

DAPCU Series XI

Experience of APSACS in conducting DAPCU reviews through video conference

DAPCUs in Andhra Pradesh were established since 2009 and there are currently 23 DAPCUs in the state. Andhra Pradesh State AIDS Control Society (APSACS) has been reviewing the performance of the districts and mentoring the DAPCU teams through monthly and quarterly review meetings at APSACS. These review meetings provided opportunities to Officers of SACS and DAPCU staff to meet regularly and discuss issues relating to program implementation at the district level. However in these meetings only the Addl. DM & HO (A & L) who are DACOs and the DPMs participated and the opportunities for other staff to attend review meetings were limited. Separate reviews were being held for M & E and Accounts Assts by the respective M & E and Finance divisions of SACS.

Since July 2011, a new practice was initiated for reviews – i.e. monthly reviews through Video Conference (VC). While the objectives of conducting review remain the same, APSACS has utilized existing technology and infrastructure in the state to ensure time and cost effective reviews. APSACS also feels that reviews through VC enabled larger participation from district and state teams. For instance, along with the entire DAPCU team, specific facilities are also invited at the district in keeping with the theme or agenda of the meeting. Similarly, at the State level, partners of APSACS are also invited as per the theme to present/discuss issues in these VCs. An overview of how VCs are conducted in AP is provided below:

PREPARATIONS: Conducting reviews through VC has been a new experience for both DAPCUs and APSACS. The following preparations have facilitated smoother reviews:

APSACS and DAPCUs use the video conferencing facilities available at the AP State Secretariat and District Collector offices respectively. *The video conferencing facility is available through National Informatics Centre (NIC) Govt. of India's established nodes across the state in AP.* As these facilities are booked/used by other departments too, it becomes critical that applications are made in advance to book the time slots at these facilities. Currently APSACS has decided to hold review meetings on every 3rd Monday of the month. Keeping a fixed day for the review has helped the DAPCUs in booking the facility at the District Collectors Office as well as preparing themselves programmatically for the same.

Agenda: In order to ensure focussed tracking of district performance APSACS has developed a list of 21 indicators covering all components of the programme. Performance of all districts on each of these is shared with DAPCU staff prior to the review. Discussions on this performance also form one of the core agenda of the review. Additionally DAPCUs are expected to be prepared with the following information prior to the conference

1. CMIS reports of the district
2. Identification of key issues requiring SACS support
3. Planning for specific programmes in the upcoming month

State AIDS Control Societies have been conducting periodic reviews with DAPCUs to ensure sustained mentoring of the team as well as to review the district level programme.

APSACS initiated reviews through video conferencing in July 2011 and a brief on the processes followed for the same is presented here.

To know more about the video conference facilities in your districts please visit

<http://vidcon.nic.in/Studios.htm>

CONDUCTING THE VIDEO CONFERENCE: ¹Each review through VC lasts for close to 3 hours and in order to make efficient use of time APSACS adheres to certain set procedures. The review is chaired by PD APSACS and broadly these are the processes followed:

Introduction and overview: The meeting commences with an introductory address of the PD providing an overview of the agenda. Post which the PD also highlights some critical milestones and observations in relation to the month under review. This is followed by discussion on the district performances on each indicator- highlighting the districts performing well and those that need strengthening.

Component wise discussions: Specific time is allocated for discussions on each component. The discussion is moderated by the respective Component Officers who review performance of Districts based on pre-decided indicators. Wherever relevant the districts are asked for their views or explanations.

District specific discussions: Each district is allocated time to raise critical concerns requiring support from SACS. The districts utilize this time to highlight the concerns they face and their expectations from SACS in mitigating it.

Response of SACS to district sharing: While the districts share their concerns, respective component officers or nodal officers are expected to make note of issues they can address. At the end of the district specific discussions, they are expected to respond to requests pertaining to their responsibilities and inform the support they plan to provide to the team.

APSACS see the following advantages of using VC for DAPCU reviews

- Resource Saving (time and cost)
- Larger participation at district and state level

Monthly theme: Additionally, a specific theme for each month is included in the agenda. For instance the review in September also included discussions on preparations for Voluntary Blood Donation Day and the upcoming trainings for ICTC counsellors. Planning for special events in the upcoming months is also included in the review.

Discussions with partner agencies: APSACS has been inviting partner organizations for these video conferences. It gives them an opportunity to inform new developments in their program as well as address any concerns that the DAPCUs might have regarding their programs or staff.

DAPCU review through VC has been an initiative of APSACS PD, Mr C. Parthasarathi, I.A.S and he has been leading the interactions with 23 DAPCUs since July 2011. Along with respective component heads, the Strategic Information Management Unit has been pivotal in facilitating the reviews. The unit takes a lead in the development of indicators, monthly consolidation of performance and follow up with districts. The processes described above have evolved over these months and APSACS envisages that based on these experiences and the needs of the programme they will continue to add newer topics and activities in the reviews For further information please write to Dr Pradeep Kumar DD M&E, APSACS (dr_kumarpradeep@rediffmail.com).

¹ For information on basics of conducting a video Conference DAPCUs may refer to <http://vidcon.nic.in/Pdf/General%20Guidelines%20for%20a%20VC%20Session.pdf>