



## **Case Study: Reliance Industries Limited**

### **Overview**

Reliance Industries Limited is India's largest private enterprise, with businesses straddling several sectors and a workforce of 25,000 employees.<sup>6</sup> Its large workforce and extensive operations give it a big stake in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

The company's HIV and AIDS program is unusual among those initiated by private companies in India in that it not only promotes awareness of HIV and AIDS but also provides treatment. Another unique feature of the program is its broad coverage: it provides antiretroviral therapy to anyone in the community who is HIV-positive, whether or not that person is an employee of the company.

The program began by establishing a well-equipped health center at Hazira, in Gujarat, to provide tuberculosis treatment based on the strategy recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), known as DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course). The center, which

---

6. The information in the Reliance case study is based on personal interviews with Reliance officials responsible for the company's HIV and AIDS program, site visits, and internal documents shared by the company. The information is current as of September 2006.

also offered information on HIV prevention, later expanded to treatment and other services for AIDS patients. It also provides counseling, education, and training and disseminates information on nutrition.

Reliance has worked closely with partners to help extend the program's reach. In villages near Hazira local NGOs disseminate information and refer HIV-positive people to the center. While education programs and the center itself initially encountered resistance because of the social stigma associated with HIV and AIDS, repeated awareness activities have helped gain acceptance.

The program has already reached nearly 300,000 people—truckers (drivers and crew members), contract and migrant workers, employees of local enterprises, and members of the local community. Reliance is now initiating a process of replicating the program at other company sites.

### **Business background**

Reliance is a big presence in the Indian economy, with annual sales of US\$20 billion, a net worth of US\$11 billion, and total assets of US\$21 billion. Its activities include oil and gas exploration and production, petroleum refining and marketing, petrochemicals (polyester, fiber interme-

diates, plastics, and chemicals), and textiles. Its exports reach nearly 100 countries across the globe, totaling US\$7 billion annually.

The company operates manufacturing facilities at several sites in Gujarat. The Naroda facility, near Ahmedabad, houses a textile plant. The Pa-

As a global business leader, we are equally concerned about the society we live in and our environment. We have constantly pursued businesses that will trigger high growth and promote sustainable development, and this has been and must continue to be one of our guiding philosophies.

—Mukesh D. Ambani, Chairman  
Reliance Industries

talanga complex, near Mumbai, has polyester, fiber intermediate, and linear alkyl benzene manufacturing plants. The Hazira complex, near Surat, has a naphtha cracker feeding downstream fiber intermediate, plastics, and polyester plants. And the Jamnagar complex has a petroleum refinery and associated petrochemical plants that produce plastics and fiber intermediates.

### **Why do something about HIV and AIDS?**

As an industrial site, Hazira has a large migrant workforce employed in several local industries. The presence of these industries has also contributed to a large, floating population of truckers in Hazira. Concerned about the risk of infectious diseases in such a population, the local government sought corporate support to set up HIV and tuberculosis programs at the workplace and in medical camps in local villages and on local highways.

In 2004 the district tuberculosis program approached Reliance about collaborating in efforts to address tuberculosis in Hazira. Around the same time, at the World Economic Forum, Reliance committed to working toward combating HIV and AIDS in India. Together, these two events gave management the impetus to initiate a full-time HIV and tuberculosis program at the company's Hazira location.

The company's management began by discussing possible intervention strategies with Lok Vikas Sanstha (LVS), a local NGO specializing in public health. In 2004 LVS had conducted a baseline survey on the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections in Hazira and found that among the local population of migrant workers and truckers the prevalence rate was close to 12 percent (LVS 2004).

The discussions with LVS led Reliance to set up a DOTS tuberculosis and HIV center at Mora village on May 15, 2004, to provide medical ser-

vices (both general and tuberculosis related) and information on HIV prevention for local villagers, truckers who halt for long hours, and the neighboring communities of migrant and contract workers. The center is housed in a community hall provided by Mora's *gram panchayat*.<sup>7</sup> Involving the panchayat helped create a sense of ownership among the local villagers.

