

ANNUAL REPORT 2009

Prepared by:

INDIAN COMMUNITY WELFARE ORGANISATION (ICWO)

AP-216, 18th Main Road, 6th Street, I Block,
Vallalar Colony, Anna Nagar West, Chennai- 600 040
Phone: 044-26184392 / 65515742. Fax: 044-45536392
Email: fieldmaster2000@hotmail.com, fieldmaster@mail.com
Website: www.icwoindia.org

ABSTRACT

1. Lesbian Helpline in Tamil Nadu
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4. Blow The Whistle Campaign
5. Two Days Strategic Consultation Meet for children of Female sex workers in Tamil Nadu
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TECHNICAL REPORT - 2009

ABOUT ICWO:

Indian Community Welfare Organisation - ICWO is a non-profitable organization working in the field of STD/HIV /AIDS prevention among high risk population since June 1994. ICWO also works among children vulnerable to prevent them from being trafficked for sexual exploitation and bring in quality of life.

Indian Community Welfare Organization is actively involved in creative, innovative and replicatable model in the developmental sector. ICWO previous innovative efforts were successful and appreciated through out the world. Some of the activities conducted by ICWO in the year were as follows.

1. LESBIAN HELPLINE IN TAMIL NADU – 044- 65515742

As part of the innovative efforts ICWO initiated a **Helpline for Lesbians in Tamil Nadu**. The helpline was inaugurated on **7th February 2010**. The first dedicated lesbian helpline in the city started ringing from 28th February 2009, 10 days ahead of its schedule launch.

ICWO has been working with MSM for the past 10 years. There were lots of queries from the community of Lesbians. To register their queries and request for guidance and support ICWO initiated the helpline for lesbians in Tamil Nadu.



The Lesbian helpline will aim to;

- To stop violence, ill-treatment, stigma and discrimination of lesbians
- Identify and refer need based referral services
- Provide counseling services for lesbians
- Stop suicide tendency among lesbians
- Refer livelihood opportunities for lesbians

ICWO will facilitate for community members to take up future plans. ICWO will not decide on behalf of the community regarding the strategies and for the future plan. ICWO is committed to provide technical assistances for the upcoming formal and informal lesbian groups. ICWO will take efforts like setting up campaign like, advocacy and capacity building for the newly identified lesbian community. ICWO will also identify collaborating agencies with similar interest.

ICWO inaugurated the lesbian help line on 7th February 2009 between 11.00am to 12.00pm. Counseling services has since been provided through the telephone. **The Lesbian helpline is 044 – 65515742**, and will function from 09.00am to 06.00pm on all workings days.

2. DISTRICT LEVEL FEMALE PEER EDUCATORS CONVENTION 2009

Indian Community Welfare Organization (ICWO) receives financial and technical support from USAID-VHS-APAC to implement STI/HIV/AIDS programs among female sex workers and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) in Kancheepuram district.

The primary objective of the project is to provide comprehensive prevention and care services to female sex workers, and PLHIVs in six blocks of the district. The key activities of the intervention among female sex workers (FSWs) include: behavior change communication through outreach workers and peer educators; increase access to condoms, STI treatment, HIV testing, care, support and treatment services; psycho-social counseling and support; and community mobilization activities. ICWO, with financial support of APAC, VHS-USAID conducted the **District Level Peer Educators Convention 2009 in Mamallapuram – Kancheepuram on 16th March 2009**.

THEME:-

The theme for the convention was “Anti – Trafficking” with related to International Women’s Day 2009. A total of 138 Peer Educators participated in the convention.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CONVENTION:

- To sustain the created platform for all Peer educators to collectively meet in a surface like this.
- To learn extensively about new, unknown areas through group discussion and panel discussion in specific to Anti Trafficking efforts
- To bring about the concept of unity is strength, the convention is organized for the peer educators and work together for anti trafficking efforts
- To train the peer educators on group dynamics, self-concept and to strengthen their interpersonal skills.



Sharing by Mr. K.Jimreeves, Programme Manager (Prevention), APAC

Mr. K.Jimreeves, Programme Manager (Prevention), APAC shared about the purpose of the convention. He highlighted that this convention was planned based on the International Women's Day 2009, as women in our society and at large face a lot of problem and violence. This convention is organized to speak on this, with specific focus on Human Trafficking.

He also continued that this appreciation should help the women to grow, share and learn form each others experiences. The topic for the convention is Human Trafficking, it is very strongly believed that if we prevent human trafficking we can prevent HIV/AIDS.

