Support to Expand Coverage and Impact of National Response for Sexual Minorities

### Millennium Development Goal:
**Goal 6 – Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**

### Targets:
Halt by 2015 and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

### Relevant India Development Goal:
The goal of the National AIDS Control Programme Phase III (NACP-III) is to halt and reverse the HIV epidemic in India by 2012

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### Background

India has an estimated 2.24 million people living with HIV. Almost one-third of the districts in India have high HIV prevalence, especially among key population groups like injecting-drug users (7.2 percent), men-who-have-sex-with-men (7.3 percent), and sex-workers (5.1 percent). Sexual minorities, such as men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM) and transgenders are significantly affected by the HIV epidemic. Since the practice of male to male sexuality in India is very complex and unique, it needs to be better understood. This will also help to improve the implementation of the current NACP-III programme and better formulate NACP-IV.

As the lead agency working on human rights and sexual minorities, UNDP supports the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) to ensure that those vulnerable to HIV are included in the national programme. UNDP has undertaken preparatory studies and consultations that have helped design evidence-based programme strategies for stigma reduction and increased access to services for sexual minorities.

### Objectives

- Strengthen community systems that reach MSM, hijra and transgender communities
- Increase numbers reached by community-based activities and services
- Strengthen relevant health system resources and increase the involvement of community systems through building networks and collectives of MSM, hijra and transgender communities
- Increase awareness of advocacy-related efforts for MSM, hijra and transgender communities

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### Project Information

**Area:** HIV and Development

**Budget:** US$ 1,907,766

**Duration:** Jan-Dec 2011

**Implementing Partner(s):** NACO

**Other Partner(s):**
- The Humsafar Trust Center for Legal Aid and Rights
- India Network for Sexual Minorities
- Jan Jagriti Kendra
- Solidarity and Action Against the HIV Infection in India
- DFID AIDS Technical Assistance Support Team (DFID TAST)
- United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
- National Institute of Epidemiology
- FXB India Suraksha
- World Health Organisation

**Location(s):**
National-level, multiple states
Results so far

- Prioritization of interventions for transgenders and hijras by NACO has resulted in the development of operational guidelines for transgender-specific interventions by UNDP and DFID TAST
- Close to 5,000 MSM and transgenders received a comprehensive package of HIV-related services (including psycho-social services) through project Sashakt. Over 2,500 MSM and transgenders also received an HIV test
- Developed benchmarks for the Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria (GFATM) India project ‘Pehchan,’ which is now reaching out to over 5,00,000 MSM and transgenders across the country
- Inputs to national curriculum for outreach and peer education have enabled greater awareness amongst frontline workers of over 200 targeted interventions by NACO on the needs of sexual minorities
- Transgender is a separate category in the 2011 Census of India. An Election Commission directive has also enabled transgenders to vote under a separate gender category – ‘others’
- State Legal Aid Services Authorities are now mandated to provide free legal aid to transgenders
- The Approach Paper to the 12th Five-Year Plan recommends improved access to health services for transgenders and sexual minorities
- A comprehensive range of over 20 knowledge products on MSM, transgender and sexual minority groups that address gaps identified in the national programme provide a better understanding of successful community-based HIV interventions for sexual minorities in India; culturally competent intervention models for transgenders and importance of collectivization of MSM and transgender groups in India

Looking to the Future

- Provide required evidence and need-based models to upscale access to specific, culturally appropriate HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services for sexual minorities
- Create or enhance multi-sectoral links between the Home Ministry, social welfare, justice and the police. This will ensure comprehensive programming provision of services for MSM and transgenders
- Support NGOs and community-based organizations, including organizations of self-identified gay men and organizations of PLHIV, to promote HIV prevention and care programmes, and address issues related to sex between men

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