



EXPOSURE OF TRANSGENDER ISSUES WITHIN LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

VHS DIVA has conducted trainings in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Uttarakhand of our 18 operational states, for 109 participants.

Multiple stigma studies and IBBS reports go on to reaffirm the violence and discrimination perpetuated by law enforcement throughout the country, which demanded action to sensitize them. The transgender community are also faced by sexual and physical abuse from customers as well as the police, thus forcing them to hide and, seek solace within their community itself.

In the broader sense, this means that there is hindered access to healthcare, sexual health information for the transgender community and the repercussion is a community prone to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which if left untreated and un-diagnosed, percolates through to the society at large and could destroy its very social fabric¹²³.



Message

Regular follow-up and involvement of law enforcement officers through their trainers to promote exposure and interaction

¹ Prakash & Karunanithi (2012)

² Patel (2010)

³ Agoramoorthy & Hsu (2007)

THE OBJECTIVE

To identify and sensitise Law Enforcement agencies about Transgender people thus, facilitating the nurturing of an enabling environment to improve their access to HIV services.

ACTION

We conducted need based sensitisation training for law enforcement officials in operating states. Relevant and necessary curriculum was developed mainly for the Police Academy. The topics covered were broadly as follows, but not limited to:

- Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity,
- Needs of transgender population,
- Most-at-risk population and HIV epidemic

- HIV, health and human rights
- Social protection programmes
- Government welfare schemes
- Supreme court judgement
- Transgender Persons (Protection of rights) Bill
- Understanding Transgender and Hijra People
- Role of Police officers in protecting human rights of transgender population.

VHS DIVA also promoted knowledge and experience sharing by welcoming guest speakers and renowned individuals as resource persons. Following these sensitisation trainings, we facilitated necessary efforts for prompting policy-level changes.

SUCCESS

- Following a sensitization training conducted in Raipur, Chhattisgarh for Police officials, the officers took forward their learning and initiated to carry out sensitisation trainings in all their respective districts to ensure all law enforcement officials were aware and sensitised on transgender people and their current disposition within society. This effort is currently in progress and they aim to ensure the successful sensitisation of all police officials within the state of Chhattisgarh.
- In Uttar Pradesh's, Rampur district, following a police sensitisation training, the transgender population noted a change in attitude and behaviour in behaviour of law enforcement officials. The police officials encouraged the uptake of livelihood opportunities such as setting up stalls, acquiring space and selling products within local markets. To further ensure the smooth operation of their businesses, police ensured no haggling and inappropriate soliciting took place, therefore encouraging an open and safe space that promoted dialogue between them and the transgender population.
- Another key success for VHS DIVA, in Nagpur, Maharashtra, police officials were previously noted for harassing and haggling transgender people at bus stands, railway stations and public spaces. However, following a sensitisation program conducted by VHS DIVA Project, members of the local transgender community noted a stark difference and a much welcomed change.

"When we walk the same streets we once were heckled at and harassed, we now feel respected and proud in displaying our identity as a transgender". - Vidya, transgender

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VHS IS A RECIPIENT OF THE MULTI COUNTRY SOUTH ASIA GRANT, AND HAS A PRESENCE IN 18 STATES ACROSS INDIA, WITH ITS HEADQUARTERS IN CHENNAI. VHS IS THE NATIONAL TECHNICAL RESOURCE TEAM IN PROVIDING SENSITISATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING FOR GOVERNMENT BODIES AND ADVOCACY BODY TO EMPOWER THE LIVES OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE.



ENSURING JUSTICE FOR THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

In 2017, we've conducted three trainings at Uttarakhand, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab for 74 participants.

The lack of redressal forums and community centres for the transgender people has exacerbated the HIV/AIDS conundrum amongst the general populace. Owing to the lack of awareness and non-corporation of legal personnel in assisting transgender people with their domestic disputes.

This also means that there is hindered access to healthcare, sexual health information available to the community. Sexual and physical abuse by customers as well as the police force Hijra to hide and seek solace within the community itself. The repercussion is a community prone to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which left untreated and un-diagnosed, percolates through to the society at large and destroys its very social fabric.



Message

- Refer to the national human rights commission protocols
- Seek the legal support for TG/Hijra people from DLSA & SLSA
- Develop community legal volunteers

THE OBJECTIVE

To identify judicial members such as lawyers, advocates and counsellor sensitized about transgender thus creating an enabling environment for the Transgender / Hijra people.

ACTION

To be able to contribute to the increase in protection for transgender groups and their access to legal services, we aim to create a supportive group of Judicial members and lawyers to assist transgender/Hijra people for ensuring better access to legal services and protecting their rights.

Topics covered were as follows and also involved facilitation of discussion sessions by Resource Persons in the industry.

- Why Focus on transgender people
- Transgender people and HIV vulnerability
- Sex, Sexuality and Gender - Understanding about the transgender community
- Supreme Court judgment on transgender people
- Legal and human rights issues affecting transgender people
- Harassment, violence, stigma and discrimination experienced by the transgender community
- Promoting change in mind set, attitudes and behaviours of judicial officers.