Major things that had to be done for the prevention of human trafficking are

- To prevent/ stop trafficking - awareness has to be created and the information has to be spread to people of all walk of lives. Though this many lives can be saved.
- To help the victims who are affected we need to network and work with the traffickers.
- If trafficking is prevented HIV can also be prevented.

Poster Release

The poster on Anti – Trafficking was released by the female peer educators. The poster was designed and printed by APAC, VHS- USAID containing the message on Anti – Trafficking.



WORLD AIDS DAY 2009

3. “RIDE FOR RIGHTS” BIKE RALLY:

The theme for World AIDS Day 2009 was '**Universal Access and Human Rights**'. Global leaders pledged to work towards universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care, recognizing these as fundamental human rights. Valuable progress has been made in increasing access to HIV/AIDS services, yet greater commitment is needed around the world if the goal of universal access is to be achieved. Millions of people continue to be infected with HIV every year.

The protection of human rights is fundamental to combating the global HIV and AIDS epidemic. Violations against human rights fuel the spread of HIV, putting marginalised groups, such as injecting drug users and sex workers, at a higher risk of HIV infection. By promoting individual human rights, new infections can be prevented and people who have HIV can live free from discrimination.

World AIDS Day provides an opportunity for all of us - individuals, communities and political leaders - to take action and ensure that human rights are protected and global targets for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care are met.

“Ride for Rights” Bike Rally

To observe **World AIDS Day on 30th November 2009**, Indian Community Welfare Organisation- ICWO and Madras School of Social Work – MSSW organized a **Bike rally** titled “**Ride for Rights**”.

Men from the Metal Men Club of Chennai were on their bikes and carried messages along with the students of MSSW to endorse the commitment from various stake holders to ensure **Universal Access and Human Rights for the People living with HIV/AIDS**.

The Rally was jointly inaugurated by **Dr.R.Lakshmi Bai, Project Director, TamilNadu AIDS Initiative (TAI)** and **Mr.Amar Jothi Nayak, Regional Manager, Actionaid, Chennai Region**. The poster was released by **Dr.Fathima Vasanth, Principal, MSSW**.



Speaking at the inauguration, Mr.A.J.Hariharan, Founder Secretary, ICWO, said that “this is important to increase access for high risk group for quality STI care which will eventually lead to decrease in the new HIV infection. It is equally important to promote and protect the rights of PLHIV to ensure the Quality Of Life for PLHIV in India. It is difficult to fight HIV in isolation. We need to bring in different stakeholders like the student community and various Civil Society Organizations to come together to fight against AIDS.”

The World AIDS Day Event was organized by Indian Community Welfare Organization - ICWO in Association with Madras School of Social Work.

4. BLOW THE WHISTLE CAMPAIGN – A CAMPAIGN TO STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST GAY MEN IN CHENNAI

MSM/Transgenders are among the most repressed categories, and the high prevalence of STI/HIV/AIDS among them add a significant problem which is being reduced and controlled by providing all possible services like condom promotion in the field.

Still there are several problems faced by the MSM/Transgender community in the field. These include harrasment by rowdys/gangsters, and clients. They even face violence from their own community members who harass each other for personal issues or any revenge in the field and this sometimes even goes to extreme levels.

Triumph in “Blowing The Whistle” Campaign

To observe **World AIDS Day on 1st December 2009**, Indian Community Welfare Organisation- ICWO with the support of Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society-(TANSACS) organized **“Blowing The Whistle” Campaign** in Chennai Marina Beach, (Near Marina Swimming Pool)

To address the issues of MSM and Transgender, ICWO/MSM project team developed a rescue program for the MSM/Transgender in the field area. That is a common whistle was distributed to the ORW (Out Reach Workers and PEER EDUCATORS. The community people then informed their peers and community about the advantage of the whistle. Whenever there is an occurrence of violence or any sort of harrasment in the field the MSM/Transgender can blow the whistle, hearing the unique sound of the whistle nearby MSM/Transgender community will come for rescue immediately.

This programme was developed by ICWO/MSM team at the field level and created a good impact in the community. There was also hope that finally there was a means to be rescued from the perpetrator. Hence ICWO planned to conduct a campaign to create awareness among the community about this programme so that it helps them to react immediately at any crisis.

This activity also helps to provide excellent services to the MSM/Transgender community in the field without any barrier. Condom promotion can also be strengthened; more information about STI can be induced to the community. Thus this will serve as one of the stepping stone in controlling and preventing STI/HIV/AIDS among the MSM & TG community.

