

MTV Staying Alive Foundation (SAF) Project with Yaariyan

The LGBTQ community continues to remain neglected by the society in India due to the presence of the anti-sodomy laws as well as socio - cultural bias against sexual orientation and gender identity. Through its on ground intervention, The Humsafar Trust observes that an increasing number of new HIV infections are among young MSM and transwomen. Further, stigmatisation around same sex relationships and sex limits the uptake of condoms, unavailability of lubricants and inconvenient packaging, an increase in the alcohol addiction and substance abuse are some of the key reasons among others leading to unsafe sexual practices among LGBTQ youth. It is thus significant provide mental-health support and psychological interventions to enable reduction in high risk HIV behaviour within the community. In light of these adversities, Yaariyan launched project “*Bridging gaps between LGBTQ youth and HIV/AIDS healthcare via innovative strategies.*” with the support of MTV SAF in Mumbai. The project aims at enhancing the accessibility for HIV testing and mental health counselling besides also increasing the knowledge of safe sex practices through its online forums to reach out to larger number of individuals who may not be open about their sexual orientation.



Founded in 2010, Yaariyan is an LGBTQ youth initiative which is supported by The Humsafar Trust. It aims at providing a safe space to nurture dialogue within the LGBTQ space and help provide mental and sexual health services to the LGBTQ youth. Yaariyan facilitates an online secret Facebook group which aims at providing a safe space for a dialogue among the LGBTQ youth. With the goal of providing mental health counselling and a psychosocial support base to the youth of the LGBTQ community, Yaariyan has adopted a three-phase innovative strategy to encourage youth for regular HIV testing, seek mental health counselling and clarify their queries in an LGBTQ-friendly setup.

As part of the first leg of the project, Yaariyan, in 2017-18 conducted several activities and events on the theme of HIV and STI awareness and prevention, these include creating three videos which were viewed by over 18,000 people, creating and distributing an informational booklet titled 'Your Just in Time Friend', running a 'One Lube for One Condom' campaign, organising a mixer event with a footfall of 460 people and hosting an awareness stall at Yaariyan's annual event - *Gulabi Mela*.



The three videos launched by Yaariyan were on the key topics of awareness on safe sex practices, prevention of HIV and short film titled #PlaySafe2StaySafe. 'Your Just in Time Friend' booklet is a manual on safe sex practices and the right use of contraceptives. Over 5000 of these booklets were published and distributed by Yaariyan. Yaariyan also hosted a mixer event to launch *Khushpudis* (Pleasure packs) as part of the 'One condom One lube' campaign. Members of Facebook group of Yaariyan were allowed to post selfies for a duration of 24 hours with hashtags: #Yaariyan #MTVSAF #PlaySafeStaySafe along with an online contest on the lines of the three films produced by Yaariyan & MTV. In 2018, Yaariyan's annual festival, *Gulabi Mela* saw a crowd of 1700 people. A stall was organised at *Gulabi Mela* for HIV awareness and a condom man distributed *Khushpudis* at the event. An HIV testing camping, 'I-Test' was also organised at the venue where as many as 100 underwent testing.