### **The program**

The Reliance HIV and AIDS program has two components: awareness and education, and treatment and support.

#### Awareness and education

Before launching its awareness program, Reliance held a series of discussions with the Gujarat State AIDS Control Society aimed at better understanding the nature of HIV prevalence in Hazira. These discussions made it clear that generating awareness among high-risk groups was a priority in stemming the spread of the epidemic. Reliance thus ensured that its awareness program extended beyond its employees and local villagers to high-risk groups in local industries.

#### *Reliance employees*

Reliance initiated the awareness program in-house, as part of its health, safety, and environment training for contract workers, supervisors, and

---

7. Every Indian village elects a panchayat, a five-person team that presides over the village's development affairs.

security staff. Conducted once a week by the company's on-site physician and LVS trainers, this training program has reached more than 5,000 workers. Besides basic information about preventing the transmission of HIV, sessions include discussions among workers to help clarify misperceptions about HIV and AIDS.

Initially those conducting the sessions faced challenges due to the strong stigma associated with HIV and AIDS. But Reliance has found that regular sessions and efforts to generate mass awareness among workers have substantially reduced fears relating to the epidemic.

### *Local community*

Reliance has developed a multipronged approach to HIV and AIDS awareness and education in the local community. In nearby villages it conducts mass awareness programs through health camps. Sessions held at these camps discuss other health issues along with HIV, to diffuse the focus and

**Figure 1. Examples of how HIV and AIDS information is disseminated in local villages by the Reliance program**



thus lessen the discomfort of addressing HIV-related topics. A community mobilization team, with representatives from both Reliance and LVS, frequently visits neighboring villages (Damki, Suvali, Batlai, Junagaon, Vasva, and Rajgiri) to disseminate information (figure 2). Diagnostic and referral services are also provided in the health camps. Reliance bears the cost of both the health camps and any subsequent treatment.

As part of the effort to generate mass awareness, Reliance has also posted several educational banners in Surat and used street plays, poster exhibits, and video shows. Thanks to outreach efforts such as these, 25 HIV-positive sex workers from nearby villages are being monitored and treated by the medical center.

Reliance has also worked to generate awareness among truckers visiting its truck parking area, which draws nearly 1,000 trucks a day. Staff share information, distribute brochures printed in Hindi, Gujarati, and English, and hand out packs of condoms.

To strengthen its efforts in the community, Reliance has provided training to a group of young people who expressed interest in sharing information about HIV and AIDS with their neighbors and peers. These volunteers, who serve as a link between the medical center and the village population, received training in communication skills and on such topics as modes of HIV transmission, safe behavior, condom promotion, and identification of sexually transmitted infections.

Reliance has also provided training to local medical personnel aimed at increasing their awareness of and responsiveness to the concerns of HIV-positive people. The program has targeted doctors from urban health centers, the Employee State Insurance Scheme hospital, primary health centers of Surat district, and other private practitioners. Some 80 doctors and more than 100 paramedical staff have attended training programs.

### *Local enterprises*

Having established awareness programs both at the company and in the local community, Reliance extended its efforts to high-risk groups in the local diamond and textile industries. These industries hire contract and migrant workers who live away from their families and in localities where prostitution is common, making them more susceptible to HIV infection.

In collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry, an association that represents industry on business and sustainable development issues, a team of Reliance and LVS staff visited a different enterprise each week to conduct HIV awareness sessions. A typical program would begin with a management meeting, followed by sensitization sessions with the workforce. It would conclude with the management signing an HIV and AIDS policy based on the International Labour Organization (ILO) workplace policy. In 2004–05 these sessions provided training to more than 8,000 workers in 67 textile and 24 diamond enterprises.

### **Treatment and support**

Through its outreach activities Reliance discovered that Hazira and the nearby areas lacked adequate medical care and services for HIV-positive people. It therefore converted the DOTS tuberculosis and HIV center in Mora into an HIV testing, counseling, and treatment center offering a wide range of services. And it sent its physicians for special training on clinical intervention and softer skills needed to deal with HIV-positive patients.

