



ANNUAL REPORT

2019-20

South India AIDS Action Programme

#4/51, Poonthottam, North Mada Street,

Thiruvanmiyur, Chennai – 600041.

Ph: 044-2442 1215 & 044 – 2442 2285

Email: admin.siaap@siaapindia.org

Website: www.siaapindia.org

Executive Summary

The Year 2019-20 turned out to be an exciting year for SIAAP which led the organisation to a new path and vision. Many projects taken up this year include empowering and strengthening existing systems for the marginalised communities. The advocacy project to improve access to stigma and discrimination free Sexual and Reproductive Health services for Female Sex Workers (FSWs) was a huge success. The project has attempted for sensitive health care service providers, law enforcement authorities, media persons and community members towards FSWs. Similarly, other projects have collaboratively helped in advocating and strengthening inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ community members as well.

A pilot project designed by SIAAP this year also includes the “Reintegration of Children in Institutional Care” program. This program aimed at promoting family based care for children rather institutional care to nurture growth and development of the children. This project has played out well in preparing the children in institutional care and their families and care staff in child care institutions and is going to be taken up in the upcoming year as well. As in the past two years, SIAAPs vision has been focused on the holistic multidimensional development and emotional wellbeing of adolescents, this project also joins hands in that dimension. This project looked into strengthening the resilience of vulnerable children in institutional care settings to enable successful re-integration with families and communities, strengthening institutional systems of care and support of vulnerable children to promote reintegration and prevent re-institutionalization, strengthening family and community systems to support reintegration and to prevent institutionalization and re-institutionalization, while also research and evidence building on factors leading to institutionalization, support required for families for successful reintegration.

On the other hand, young people in India are increasingly reporting pre-marital romantic and/or sexual relationships. At the same time, sexual health morbidities and violence are also high in this population. Sexual consent is the primary marker of sexual agency in a sexual relationship, and the lack of consent is the critical indicator of sexual violence. Yet, much of the evidence is about non-consensual sexual behavior, i.e., what consent is not, but very little about what it looks like in consensual situations, which probably form the bulk of pre-marital sexual interactions. This understanding is essential to effectively promote sexual and reproductive health and safety for young people. Hence, a research study conducted by SIAAP this year on ‘Sexual Consent among young people in India’ was conducted. The study’s results can contribute to the organisation's further intervention plans and in understanding the current knowledge of the young adults. Through the help of this study, projects in the future can be designed to acknowledge the learnings.

Overall, the year was busy and productive and with the support of all staff, and with war footing measures, all the activities were completed as per timelines committed. Few tasks such as perspective building approach among communities in various low-income settlements in Chennai helped staff build capacity in approaching a new community in newer ways.

Project Name: Advocacy to improve access for Female Sex Workers to comprehensive, non-discriminatory Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services in 3 states in India.

Project Period: 8th February 2019 to 7th December 2020

Theme: Advocacy to promote comprehensive and stigma and discrimination free SRHR services for FSWs.

Objective: Our project seeks to increase policy support for the right to voluntary sex work and to increase access of FSWs to comprehensive, non-discriminatory, and ethical SRHR services through 1) Advocacy at 3 levels, 2) Research and evidence gathering, 3) Communications and media work, 4) Capacity building of FSWs to increase access to comprehensive, non-discriminatory, and ethical SRH services including services for mental health and well-being, contraceptive options, safe abortion, and cervical and breast cancers, and 5) Organisational capacity building for a stronger SRHR movement.

Interventions: A baseline study covering 1000 female sex workers in 3 states covering socio-economic background of sex workers, SRH, non-communicable diseases, mental health, violence, agency, empowerment, access to services was conducted and advocacy plans have been developed. 45 FSWs were provided with community counselling on SRHR including mental health, abortion, and contraceptive availability and who in turn reached out to about 1000 sex workers. Furthermore, at least 90 service providers and healthcare professionals in selected areas were sensitized to needs for comprehensive and confidential SRHR services including public and private health care services. To concretize this process, a guideline was drafted on non-discriminatory, confidential and comprehensive methods of provision of services by policymakers and key influencers. This was drafted by attending a workshop to improve the SRH services. Positive media representation of rights of sex workers including access to comprehensive SRHR services was also covered in the project.