As part of this new Advocacy effort, ICWO initiated the “Blow the Whistle Campaign – a Campaign to Stop Violence against Gay Men in Chennai” on 1st December 2009.

The campaign was inaugurated by **Dr. J Revathy, Expert Advisor, TANSACS, Dr.Ravi Babu, Joint Director, Blood Safety, TANSACS, Mr. Vendar Venden, Joint Director, TI, TANSACS.**



ICWO also mobilized the support of the general public to extend their support to stop violence against gay men and transgender in Chennai. Mr. A.J.Hariharan, Founder Secretary, ICWO said that “from this day any one from general public who hear their whistles will say “STOP NOW” and in Tamil “ITHU THEVAYA” this will be the first step towards mobilizing the general public support to stop violence against gay men and transgender in Chennai”. He continued that “the acceptance level of the MSM/transgender communities is much better than what it was ten years ago. This is an active step to improving their life”.

The successful model will be replicated in other districts of Tamilnadu and also in other states as well.

The event was well covered in the media.

5. TWO DAYS STRATEGIC CONSULTATION

On **December 4th & 5th, 2009**, Indian Community Welfare Organization with the UNICEF conducted a **2 day Strategic Consultation Meet at Hotel Vijay Park , Chennai**. The Consultation Meet was to assess the needs & identify strategy to improve the quality of life of children of Female sex workers in Tamil Nadu. The two days consultation program had lively sessions of experiential sharing in the remembrance of the past difficult memories of themselves and their fellow friends and neighbors. Both days were packed with information sharing, know-how, case studies, time of fun and frolic. It was also a time of new introduction and time of meeting the old friends. There were various discussions which were facilitated by NGO directors and leaders.

The participants were a bunch of experts in the field. The discussions by this expert group carries more weight because of the participation of former sex workers now working for the cause of sex workers, NGO leaders, Program managers, coordinators, field workers, policy initiators and so on.

The introduction to this meet was given by Mr.A.J.Hariharan, Founder Director, ICWO, and the purpose of the Consultation was explained by Dr. Devashish Dutta, UNICEF.

Setting the note for the consultation meeting, Dr. Devashish Dutta, instilled that an achiever has a beginning; one step at a time and thus this 'Two days Strategic consultation meeting ' would set the tone right for the program.

He added that the velocity of growth differs from place to place. And he also mentioned that there are two ways of approaching any intervention.

- a. All programs for all target group which does not work
- b. (Or) certain program for certain target group

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) says that children have their own rights. CRC is been widely accepted and except for two countries, CRC is applied and executed. Children are not little adults. They are unique by themselves. There are children who are deprived of these basic rights and NGOs, bilateral donors, organizations who work towards these rights are the agents holding responsibilities to disseminate knowledge to the children. He encouraged the NGOs present at the consultation to initiate programs raising awareness on CRC.

There are underprivileged children like tribal children, gypsies, migratory construction child workers who are deprived of right to information itself. He emphasized that in recent days awareness creation is a strategy but most often the implementation method or procedure is not taught to them. Children of sex workers are important target group that is focused for this program.



In order to support and bring in welfare measures, one learning by the group was that “One size does not fit for all” meaning not all programs fit for all. As mentioned earlier the second approach of “CERTAIN PROGRAM FOR CERTAIN TARGET GROUP” would work in helping the children of sex workers.

The guest consultant shared the findings of the analysis done among mothers and their children. The group then had discussions on the various factors like Social and cultural factors, Physical factors, Economic factors, Psychological factors and Political and policy factors that affect the status of children of sex workers & the smart ways of strategizing it.

6. MISS. INDIA CONTEST FOR TRANSGENDER 2009

As part of the many innovative efforts, ICWO organized **Miss India Contest at Chennai for the transgender Community on 19th December 2009 at Hotel Vijay Park, Chennai**. The event created an opportunity to discuss about stigma, discrimination, violence, marginalization, ill treatment, denial of treatment, privacy, quality of life, access to the medical facilities for the Transgender Community.

The Miss India Contest was first of its kind in whole of India at the National Level and was conducted by ICWO with the support of TANSACS, UNAIDS & ACTIONAID

About Transgender (TG) and why this contest?

