

For Immediate Release

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Albina du Boisrouvray visits India to assess FXB programs

Albina du Boisrouvray, Founder and President of the Swiss-based NGO, François-Xavier Bagnoud International (FXB), will be traveling to India to monitor the progress of FXB's various programs she initiated throughout the country, related to orphans and vulnerable children, poverty alleviation and HIV prevention.

Since 1981, over 25 million people in India have died of AIDS. Approximately **5.7 million people are currently living with HIV**, and **over 90% of HIV-positive people in India do not know that they are carrying the virus.** *"In India, [...] Five years ago, one did not speak about AIDS. Officially, it did not exist. The population's lack of knowledge about the epidemic was tremendous. [...] We therefore began with information dissemination and prevention: explaining what AIDS was, how to protect oneself from it, promoting voluntary counseling and testing, working in collaboration with local authorities so that they would take ownership of these messages"*, said Albina du Boisrouvray in 2005.

FXB has been present in India since 1991. Rajasthan was to be the setting for FXB's initial prevention work in India, later expanding across the whole country. Since 2003, FXB has been **the only NGO working in the area of HIV/AIDS present in all 35 States and Union Territories of India.** Its strategies focus on the need to spread HIV awareness and treatment, and the implementation of the innovative one-of-a-kind FXB Village Model Program, especially within the rural areas.

From February 6 to 18, Albina du Boisrouvray will visit Delhi before traveling to the north-eastern regions of India; namely Mizoram, Jharkhand, and Bihar. From March 2 to 7, she will then travel to the north-west; from Rajasthan to Gujarat, and Mumbai.

In Delhi, the FXB President will be meeting with staff to launch the new **FXB India Suraksha** (still to be incorporated), a non-profit company designed to make the delivery of FXB programs in India smoother. She will then begin her site visits, as highlighted.

The Slum Intervention Program specifically targets migrant workers in slum areas whose high-risk sexual behavior exposes them to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS. In parallel, FXB supports communities living in precarious conditions through programs that provide sustainable development to improve their living standards. Slum communities are sensitized, motivated and trained for perpetuating HIV prevention messages.

Barbers in India are part of a unique program initiated by FXB to promote AIDS awareness. Through its latest project in India, FXB's **Barber Intervention Program** has reached up to 2,500 barbers and is targeting 5 million customers. Barbers are being trained in communication skills to discuss sexual issues, still a taboo subject in India, discuss HIV prevention, identify symptoms of HIV infection, and refer customers to health clinics. The program was started as a pilot project in 2001 in Delhi, and has now extended across 26 states and two union territories of India.

Says Albina du Boisrouvray of the Program, *“We realized that barbers in each village provided a good means to promote safe sex and spread the message of prevention against HIV to their customers. We taught them the basic facts about AIDS, how to protect themselves and combat the epidemic, and we asked them make use of the moments when their [male] customers were relaxed and indulging in conversation, to spread our message.”*

In Kolkata, Albina du Boisrouvray will be signing a **Memorandum of Understanding** with West Bengal Health Minister Dr. Surya Kanto Mishra, to launch the **FXB Village Model Program**, which will be implemented in selected districts of West Bengal, with the collaboration of Dr. Amartya Sen's Pratichi Institute. The pioneering FXB low-cost, sustainable community-based Village Model Program helps families and communities respond to HIV/AIDS, orphanhood and poverty. Operating through a budget of US\$ 150,000 over a 3-year period, up to 85% of FXB's beneficiary families in the program become entirely self-sufficient.

“And it works!”, exclaims Albina du Boisrouvray. *“After 3 years, families have lifted themselves out of poverty, increasing their profit from 60 cents to 3 or \$4 a day, placing their children in schools, raising a generation of orphans, radically changing their lives.”*

FXB is partnering with the giant Indian private sector **Hindustan Construction Company**. A meeting between Albina du Boisrouvray and HCC members in Munger (Bihar) will assess FXB interventions in the workplace with the purpose of encouraging the private sector to put in place prevention and care HIV/AIDS programs within its companies.

A reflection of FXB's innovative and hands-on projects in India is the **Railway Station Platform Children Program**, which Albina du Boisrouvray will visit in Delhi and Jaipur. This program, which touches the very core of FXB's raison-d'être, focuses on homeless street children who are neither in the care of their parents nor a foster family. Low personal hygiene, irregular eating, lack of shelter, no care or treatment for common illnesses, and abuse and exploitation, are a common story of every street child. FXB is assisting these children, certainly a group very much exposed to HIV infection, by promoting the adoption of healthy lifestyles and providing care and treatment.

In June 2000, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded financial support to FXB to initiate an **HIV/AIDS/STI Prevention Project in Rural Rajasthan**, one of the largest of FXB's projects, aimed at raising social awareness about sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS among migrant workers within their homes, communities and workplace. Male migrants typically contract HIV during their work in another state, often urban, where they frequently engage in unprotected sex.

Today, in order to ensure safe behavioral practices that reduce the risk of HIV infection of these migrant workers, the commercial sex workers they visit, and their families back in their villages, FXB has started a targeted intervention with these migrants and their workplaces. Counseling services are provided, condoms are distributed and questions answered.

Please note that Albina du Boisrouvray is available for interviews during and after her trip to India.

For more detail on times and locations, refer to Media Advisory

For further information, visit www.fxb.org

Contact: Department of Advocacy and Communication, Rasha Diwany, rdiwany@fxb.org or Fanny Chavaz, fchavaz@fxb.org

Tel.: +41 (0)22 741 71 80