

Project Unnati 2.0 Annual Report

July 2024 – March 2025

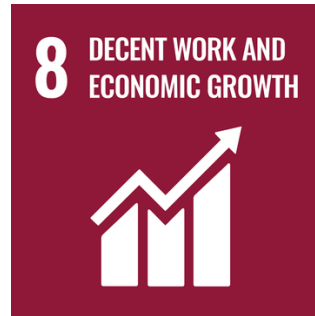
The Humsafar Trust x BDO Rise Pvt. Ltd.



Project Unnati 2.0

Strengthening socio-economic inclusion of LGBTQ+ Communities

Sustainability Development Goals addressed



Project Unnati 2.0, supported by BDO Rise and implemented by The Humsafar Trust, aims to strengthen socio-economic inclusion of LGBTQ+ communities by enhancing access to education, skilling, and entrepreneurship opportunities.

The project focuses on promoting inclusive workspaces through sensitization-based media content and immersive storytelling, while also nurturing LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs through structured mentorship, training workshops, and business development support under HST's Dolphin Tank initiative. By addressing systemic barriers to employment and self-reliance, Project Unnati 2.0 empowers LGBTQ+ individuals and fosters long-term inclusion through community-driven, sustainable livelihood pathways.

Project Details

“Unnati 2.0 aims to strengthen socio-economic inclusion of LGBTQ+ Communities”

Project Beneficiaries:

LGBTQ+ persons, Transgender Persons, individuals living with HIV, other Marginalized & Vulnerable Groups

Project Location:

Pan-India implementation.

Project Overview:

This project aimed to strengthen LGBTQ+ inclusion in workplaces and support queer entrepreneurship through creative advocacy and capacity-building initiatives. It combined sensitization efforts with media tools and a structured mentorship model to drive systemic and sustainable change.

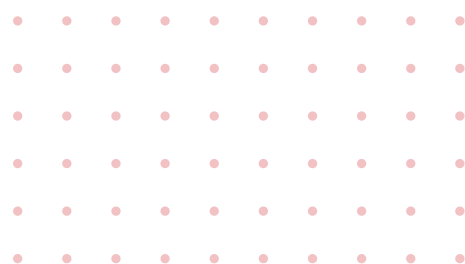


Objective 1: To create and disseminate LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion themed media content.

- Activity 1.1: Roundtable for creation of LGBTQ+ sensitization content
- Activity 1.2: Creation of a short film for workplace inclusion as the theme

Objective 2: To enable access to entrepreneurship amongst LGBTQ+ communities.

- Activity 2.1: Creation of Dolphin Tank Module
- Activity 2.2: Dolphin Tank Immersion workshop



Activity 1.1: Roundtable for creation of LGBTQ+ sensitization content

A series of collaborative roundtables were conducted to co-create a street play script highlighting workplace inclusion for LGBTQ+ individuals. The sessions brought together corporate employees and community members to develop narratives rooted in lived experiences.

- At BDO Rise (Bangalore), **13 corporate employees** and **4 community representatives** participated.
- At Trent Ltd (Mumbai), **14 corporate employees** and **5 community representatives** were engaged.
- At Allianz Technology (Pune), **14 corporate employees** and **4 community representatives** contributed.

Using the “4 Cs” approach—Context, Character, Conflict, and Conclusion—participants were encouraged to reflect on the real-life challenges of LGBTQ+ employees and collaboratively develop scripts that addressed these issues. The process fostered dialogue, empathy, and creative expression around inclusive workplace practices, culminating in a co-created screenplay developed with volunteer inputs from the participating corporate teams.



"Collaborating with the community helped me see beyond policies and numbers. Crafting the story together made the challenges real, and I now feel more equipped to support inclusion at my workplace."

– Participant from Trent Ltd, Mumbai



Activity 1.2

Creation of a short film for workplace inclusion as the theme

To promote workplace inclusion through storytelling, a short film was conceptualized as a sensitization tool aimed at fostering empathy and understanding of LGBTQ+ experiences in professional settings. The project intentionally engaged LGBTQ+ individuals across both cast and crew roles, ensuring authenticity and lived experience were central to the film's development.

The short film, titled "Sir.... Ma'am" narrates the events of a week leading up to a company's anniversary celebration, focusing on the journey of Khushbu, a recently hired trans woman navigating challenges of acceptance and bullying in her new workplace. With support from Neha, a colleague exploring her own identity as a lesbian, and Pratul, a well-meaning but initially unaware co-worker, the story unfolds to highlight the complexities of allyship, inclusion, and personal growth within a professional setting.