Transgender (Aravani a term used in Tamil for a belief of having married to God Aravan God) are born as biological/anatomical males who reject their 'masculine' identity in due course of time to identify either as women, or not-men, or in-between man and woman, or neither man nor woman. Many transgender people live part-time or full-time as members of the other gender. However, not everyone whose appearance or behaviour is gender-atypical will identify as a transgender person. It is inappropriate and incorrect to use the terms “Eunuchs” or “Ali”. The ARAVANIS

are of two types. Among them, those who had Undergone emasculation are called as NIRVAN and those, who have not yet undergone emasculation, are called ACKWA. Transgender people experience their transgender feelings in a variety of ways. Some can trace their transgender identities or gender-atypical attitudes and behaviours back to their earliest memories. Others become aware of their transgender identities or begin to experience gender-atypical attitudes and behaviours much later in life.

The stigma and discrimination towards Aravanis (Transgender) starts right from the adolescence stage when they are in their parental care. The society neglects the community not considering them as a human being. Most of them leave their house and join their community (known as Jamath). They are forced to lead a miserable life by earning their living by begging, dancing, prostitution thus becoming more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. As they lack distinct gender identity, they are discriminated and stigmatized in the society.

Although the Chennai High Court has issued directions in favour of transgender to get their voter identity card, in reality the Aravanis are still in the process of getting voter identity cards as well as PDS card. After physically thrown out of their parental home, housing and basic facilities remain a very serious issue for Aravanis. They are denied rental houses. Because of this situation, they discontinue their studies and are denied of their right to education.

Now the Tamil Nadu government has begun to address the various practical issues the Aravani community is facing such as basic education, health and legal rights, and space for creative expression.

In Tamil Nadu, it is mandatory now for the district administration to assign one day in every three months as a Grievance Day for Aravanis where they express their difficulties in accessing entitlements. Despite all these, the status of transgender has not improved.

Objectives of Miss. India Contest for Transgender 2009

1. To create an opportunity for the Transgender Community to showcase their talent and skills.
2. To create a platform to address the issues related to transgender.
3. To address the stigma, discrimination, marginalization and misconception related to Transgender community through the event with the support of Media.
4. Develop and disseminate positive messages regarding transgender.
5. Disseminate information on STI/HIV/AIDS information among Transgender.
6. Disseminate information vulnerability and risk of HIV infection among Transgender community

Details of the contest

The contest was inaugurated by **Mr. M. Ravi, Additional Commissioner of Police, Chennai, Mr. Alex Parimalam, Joint Director – IEC, Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control society – TANSACS, Mr.A.Sathiyanaaraayanan, Consultant, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Retd) and Ms. Esther Mariaselvam, Program Manager and Actionaid India, Chennai Region.**

Competitions were organized for **Miss Beautiful Hair, Miss Beautiful Walk, Miss Beautiful Eyes, and Miss Best Skin. The MISS INDIA** Contest for Transgender 2009 title was awarded to the best Transgender. Contest rules and regulations were addressed to the contestant.

The Miss Beautiful Eyes Title was awarded by **Ms. Yogini and Ms. Sanya, Cine Artists.** Miss Beautiful Hair Title was awarded by **Ms.Malaika, Miss Chennai TG and Ms. Jeyalakshmi, Cine Artist.** Miss Beautiful Skin Title was awarded by **Ms. Lavanya, Cine Artists.** The Miss Beautiful Walk Title was awarded by **Mr. Kolangal Sreedhar and Mr. Kovai Babu, Cine Artists.** The Miss India Title was awarded by **Ms. G. Jayalakshmi, Deputy Director, Women Welfare, Directorate of Social Welfare.**

Contest Participation of Transgender

Around **120 transgender** contested in the Miss India Contest. The contestants were from different states - Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur. Around **1040 transgender community members** and representatives working for transgender community across the country participated in the program. **15 judges** assessed their talents and marked them under criteria.

Exhibition

There were appropriate materials related to HIV, Prevention, care and support, reduction in stigma and reduction in specific focus on HIV / AIDS. Leaflets and brochures were exhibited in the vents. There were two counselors available to provide counseling services for those who are in need and help them in risk reduction techniques. Handouts were made available for participants to take away to their intervention sites. A short film on HIV/AIDS was screened whenever there were small gatherings.

