

FAST FACTS

United Nations
Development Programme



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

MULTI-COUNTRY SOUTH ASIA GLOBAL FUND HIV PROGRAMME

Overview

In countries throughout South Asia, rates of HIV among men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender people are significantly higher than those in other adult groups. They suffer from **high levels of stigma and discrimination**, which often present barriers for accessing healthcare services. **Same sex relations are criminalized in seven out of eight South Asian countries**, further hindering health seeking behaviour. Estimates by the Commission on AIDS in Asia predict that these two population groups could make up **half of all new HIV infections in Asia by 2020**.

To address this, the Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme was initiated in 2011 with the goal of **reducing the impact of and vulnerability to HIV of MSM, hijras and transgender people**. The Programme operates in seven countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), and is currently in Phase 2, which will run from July 2013 to December 2016. In Afghanistan, the Programme focuses on HIV prevention services for men with high risk behaviour. The Programme is supported by a grant from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The United Nations Development Programme Bangkok Regional Hub (UNDP BRH) serves the role of Principal Recipient.

The Programme promotes and protects the rights of key populations of MSM and transgender people and is building a foundation to ensure that regional and country-level community networks continue to be an essential partner in the HIV response.

It focuses on **strengthening community systems** to improve coordination with local governments and health care providers, deliver concentrated and quality capacity development support, and provide technical assistance to ensure high intervention impact and sustainability.

To align with regional strategies and national programmes, the Principal Recipient cooperates with regional community networks, including the Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health and Asia

Pacific Network of People Living with HIV, to support **high-level regional and national-level policy development and advocacy, technical support and research activities**.

At the national and sub-national level, community strengthening and advocacy activities are **directly implemented by sub-recipient organizations**.



Key achievements

In Phase 2, the Programme has contributed to strengthening organizational and technical capacity of community-based organizations in seven countries and regionally, and expanding coverage of HIV prevention and testing services. It has also resulted in reviews and reforms of legal and policy barriers hindering access to services for MSM and transgender people. Examples of achievements include:

- **Six countries in South Asia hosted national HIV and the law dialogues**, and Pakistan produced its first national [Scan of Law and Policies](#) impacting the HIV epidemic. This process led to **Sindh Province in Pakistan passing South Asia's first protective AIDS law**. As a result of the national dialogues, all countries were able to engage with communities and other national stakeholders to document key opportunities to promote inclusion and to report progress towards national commitments at the 2015 [Asia Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV](#).

- In February 2015, five National Human Rights Institutions from South Asia joined an additional 13 from the Asia-Pacific region to **develop a [common action plan](#) to promote and protect human rights in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity.**
- **In Bangladesh, hijra/transgender people have been recognized as 'third gender' by the government,** influenced by rigorous and continued advocacy and consultation by concerned stakeholders including sub-recipient Bandhu Social Welfare Society and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and informed by evidence developed by the Programme.
- **In Nepal, sexual and gender minorities have secured explicit protection against discrimination in the country's new Constitution in 2015.** The progressive inclusion of these protections was secured thanks in large part to the coordinated advocacy efforts of civil society groups such as sub-recipient Blue Diamond Society. Work with the NHRC and national stakeholders also helped provide the community with evidence and political advocacy for the country **to recognize a 'Third gender' category and to introduce "others" in the citizenship and immigration card in 2013.**
- **In India, the safety and well-being of hijra/transgender people has been improved,** thanks in part to targeted sensitization sessions by Voluntary Health Services with government, police, Advocates, media, health care providers and CSO/CBO staff. In 2015, the Kerala state government introduced a new policy providing dedicated cell blocks in prisons for transgender prisoners. In 2016, a welfare board for transgender people was set up in Kerala to ensure justice and equality for the community. Efforts to form a similar transgender welfare board in New Delhi, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh are in process.
- Trainings of health care providers using the ["The Time Has Come" - Enhancing HIV, STI and other sexual health services for MSM and transgender people in Asia and the Pacific: Training package for health providers to reduce stigma in health care settings](#) have been conducted in all Programme countries. **India and Bhutan have integrated the training package into national curricula** while in other countries the package adaptation process is under way.
- **Since 2014, service provision in Afghanistan and Pakistan has reached over 125,000 people and more than 28,000 were tested for HIV and knew their results. In addition, over 17,000 cases of STIs have been treated.** The service delivery programme is the only such one in Afghanistan providing HIV testing and STI diagnosis and treatment services for men with high risk behaviour.
- **Six national Monitoring and Evaluation System Strengthening workshops were convened to review the inclusion of MSM and transgender people in national reporting.** As a result, national AIDS programmes are conducting IBBS/size estimation exercises in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bhutan with support from Joint UN Teams on AIDS, which for the first time include MSM and transgender people as key populations.
- **Men with high risk behaviour and transgender groups were included in the IBBS and National HIV Strategic Plan in Afghanistan and Pakistan,** thanks to advocacy efforts of sub-recipients YHDO and NMHA, and UNDP. **In Bhutan, an IBBS formative assessment was undertaken which laid the foundation for inclusion of MSM and transgender people in subsequent national IBBS.** Additionally, Bhutan conducted the first MSM and transgender mapping study, and a formal assessment of stigma among health care providers.
- Exposure visits for community-based organizations from Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan with their peers have increased knowledge sharing on organizational governance and advocacy strategies. After a visit to Nepal, MSM and transgender people have formed the **first Bhutanese MSM and transgender community group.**
- **Over 60 community-based organizations are directly benefiting through community systems strengthening and advocacy capacity building efforts.**
- In 2015, the Programme supported the development of the [Blueprint for the provision of comprehensive care for trans people and trans communities in Asia and the Pacific](#), which provides **evidence-based recommendations to strengthen and enhance the policy, clinical and public health responses for transgender people,** and has been endorsed by the World Health Organization.

For more information, visit our website: <http://goo.gl/ExNIUI>

Or follow us on:



United Nations Development Programme
 Bangkok Regional Hub
 United Nations Service Building
 Rajdamnern Noke Avenue, Bangkok 10200, Thailand
 Email: registry.th@undp.org
 Tel: +66 (0) 2 304-9100 | Fax: +66 (0) 2 280-2700
 Web: <http://asia-pacific.undp.org/>