The center provides a number of medical tests free for HIV-positive patients and at a heavily subsidized cost for others, including pregnancy tests, blood screening for syphilis (Venereal Disease Research Labora-

tory test), urine microscopy, and biochemical examinations such as liver function tests, blood sugar, and lipid profile. Patients seeking treatment for sexually transmitted infections receive counseling on such topics as modes of HIV transmission, the relationship between HIV and sexually transmitted infections, and the use of condoms. The center also provides antiretroviral therapy. And it offers emergency care including intravenous drugs and fluids and ambulance services.

Also among the services offered at the center are counseling, yoga training, pranayama coaching (breathing exercises to boost physical and mental spirits), and nutritional support. Malnutrition patients weighing less than 40 kilograms receive food and nutrition supplements.

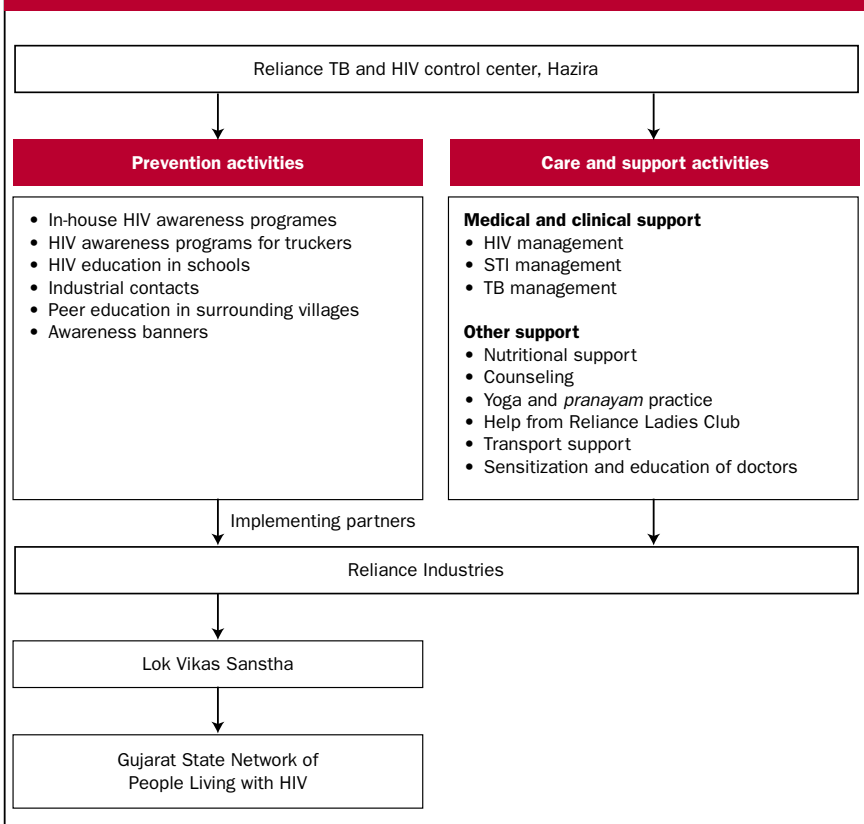
## Partnerships

Reliance management played a key leadership role in shaping the program and extending its outreach beyond company employees to the neighboring community. But partners have also been critical in implementing the program (figure 2):

- *Lok Vikas Sanstha*, through its team of 100 peer educators, has been responsible for organizing awareness campaigns in local areas and for the migrant workforce of Reliance on identification and treatment of sexually transmitted infections.
- *Gujarat State Network of People Living with HIV (GSNP+)*, an extremely active network of 1,600 members, has helped strengthen outreach by referring potential HIV-positive cases to the center. GSNP+ has provided counseling to HIV-positive people with no funds from Reliance. It encourages members of the network to take their medications regularly and coordinates with Reliance in providing medication and transport to the center. GSNP+ has also



Figure 2. Reliance program: Activities and implementing partners



worked with Reliance to sensitize local government authorities, which has led to the establishment of an AIDS information desk at the government hospital in Surat.