Dissemination Plan:

Corporate screenings – Pride Month 2025

Film festivals – 2025-2026

Youtube – 6 Sept 2025

Watch the film here:



Click on the thumbnail to watch the film

Activity 2.1: Creation of Dolphin Tank Module



The Dolphin Tank Programme Manual, created under Project Unnati 2.0, represents a crucial step in advancing financial inclusion and empowerment for LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs, particularly those from marginalized communities like trans individuals. Developed by The Humsafar Trust, the manual provides a structured framework for seed funding, mentorship, and business support, offering a model for fostering sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems for underrepresented groups.

The manual was developed to address the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs, including discrimination and limited access to financial resources. Through collaboration with past program participants and key stakeholders, the content was designed to be practical and applicable to the needs of LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs, emphasizing inclusivity, adaptability, and sustainability.

This manual serves as a guide for other entities aiming to implement seed funding models for LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs, especially within marginalized communities. It shares strategies and best practices from the Dolphin Tank Program, outlining how to provide financial support, mentorship, and community engagement to foster long-term entrepreneurial success.

The manual provides LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs with valuable tools, including:

- Business Development and Financial Management: Guidance on building sustainable business models and managing finances.
- Risk Management Strategies: Practical advice for navigating financial and operational risks.
- Mentorship and Networking: Emphasis on forming supportive networks and leveraging mentorship.
- Inclusion and Advocacy: Tools for engaging with stakeholders to create a more inclusive business environment.

[Read the complete document here](#)

The manual offers a comprehensive framework for other organizations seeking to implement similar seed fund models for marginalized communities. It outlines processes for identifying and supporting diverse entrepreneurs and creating inclusive business environments. This guide enables entities to launch and scale initiatives that promote economic empowerment for LGBTQIA+ communities, fostering collaboration with investors and advocates.

The Dolphin Tank Program Manual is a vital resource for supporting LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs, offering actionable guidance for building sustainable businesses. By providing a scalable model, the manual empowers organizations to replicate and expand seed fund programs, driving social and economic inclusion for marginalized communities.

Activity 2.2: Dolphin Tank Immersion workshop



The workshop included a networking dinner at The Trans Café and interactions with mentors and leaders from The Humsafar Trust and corporate partners like Dorf Ketal and LTI Mindtree. The program offered practical tools and guidance, fostering confidence and community support for queer-led businesses. The programme contributed significantly in the overall Dolphin Tank implementation.

The Dolphin Tank Immersion 2024 by The Humsafar Trust, held in Mumbai from 14–16 October, trained **11 queer entrepreneurs** through focused sessions on entrepreneurship, compliance, marketing, and business planning. Facilitators covered legal registration, monitoring frameworks, and pitching strategies to prepare participants for launching sustainable ventures.



Dolphin Tank Dissemination



Gulabi Mela 2025, the annual flagship event organized by Yaariyan, the youth initiative of The Humsafar Trust, was successfully held on 26th January 2025 in Mumbai. The event, supported by BMC Software India Pvt. Ltd., Blackrock Services India Pvt. Ltd., KPMG Global Services Pvt. Ltd., Sony Pictures Networks India Ltd., BDO Rise Private Ltd., and Dorf Ketel Chemicals India Ltd., witnessed an overwhelming turnout of over 1,300 attendees, celebrating queer entrepreneurship, creativity, and community spirit.



This year's edition of Gulabi Mela provided a dynamic platform for **52 LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs** to showcase and sell their products and services, which included handmade goods, accessories, clothing, stationery, food, and more. These entrepreneurs, including several supported by The Humsafar Trust's Dolphin Tank initiative, had the opportunity to connect with a larger community and gain visibility and support for their ventures.





Conclusion & Impact

Project Unnati 2.0 has made substantial strides toward advancing both LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion and entrepreneurial empowerment. By creatively engaging corporate employees and LGBTQ+ individuals through roundtables and film production, the initiative fostered authentic dialogue, empathy, and narrative change, resulting in impactful sensitization tools like the short film “Sir..... Ma’am.” These efforts not only humanized workplace experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals but also equipped organizations with storytelling tools to deepen inclusion.

Simultaneously, the Dolphin Tank program fortified economic inclusion through a comprehensive immersion workshop and the development of a replicable entrepreneurship manual. These efforts culminated in visible community participation at Gulabi Mela 2025, showcasing queer talent and business acumen to over 1,300 attendees. By blending creative advocacy with structured economic interventions, the project created a dual impact—shifting perceptions in corporate India while building a foundation for sustainable queer entrepreneurship. The models and materials developed through this initiative now offer scalable, community-led pathways for inclusive change nationwide.