Panel of experts posing questions to beauty pageants

*What should society do for you? What Transgender should not do?
To gather and mobilize Transgender, what is your idea? After that, what would be the purpose of gathering them?
Who is the first MLA TG, which state in India?*

*Any one person whom you adore in TG community and why?
For the problems of TG what should be done?
If you are a cinema director, what would be the theme of your film?
In a general gathering, if a TG dresses exposingly? What is your opinion on it?
In a village there are 12 TGs living together, there are young men who misuse them?
If there is community problem between two TG groups, as TG what would you do?
If you get 1 lakh rupee prize money, truly what would you do?
For transgender sisters, on priority, tell me three vocational occupations that you as a group may fair well?
If you get a smart husband, how should they behave with you?
If you are the Chennai Mayor, what is the behavior change that you would opt for?
If someone murders and comes for rescue to you, what is your reaction?
If you are going to the U.S, between the donor and you, there is an amount of 10 lakh rupees for doing social service in India, what would you do?
If TG becomes a big Cinema Star, what would you do?
TGs have certain habits like alcoholism, your friend gifts foreign alcohol, what will you do during the weekend after work?
With 5 lakh rupees, you are starting a business, who will you employ?
What are the two achievements you wish to accomplish?
If you are invited by the Prime Minister the week before you were harassed by the police and you had gone to represent your TG community, what would you address on behalf of them?
What is the year and month of the commencement of TG welfare Board?
You had entered into Delhi for the first time, not knowing their language, what is your safety measure, who will you approach?
How to integrate Tamilnadu and other state TGs on a national basis. What would be the main reason?
If not for this program, what are the other programs that you as TG prefer?*

Contestant' Feedback

*Tanushree from Karanataka expressed her thought that "It was an unique opportunity"
Lakshaya from Kerala said that "It is the first ever time I feel happy and good about being a transgender"
In her joy, S. Thenmozhi from Pune gladly said that "These kind of contests should be conducted once in every week"
Rubina from Mumbai complimented ICWO that "Arrangement was really good"
S. Sadna from Tamil Nadu told that "This is the first time ever, I am seeing this large gathering of Transgender"*

Support of Sponsors

Rotarian M.MYTHILI, President, Rotary Club of Chennai, Gemini
Ms.D.KAMAKSHI, General Secretary, State Women Wing, Chennai
Mr.A.PRABHU, Managing Director, Latha Roadlines, Anna Nagar, Chennai
LAKSHMI ENTERPRISES, MMDA, Chennai
SRESHTA COMMUNICATIONS, Chennai

Outcome of the contest

- ✓ A platform created for Transgender to showcase their skills and talents
- ✓ Positive messages will be disseminated through the Media about Transgender
- ✓ The general public will be reached with information about the living status of Transgender and Educated about transgender issues.
- ✓ Awareness created with regards to attitudes concerning people with gender-atypical appearance or behaviour.

- ✓ Assumptions about transgender people's sexual orientation, desire for surgical or hormonal treatment, or other aspects of their identity or transition plans awareness would be created.
- ✓ The lines of communication would be open with the transgender person among the general public.
- ✓ Support groups for family, friends, and significant others of transgender people would be ensured.

The event was widely covered in NDTV, NDTV-Hindu, CNN-IBN, Raj News, Zee Tamil TV, Amirtha TV, Manorama News, ANI, Sahara TV, Jaya TV, India Vision News and in print media like Indian Express, Deccan Chronicle, Times of India, Dinathanthi, Dina Mani, Dinakaran, Dina Malar, Malayala Manorama, Mathraboomi, Enaadu, Sakshi, Malai Malar, Chennai Murasu, Saidai Times, PTI, AFP and India today.

Winners of competitions

Miss Beautiful Eyes

I	Ms. Lakshya	Kerala
II	Ms. Priya	Tamil Nadu
III	Ms. Tanushree	Karnataka

Miss Beautiful Hair

I	Ms. Olga	Tamil Nadu
II	Ms. Monal	Tamil Nadu
III	Ms. Ashwini	Tamil Nadu

Miss Beautiful Skin

I	Ms. Nandini	Karnataka
II	Ms. Ragasya	Tamil Nadu
III	Ms. Priyanka	Tamil Nadu

Miss Beautiful Walk

I	Ms. Kareena	Mumbai
II	Ms. Reema	Karnataka
III	Ms. S. Sudha	Tamil Nadu

“This is just a beginning and not the end to support TGs”

Miss India Contest for Transgender 2009



[Left] Ms.Romi, Ms.Kareena Shaline [Middle]. Ms.Padmini [Right]

I	Ms. Kareena <i>Darban Foundation, interested doing films, modeling, movies and dance shows</i>	Mumbai
II	Ms. Romi <i>Like to enhance her personality and prefers to do higher education</i>	Manipur
III	Ms. Padmini <i>Work for the betterment of HIV positive people and create awareness on HIV / AIDS</i>	Coimbatore, TN

*******End of the Report*******