Impact: The interventions showed improved community outreach and increased knowledge and access to by FSWs. The project has contributed to establishing new associations of sex workers and thereby evolving new leaders to take responsibility for collectivization. Advocacy plans have been developed with coalition partners for each sub-concern; including decriminalization of sex work, confidentiality of services, access to mental health, abortion, contraceptive options, breast and cervical cancer prevention and treatment. This advocacy opened up avenues to discuss rights of FSWs with multiple stakeholders like health care providers, policy makers, judiciary, police, students, media and the public. Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society has considered including NCDs and mental health for FSWs as opposed to the earlier focus only on SRH. FSWs shared personal accounts of Stigma, Discrimination and Violence with people in power boosting their own self-esteem and enabling stakeholders to understand the ground reality and take appropriate action. Inspired by the leaders engaging in advocacy, other FSWs were inspired to participate in the sex workers' movement as well.

Donor: Amplify Change

Primary Stakeholders/Beneficiaries: Female Sex Workers, Individuals with disabilities, People living with HIV/ AIDS, Survivors of violence

Project Name: Promoting Reintegration of children in Institutional care settings and preventing re-institutionalization in Tamil Nadu.

Project Period: April 2019 to December 2019

Theme: Reintegrate children in institutional care with their families

Objective: Strengthening resilience of vulnerable children in care settings to enable successful reintegration with families and communities.

Interventions: As the main area of focus are the children in the institutional care, interventions with them were the primary and major activity area. Recreation of childhood experiences that are as normal as possible, ensuring physical and emotional well-being of the child was one of the key strategies. This was done with utmost care to ensure a sense of safety and security, and to work towards successful integration of the child with their family. Initiating contact with the families and assessing their capacities to ensure safety and security of the child was then done through educating, promoting positive attitudes and skill building of the family members. In order to further strengthen family and community systems to support reintegration and to prevent institutionalization and re-institutionalization, community outreach, sensitization and identification of volunteers/mentors to support reintegration were identified. They were then finalized as mentors to provide ongoing support for reintegrated children.

Impact: Through the interventions it was noticed that 40% of the prioritized children became confident of handling negative peer pressure in the community. The children expressed that they were psychologically prepared to cope with family and other issues that may come their way. With respect to the families, parents of 5 families submitted applications for sponsorship while realizing the importance of spending quality time with children and gained awareness about the disadvantages of institutionalization. To support the continuum of care for the children, within their respective communities 60 volunteers/ mentors were identified and provided with improved knowledge about family based care and negative effects of institutional care among women and youth.

Donor: UNICEF

Primary Stakeholders/Beneficiaries: Children in the CCIs, Families, Staff of CCIs, Communities and Allied Agencies.

Project Name: South Asia Women Fund (SAWF)

Theme: Advocate and strengthen the movement for sex worker rights in India

Objectives: The project seek to strengthen the grassroots sex worker rights movement, foster dialogues with rights based movements specifically the feminists, queer, health and dalit movements, advocate with UN agencies, Commissions and panels, treaty body reporting mechanisms; to strengthen the rights of sex workers nationally, regionally and globally.

Interventions:

During the year, we focused on strengthening sex workers to participate in policy formulations and negotiations. The Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2018 has been a problem for the sex workers in India given that it has been drafted without any consultations from the sex worker groups. We worked with other movements towards a better understanding of sex work and whether it could be considered as a form of work. It strengthened our alliance with the LGBTQI movement and helped us participate in the rallies and pride marches. A dialogue was organised on framing sex work as work, during the year, where women boldly shared about their life experiences.

Impact: Few of the women sex workers, associated with us for years, were able to articulate the distinction between sexual exploitation and consensual adult sex work. Their actions were reassuring that they believed in sex work as work and that it was a rightful and dignified livelihood option. They shared that they wish to empower themselves to handle police violence and false cases through protection of laws. This in itself was a huge victory and the sex worker groups began reaching out to members of the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Parliament) calling on them to refer the Bill to a Select Committee in order for concerns of workers to be heard (including sex workers, garment workers, unions, groups working on stopping bonded labour etc.). This gave women the confidence to interact with policy makers and seasoned politicians, to express their concerns and opinion.

