

Introduction:

Project Title:	MSM Khenawal
Lead NGO:	Pakistan Lions Youth Council
Partner NGO:	Social Development Council
Target Group:	Men having sex with Men & Transgender
Location:	KHANEWAL

According to recent studies e.g. HASP prevalence of HIV among Men having Sex Men has reached the concentrated epidemic level in many cities of Pakistan. Men having sex with men are more vulnerable to HIV and AIDS due to biological, social, cultural and legal factors. Khanewal is a busy expanding city situated on GT road and has large clusters of transgender who are vulnerable to HIV because of their low awareness levels and involvement in risky behaviors

Objectives:

The main Objectives of the Project are:

- Identification of key features of social, cultural, and structural context, which influence sexual and risk taking behaviors, increasing vulnerability towards HIV and AIDS.
- Creation of an enabling environment by developing linkages with key stakeholders including district government, police authorities and local religious leaders.
- Identification of features influencing sexual behavior.
- Empowering Men having Sex with Men and transgender population to themselves carrying out interventions for prevention and control HIV & AIDS and STIs.
- Promotion of safer sex behavior through behavioral change communication, and condom promotion.
- Bringing about attitudinal change regarding HIV and AIDS prevention

Methodology:

In depth interviews were conducted with transgender and clients, also the mapping was conducted to identify the geographical areas where MSM activities occurred. Key informants and focus group interviews were also the main part of the methodology adopted. To develop rapport with target groups, peer educators were selected. Establishment of project advisory committee involving all the relevant stakeholders and involvement of *Gurus (Leaders of eunuchs)* were the cornerstones on the strategy adopted. Provision of primary health care services was also an important factor for initially attracting the key population.

Achievements:

- Increased access to the services to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV through Primary Health Care and referrals
- Access to the services for HIV care and support through referrals
- Knowledge and attitude regarding HIV and AIDS & STIs improved resulting in increased use of condom and STI Reporting.
- Creation of enabling environment through linkages with local authorities and police
- Capacity strengthened
- skill development of the target group regarding negotiating safer sex

Challenges Faced:

Mobility:

- The target group is very mobile because of the demands of their profession and also because of the fear of harassment and extortion by law enforcing agencies. Therefore, it was difficult to sustain the access level.

Non Participative Approach:

- Due to many factors like lack of awareness, knowledge of their rights, low self esteem and self stigma leads to situations which result in non participation and non activeness of the target group in project activities

Lesson Learnt:

As the target group is always on move, only the peer education strategy proved effective. Approaching and involving "Gurus" (Leader) can result in greater involvement of the target groups and in enhanced awareness level of transgender population. The interventions for MSM should be broad based and consider many structural factors that have potential Implications for the HIV prevention issues. Also the religious leaders and law enforcement agencies should be involved in the process to overcome the problems associated with such initiative.