- *Reliance Life Sciences*, a research-oriented subsidiary in Mumbai focusing on medical, plant, and industrial biotechnology, has provided viral load testing (which determines the stage of HIV infections) at a subsidized cost.

- *Lok Samarpan*, a local blood bank, conducts CD4 tests (which report on the strength of the body's immune system and thus help assess the stage of the HIV infection and predict the risk of complications) at a subsidized rate of Rs 650 (US\$14.50) per test. Further subsidy by Reliance reduces the cost to Rs 300 (US\$6.50) per test. All costs are waived for widows and orphans.

## Funding

In 2005–06 program costs amounted to Rs 100 lakhs (US\$222,000). Reliance contributed Rs 75 lakhs (US\$167,000), while the government covered the rest through the Gujarat State AIDS Control Society.

## Outreach

The Reliance center has provided counseling to around 13,950 patients. Of these, 330 are patients receiving active antiretroviral therapy,<sup>8</sup> and 166 are tuberculosis patients receiving DOTS. In addition, 1,450 patients have been treated for sexually transmitted infections. A separate group of 626 HIV-positive patients are receiving regular monitoring and follow-up. The program has enabled nearly 250 HIV-positive people to return to regular work after beginning antiretroviral therapy.

Beyond the center, a mobile medical van pays weekly visits to nearby villages to offer free consultation and basic medication for general ailments. Between January 2005 and March 2006 this initiative benefited more than 140,000 villagers and 60,000 migrant workers.

---

8. The cost of providing antiretroviral therapy for one patient is Rs 1,500 (US\$33) a month.

## Lessons learned

The program has identified success factors, challenges, and lessons based on its experience.

### Key success factors

- *Outreach.* In collaboration with program partners, the Reliance center has been able to provide quality services not only to company employees but also to a wide range of people in the community and at local enterprises. Indeed, patients from across southern Gujarat visit the center, some from as far as Amreli and Junagarh. The company attributes the success of its outreach efforts to the quality of services provided by the center and the referral network set up by partners.
- *NGO partnerships.* Top managers at Reliance have contributed greatly to the program's effectiveness through their involvement and commitment. But NGO partners have played a crucial role in enabling the program to expand and reach out to villagers, industrial workers, truckers, and the HIV-positive population.

### Key challenges

- *Poor public health services.* The government's public health system often lacks the basic medical services and expertise required to administer quality care to AIDS patients. While this may not directly hinder operation of the center, an effective government system would help both support the services offered by the Reliance center and extend coverage to more patients.

- *Retention of village outreach workers.* Retaining village outreach workers has been a challenge for the program staff, with workers often dropping out after receiving training. Continually training new outreach workers has been costly and time consuming.
- *Social stigma.* Reliance faced initial challenges in its awareness and education programs because of the social stigma associated with HIV and AIDS and sexually transmitted infections. Workers hesitated to ask questions during training sessions, though they often returned to clear up misconceptions. And villagers were concerned about the proximity of the medical center to their homes, fearing that it could expose them to infections from visiting patients.
- *Monitoring and evaluation.* Reliance staff believe that monitoring and evaluation of the program need to be strengthened, with clearly defined targets established for evaluating all partners.

### Other lessons learned

- *Financial sustainability.* The Gujarat State AIDS Control Society provides funds to LVS for its counseling, training, and dissemination services and for the cost of medicines. Thus the continued support of LVS as a program partner depends largely on the continued financial support of the Gujarat State AIDS Control Society.

### Future plans

At the Hazira site, where Reliance has largely concentrated its efforts, the company has begun to construct a new center that can accommodate more patients. Future plans also call for replicating the program at other

company sites. In addition, the company is considering implementing similar HIV and AIDS initiatives at Reliance gas stations on the highways, targeted to the trucking population. Given the plans to extend and expand the program, evaluating its impact to date and assessing the effectiveness of its interventions will be especially important.