Donor: South Asia Women Fund (SAWF)

South Asia Women's fund through Sampada Grameen Mahila Sanstha, (SANGRAM), Sangli, Maharashtra

Primary Stakeholders/Beneficiaries: Female Sex Workers

Project Name: Vistaara

Project Period: 1 April 2019 to 30th June 2020

Theme: Advocacy for LGBTQIA+ community members

Objective: Project Vistaara aims at building a national coalition to build capacity of members of LGBTQ+ communities to (i) Advocate for formation/strengthening of transgender welfare boards, (ii) Advocate for state-level amendment of Section 377, Indian Penal Code, (iii) Make acts pertaining to Domestic Violence and Juvenile Justice LGBTQ+ inclusive, (iv) Advocate for making medical and educational curricula LGBTQ+ inclusive.

Interventions: The intervention activities of the project worked formation/strengthening of transgender welfare boards, (ii) state-level amendment of Section 377, Indian Penal Code, (iii) making acts pertaining to Domestic Violence and Juvenile Justice LGBTQ+ inclusive, (iv) making medical and educational curricula LGBTQ+ inclusive and piloting of LGBTQ+ inclusive medical and educational curricula in the state and documentation and dissemination of processes and successes of advocacy activities.

Impact: As a result of the activities with college students, issues in education domain, bullying, discrimination, coming out, affirmative actions, prevent discrimination, bullying, ragging due to SOGIEISC were brought to point of discussion among students. Cascade training events resulted in dissemination of information about the intersex identity and their issues are new for the participant, improving understanding about the issues with the transgender bill, familiarity with gender and sexuality identities. These activities motivated the participants to work together to resist the transgender bill, and work together with the larger transgender community. In addition, workshops with the lawyers and advocates improved their understanding about issues related to SOGIEISC and they expressed interest to continue to work with us to protect the rights of LGBTQ community. Activities with media persons resulted in publication of 7 media stories covering Transgender clinic, Anti-discrimination policy, NALSA Judgement, Sec 377 judgement, Transgender Bill 2018.

Donor: SAATHII

Primary Stakeholders/Beneficiaries: LGBTQi, college student, lawyers, media persons

Project Name: Advanced Mental Health Training for Community Counsellors

Project Period: November 2019 to

Theme: Capacity building for marginalised community counsellors

Objective: To strengthen and train the counselling skills of counsellors from marginalized communities through training and supervision.

Interventions: To enhance the counselling skills of the community members, topics around improved communication skills, better interpersonal relationships, positive thinking, and anger management were planned as the intervention. These skills and areas of discussion were facilitated through activities and role plays. Other areas that were also discussed in this training were - boundaries, causes of suicide, the psychological aspects on how to prevent suicide and the need for accessibility and availability during a crisis situation. The usage of props, art materials and interaction were mainly used in facilitating the training program. In addition, onsite support supervision was provided to improve their counselling skills.

Impact: Participants shared that their knowledge levels on various topics have increased, which improves the quality of their counselling they offer to clients. Secondly, the awareness about suicide being a mental issue was also understood through the training and the importance of the counsellors' presence during a crisis situation. It was shared by participants that this training has enhanced their skill set and in turn positively affect their practice within the community. As result of the training and onsite support supervision, these community counsellors developed their capacity in counselling especially the exploration, listening and communication skills and reached out to marginalized community members and effectively addressed their emotional distress.

Donor: Best Practices Foundation

Primary Stakeholders/Beneficiaries: Female Sex Workers, LGBTQI

Project Name: Advocacy to Prevent Discrimination against LGBTQi Communities

Project Period: 1 November 2019 to 31 October 2020

Theme: Advocacy for LGBTQi communities

Objective: To strengthen and empower members of the LGBTQi community, facilitation of support groups for social workers and community leaders to include LGBTQi community members and women in sex work to create awareness, prevent discrimination, and promote understanding.

