



A civil society coalition
to build the capacity of
sexual minorities and
people living with HIV
in Orissa to advance
their health and rights

Secretariat

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Discriminated against, disowned and denied their rights, most 'people living with HIV (PLHIV)' and 'sexual minorities' in Orissa lack access to basic health services and social security. They live in dire poverty and are denied basic healthcare because of severe stigma attached to their HIV status or criminalization of higher risk and socially non-conformant sexual behaviours. Denial ranges from non-availability of services or refusal of health workers to treat them to outright violence, abuse and even death.

In effect, the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) status of these groups of people is severely compromised and their vulnerability to HIV increased several fold. Any efforts to ensure the well being of PLHIV and sexual minorities must take into account their SRH and HIV concerns. But within the policy framework, government health programmes like the National AIDS Control Programme Phase III (NACP-III), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), and the Reproductive and Child Health Programme Phase II (RCH-II) are yet to adequately address the SRH needs of sexual minorities and PLHIV.

Many civil society initiatives (including community-based ones) in Orissa also lack an appreciation of the wide range of SRH and HIV needs of sexual minorities and PLHIV, most of them providing only limited safer sex education and medical services related to STI/HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment.

Moreover, the concerns of certain sections of PLHIV like children infected or affected by HIV and sexual minorities like Hijras, other transgender people, lesbians and bisexual women are yet to find adequate space within the larger health and development discourse in the state.

While the government acknowledges that an 'enabling environment' created by protecting the rights of PLHIV and sexual minorities is essential and will result in an uptake of SRH and HIV services, much needs to be done on this and other fronts to ensure that their 'right to life and health', as guaranteed under the Indian Constitution becomes available to them in the fullest sense of the term.

Sampark is a coalition of civil society organizations in Orissa committed to promoting all-round health and reducing poverty amongst sexual minorities and people living with HIV (PLHIV) in the state.

Established in March 2009 with 23 founder members, Sampark has been initiated under a project titled "Building the Capacity of Sexual Minorities and People Living with HIV in Orissa and West Bengal to Advance their Health and Rights". The project is an initiative of Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India (SAATHII) in partnership with Interact Worldwide, London and with funding support from the Department for International Development - Civil Society Challenge Fund, Glasgow. It builds on SAATHII's past experiences of working with issues of disadvantaged PLHIV and sexual minority communities.

One of SAATHII's key learnings from work on stigma and discrimination faced by disadvantaged communities over the years has been that bringing about change needs focused and sustained advocacy with various stakeholders, and advocacy is most effective when claims are made in a collective voice. Sampark consequently is a platform for community based initiatives and other NGOs in Orissa to collectively work on issues of stigma and discrimination faced by sexual minorities and PLHIV as well as other marginalized groups in the state.

While Sampark currently functions through the founding secretariat run by SAATHII, in the next few years it aims to be in a position to operate as an independent entity, with its own resources and sustainability mechanisms.

The coalition aims to fight stigma and discrimination to ensure equality and well-being for sexual minorities and PLHIV in Orissa in the spheres of SRH, HIV and associated issues - as promised by the Indian Constitution as well as government and non-government health and development programmes.



Shared stigma
shared concerns
shared potential

Sampark's members include community based initiatives and other NGOs working with PLHIV and sexual minorities. It also includes civil society organizations that work on SRH, HIV and a range of associated issues like gender, sexuality, human rights, sexual abuse, migration, trafficking, domestic violence, substance use, child, adolescent and youth health and development, old age, mental health, and physical disabilities.

In keeping with its policy of inclusive representation, Sampark tries to ensure that the most disadvantaged subsections of PLHIV and sexual minorities find space and voice in the coalition. This includes those who are particularly disadvantaged because of their gender and sexuality, income, age, HIV status and impact, disability and geography.

Membership of the coalition is restricted to organizations; individuals can be part of the coalition only as 'friends', 'advisors' or 'observers' and may participate in coalition activities, but will not have voting rights

We leverage the power of the collective
to advocate for change
at individual, community,
programme and policy levels

Sampark activities

Identifying leaders and coalition building

We use outreach and networking to identify potential and existing leaders among sexual minority and PLHIV communities and invite their networks, groups or organizations into the coalition as members. If needed, we strengthen our member organizations through financial and technical help.

Advocacy

Advocacy forms the core of our activities, is informed by ongoing creation of an evidence base, stakeholder analysis and policy research, and is carried out through campaigning, lobbying and sensitization programmes at local, state and national levels. Each advocacy area is overseen by a sub-committee.

Current advocacy agenda

- Eliminating stigma and discrimination in health settings (including focus on NACP-III, NRHM and RCH-II Promises)
- Livelihood and social security issues
- Legal and media advocacy

In order to carry out advocacy work effectively, **ongoing coalition functioning** includes general planning and review meetings, administrative and other sub-committee meetings and training of coalition member agencies on SRH, HIV, rights based approaches, advocacy and associated issues.

The coalition is based on democratic principles with every member organization - large or small - having an equal voice in the organization.

Member Agencies of Sampark

- 1) ActionAid India, Bhubaneswar: Works all over Orissa
- 2) Arun Institute of Rural Affairs (AIRA), Sambalpur: Works in Sambalpur and Dhenkanal districts
- 3) Association for Rural Uplift and National Allegiance (ARUNA), Berhampur: Works in Ganjam district
- 4) Bhawanis, Bhawanipatna: Works in Bhawanipatna block in Kalahandi district
- 5) Brundaban Sanskrutika Anusthan (BSA), Kalahandi: Works in Kalahandi district
- 6) Fellowship, Bhadrak: Works in Bhadrak district
- 7) Indian Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (INP+), Bhubaneswar: Works all over Orissa
- 8) Institute for Development Programmes and Research (IDPR), Bhubaneswar: Works in Balangir, Ganjam and Khurda districts
- 9) Kalinga Network for People Living with HIV/AIDS (KNP+), Bhubaneswar: Works all over Orissa
- 10) Laxminarayan MSM CBO, Balangir: Works in Balangir and Luisinga blocks in Balangir district
- 11) Maa Manikeswari Group, Titilagarh: Works in Titilagarh block in Balangir district
- 12) Maa Samaleswari Group, Sambalpur: Works in Rairakhol block in Sambalpur district
- 13) Parivartan, Bhawanipatna: Works in Kalahandi district
- 14) People's Cultural Centre (PECUC), Bhubaneswar: Works all over Orissa
- 15) Rajendra Yuvak Sangha, Balangir: Works in Balangir district
- 16) Rusikulya Network of Positive People (RNP+), Berhampur: Works in Ganjam district
- 17) Sakha, Bhubaneswar: Works in Khurda district
- 18) Santi Seva, Bhadrak: Works in Bhadrak district

- 19) Saraswati, Betaligaon: Works in Dhamnagar block in Bhadrak district
- 20) Sevakari Swayam Sahayak Gosthi (SSSG), Kesinga: Works in Kesinga block in Kalahandi district
- 21) Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India (SAATHII), Bhubaneswar: Works in Orissa and other eastern states of India
- 22) Utkal Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (UNP+), Cuttack: Works all over Orissa
- 23) