

SAHYOG

AN IN HOUSE CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE

Background of the Project

The Humsafar Trust is a community based organization of sexual minorities in Mumbai, India reaching out to 9000 MSM and Transgender providing prevention, care, support and treatment services. The initiation of NACP III resulted in an inadvertent loss of focus on the systemic causes that increase the risk of HIV in socially marginalized sexual and gender minority communities. With an underpinning belief that the risk of HIV cannot be reduced effectively without addressing these structural causes, we envisioned a holistic approach towards addressing the specific needs pertaining to MSM and Transgender populations.

Project

Through the Project named SAHYOG (Cooperation) supported by MAC AIDS Fund (MAF), we aimed at setting up a HUB of holistic services for MSM and TG populations in the form of mental health counseling, nutritional support and counseling, legal support for addressing issues of stigma, discrimination, continuum of care for MSM and Transgender living with HIV, clinical facility for providing general health and sexual health services to MSM and TG communities. We also aimed at reviving a safe space (Drop-In-Centre) for community events and a space where communities could come together and find a platform to address their issues. Capacity building of Intervention staff on a holistic approach towards HIV intervention through trainings (both formal and in-house) and Outreach supervision is key to the project.

An effort has been made to fill the gaps left by the targeted interventions by creating a center of excellence and best practices that cater to needs of marginalized communities by situating HIV prevention in a much broader context. We have continually assessed and fulfilled the training requirements of outreach workers and health facilitators specific to needs of MSM and Tg communities to improve the effectiveness and scope of outreach, by emphasizing on aspects of gender, sexuality and identity, overall health and well-being, legal literacy and human rights.

HIV prevalence among MSM and transgender communities is neither monolithic nor isolated and hence cannot be countered without acknowledging and addressing the socio-cultural complexities associated with it. One of the most eloquent needs emerged from this intervention is capacity building on advocacy to not only cope with adverse legal environment but also effectively work around prevalent stigma and discrimination in society.