS. It focuses on specific groups considered 'at risk' of contracting HIV virus, such as migrant workers, fishermen and street children.

"Millions of children suffering from AIDS in poor countries are becoming a discarded generation," said the Countess. Speaking to TOI, by telephone from New Delhi, in an exclusive interview Albina said: "This trip was a poignant opportunity to highlight the challenges facing unfortunate millions of children who have been left behind by AIDS."

Albina informed that she has called upon the French government and members of the G8 to allocate at least 10 % of overall AIDS funding to support orphans and vulnerable children. Ensuring that 10 % of HIV/AIDS funding is allocated to orphans and vulnerable children is the focus of World AIDS Orphan Day founded in 2002 by Albina and is celebrated every year on May 7 in more than 40 countries.

FXB's India's affiliate is the only European NGO working in the area of HIV/AIDS in all the states and Union territories of India, catering to 3.50 lakh direct beneficiaries and covering a population of 13.5 million. Through its successful village model programme, FXB provides low-cost, sustainable community based support to help families and communities.

Operating through a budget of US\$ 150,000 over a three-year period, up to 85% of FXB's beneficiary families in the programme have become entirely self-sufficient. In November 2003, Albina received the "Lifetime Achievement Award" at the 4th International Conference on AIDS in India.

Emphasizing on the grim situation she said: "Over 15 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS. A millions orphans remain unaccounted for, particularly in remote, marginalized communities across India. By the end of the next decade, the number of AIDS orphans worldwide is expected to expand to at least 25 million."

After witnessing the great success of the village model programme in Uganda and Rwanda the Countess is soon going to launch it in Jammu and Kashmir, Mizoram and some other states.

"I have appealed to the French government and members of the G8 to allocate at least 10 % of overall AIDS funding to support orphans and vulnerable children. The US and the UK have adopted such a policy. Ireland allocates 20 % to orphans and vulnerable children," she said.