Interventions: Support groups for social workers and community leaders was one of the main activities undertaken. These groups were facilitated by a professional psychodramatist and expressive arts therapist. This helped enhance understanding. To help expand this understanding and awareness, policy makers were also approached to make state level amendments that are inclusive of the minority population. In addition, team members took the initiative to help eligible transgender women avail the government schemes. Some members who were not able to avail the scheme were provided support from the project.

Impact: The greatest impact during this period was the progress made toward LGBTQi inclusion at policy level in Tamil Nadu. There is also considerable progress made toward inclusion of transgender men in the schemes of the Third Gender Welfare Board (although the name “Third Gender” itself is still unacceptable to many community members) of Tamil Nadu. Transgender clinics have been newly launched, which offer services to both transwomen and transmen. Through media advocacy, inclusive policies and judgements were implemented and ensured. The support provided to community members during the crisis of coronavirus lockdowns helped them survive the most challenging period and gave them hope to look for opportunities.

Donor: American Jewish World Service

Primary Stakeholders/Beneficiaries: LGBTQi community members including transmen and transwomen

Project Name: Sexual consent among young people in India

Project Period: 2018 to 2019

Theme: Research study

Objective: To strengthen knowledge, attitudes, and skills of adolescents and young people (14-24 yrs) in India to seek, give and refuse informed consent in the context of sexual interactions and SRH services.

Summary: This study examined what young people know and understand about sexual consent, how they practice it in premarital relationships, and what this indicates about their sexual agency. The study covered a total of 838 students in the 13-24 years' age group, from Government and private schools and colleges (n=34), in Delhi, Chennai, and Jaipur. We used mixed methods approach covering surveys (n=549), and focus group discussions (FGDs) (26), to collect data on knowledge and perceptions of behaviors related to sexual interactions, sexual consent, and sexual harassment.

Results: The findings in this study show that high proportions of young women and men in metropolitan cities are engaging in romantic relationships, and that a range of sexual interactions are common within these relationships. Yet, negotiation of consent for these interactions is practically non-existent for most interactions, non-physical and physical, except in the case of sexual intercourse. Although premarital sexual intercourse is not as common as other interactions, and consent is negotiated more frequently, this is not always the case. The only time that consent appears to be consistently and clearly negotiated is in the context of initiating a relationship.

Donor: Population Foundation of India

Primary Stakeholders/Beneficiaries: Students between the ages of 13 and 24.

Project Name: Astarea Lesbian Foundation for Justice

Project Period: 1 November 2019 to 30 June 2020

Theme: Strengthen and empower members of the LGBTQi community and FSWs

Objective: To strengthen the support for LGBTQI community members and to foster dialogues with rights based movements specifically the feminists, queer, health and dalit movements, Commissions and panels, treaty body reporting mechanisms; to empower and sensitize people nationally, regionally and globally.

Interventions: In order to cater to the sensitization towards the LGBTQ community members, sustained engagement with mental health professionals across private and public sectors around Tamilnadu was one of the interventions. Creating awareness about knowledge and experience required in handling LGBTQI issues was also acknowledged through the process. Secondly, sustaining a relationship with groups like TNPWAA to expand partnerships to other districts to establish and seek support from progressive groups that would support LGBTQI rights. As building rapport is foundational, establishing women's support groups in various districts was also key to accept and support openly lesbian, bisexual or transgender woman was also planned. To help expand this understanding and awareness, policy makers were also approached to make state level amendments that are inclusive of the minority population, through the lens of understanding and exploring the ALSA judgement bill.

Impact: LGBTIQ communities organized a press meet in Coimbatore, a tire-two city in Tamil Nadu to ensure representation of transmasculine individuals. Another impact was the organization of playback theater workshops that included a mix of college students, professionals, social workers, with participation of LGBTIQ community members and sex workers. Community members shared their personal stories and also engaged with diverse perspectives put forth by other participants in a non-judgmental space. Through activities and interactive discussions - an insight into identities beyond the gender binary and societal stereotypes of masculinity and femininity were questioned. A program with National Academy of Customs Indirect Taxes and Narcotics (NACIN) which engaged with government officials was also conducted. Through these awareness and support campaigns more members of the community itself have come to understand the ALSA bill and have been psychoeducated on similar lines. This led to the State Government having accepted in principle the demand for inclusion of transmen in the Welfare Board.