SUCCESS

- In the state of Chandigarh, following a sensitisation program conducted for lawyers, participants created a WhatsApp group including the local transgender community to promote easy dialogue and discussion of their challenges and concerns.
- The Chandigarh high court, through the advocacy efforts of its sensitised lawyers, have appointed 2 transgender people as paralegal volunteers.
- The State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) in Chandigarh, announced the provision of free legal assistance and council for litigation, domestic disputes, sex change, property disputes, cases of violence and harassment and other civil concerns. In this way, we have been able to successfully provide a safe and enabling environment for promoting dialogue as well as the inclusion of the transgender community at the forefront of policy dialogue and decision making.

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PROMOTING TRANSGENDER FRIENDLY SERVICES

In 2017, VHS DIVA conducted seven trainings in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, Puducherry and Odisha of our 18 operational states, for 163 participants.

Multiple studies on stigma and discrimination faced by Transgender and People Living with HIV/AIDS have confirmed the differential treatment received by them in healthcare settings. Doctors and medical staff, although trained to show indifference, have been perpetrators of discrimination while providing treatment and service. This attitude has discouraged the fostering of health seeking behaviour among transgender people in India.

This means that there is hindered access to healthcare and sexual health information available to the community. The repercussion is a community prone to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.



Message

- Refer to the WHO STI guidelines for transgender
- Update health care providers on the needs of people
- Set up internal community monitoring committee

THE OBJECTIVE

To reduce the stigma and discrimination faced by Transgender/Hijra people in health care settings and provide equitable access to healthcare services and treatment for all.

ACTION

To conduct a one-day sensitisation program for healthcare providers on issues affecting Transgender and Hijra people based on the specific requirements highlighted by the National Transgender Technical Resource Group (TRG) during the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) and TRG meeting 2016. The activities were conducted in collaboration with the National Health Mission and the Directorate of Medical Services.

The topics covered in brief were, but not limited to the following;

- Current health scenario for the Transgender community in their respective district.
- Sharing of initiatives, from other parts of India, for the welfare of Transgender people.
- Role of Healthcare providers in preventing vulnerability.
- Transgender people and their vulnerability to HIV.
- Issues in accessing clinical services by Transgender people.
- Sexual and Reproductive health of Transgender people.
- Clinical management of STI's among Transgender people.
- Sexual Reassignment Surgery in Transgender people.

SUCCESS

- Following the successful healthcare sensitisation training for Doctors at Patna Medical college, Bihar by VHS DIVA, the Medical Superintendent announced the allocation of a separate Healthcare Unit for Transgender people within the hospital which will provide all services for free as per norms of Government Hospitals. This initiative, ensures that all transgender people seeking healthcare services are provided dispassionate treatment and care.
- In Bhubaneshwar, Odisha following a healthcare sensitisation training at Bhubaneshwar Municipal Corporation Hospital, the Mayor and Chief Medical Officer announced the permanent allocation of 5 beds at the hospital specifically for transgender patients. This ensures that they are in no way discriminated due to their gender identity and, are provided equitable access and respectable services by all.

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ENGAGING MEDIA IN MAINSTREAMING OF TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

In the last year, VHS DIVA conducted a training in Chhattisgarh and three regional trainings with Maharashtra, Punjab, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh for 111 participants.

The portrayal of transgender people and other marginalised groups is pivotal in shaping the opinion of society, therefore we found that to address the concerns of common society, we must ensure members of media have an understanding of the transgender community. Following the negative connotations attributed to transgender people due to their non-conforming gender status and seeking livelihood in begging and sex work, they've been relegated to the borders of the Indian society.

These extreme views held within society and by the common populace, hinders their access to healthcare, employment, legal aid and sexual health information. In situations where they face sexual and physical abuse by customers and police, they are left with no choice but to hide and seek solace within their transgender community itself.



26/07/2017: THE TIMES OF INDIA : CHANDIGARH



THE OBJECTIVE

To sensitize media personnel on the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity of transgender people thereby encouraging the dissemination of positive stories, good practices employed to help in reducing stigma and discrimination among transgender/Hijra people.

ACTION

VHS DIVA conducted a one-day workshop for print / electronic media personnel (for those who have not been sensitised about TG/Hijra people) at the state level. VHS DIVA facilitated dialogue, discussion and exposure visit with those media personnel who have contributed to promoting the inclusion of transgender people. In this way, VHS DIVA also facilitated discussions on the methods

to mainstream marginalised groups within media and the larger society.

“Greatly appreciate the initiative, an eye opener for media persons to understand and write about transgender issues”

- Amita Shah, Times of India



Message

- Involve local press clubs in advocacy campaigns
- Interaction between TG people & media personnel helps main streaming

SUCCESS

- The states of Punjab and Chandigarh, had previously carried no content on the transgender and Hijra population in their states. This led to a very poor level of awareness of the transgender community that coexisted with them. To facilitate their mainstreaming both within society and popular media, we conducted a sensitization training. Following this training, these two states showcased ample content displaying positive news coverage of transgender people. This in turn aided in the acknowledgement of their transgender community and, facilitated the creation of a Transgender Social Welfare Department in Chandigarh and Punjab.
- In the state of Uttar Pradesh, the multitude of positive stories presented following the training, propelled the creation of a welfare board for transgender people within the state. This has by and large positively aided in the mainstreaming of transgender people not only in media, but by also instigating their inclusion in policy and development.

“It was excellent interacting with [the] transgender community to understand the problems and challenges they are currently facing”

- Mudit Mathur, Special Correspondent Tehelka Magazine

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