Donor: Astarea Lesbian Foundation for Justice

Primary Stakeholders/Beneficiaries: LGBTQIA+ community members

Project name: Malarkal – A Million Buds Blossoming

Project Period: 2017 - ongoing

Theme: Integrated approach to address multi-dimensional vulnerabilities of adolescents

Objectives: Key objectives of the project are 1) to strengthen evidence about spatial, temporal, contextual, and demographic distribution of sexual health, mental health, and employability needs of adolescents, availability, access, and use of services, and cost benefit ratios using technology enabled platforms, 2) to increase knowledge, understanding, and positive attitudes of adolescents, young women, and local communities towards issues related to sexuality, sexual health, mental health, and emotional well-being, 3) to increase treatment seeking behaviour and access to sexual and mental health services by adolescents, young women, and other community members and 4) to increase acceptance of families and community members around common sexual and mental health issues of adolescents.

Interventions: During the reporting period, we had strategized key activities to motivate children to visit the centres, established within the community and engaged with parents to garner support adolescents. We conducted life skills sessions for adolescent girls and boys, sports activity sessions to help adolescents effectively diffuse their unspent energy and ability to use the public space and sensitization session with parents. We have also introduced self-defence classes for adolescent girls and is piloted with group of 10 children. We have also interacted with the private and government health service providers to ensure adolescent friendly sexual and mental health services in the locality.

Impact: Based on the baseline study results, our interaction with the adolescents, parents, community members and service providers attracted large number of children to life skills sessions, sports activities and self-defence classes, and led to a positive perspective and change among children and parents. Parents have opened up to understand the perspectives of their children which they shared weren't the way they approached. They understood their role as in the words of their children 'as compassionate and supportive' and less speculative. In addition, health care service providers are motivated to provide friendly, non-threatening and stigma and discrimination services to adolescents. Our engagement with parents on suicidal ideation and contemplation among adolescents helped parents to understand the need to provide space for children to talk about their issues with parents.

Donor: Self-funded – SIAAP

Primary Stakeholders/Beneficiaries: Children, and adolescents in the age group 8-18 years, their parents and local stakeholders.

Other Activities:

Based on the success of the Phase 1 of the pilot project on reintegration of children in institutional care with their families, the phase 2 of the project focusing on reintegrating the children with the families prepared in the Phase 1 is approved by the Department of Social Defense and supported by Unicef. The Phase 2 of the project will be implemented from March 2020 to February 2021.

SIAAP organized interaction between The Secretary, Social Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu and female sex workers and between police officers and service providers and sex workers to highlight the violence, stigma and discrimination against them in their family, community and health facilities. These interactions were conducted in Chennai, Madurai and Trichy.

As part of the staff support services, staff members were provided with psychotherapy support for the mental health issues affecting them. This done through external consultants.

Siaap has long been supporting the CBOs of FSWs in 6 districts of Tamil Nadu and the federation of CBOS located in Madurai to collectivize women and advocate against marginalization. In order to strengthen CBOs and its Vadamalar Federation, skill building workshops to strengthen their leadership and communication were conducted in Madurai. In addition, session on building legal awareness were also conducted to promote access to legal services. Furthermore, SIAAP supported Vadamalar federation located in Madurai to own a rented office space and full time president to work for the issues of women and representing the federation.

Apart from the direct projects implemented by SIAAP, we also function as a Fiscal sponsor for Nirangal, our partner NGO, since they do not have FCRA account. So SIAAP provide admin, and accounts support in aiding Nirangal work with professionals like advocates, doctors and several stake holders on creating awareness on Gender, Sex and Sexuality, and about the laws and policies in India with respect to LGBTQi communities.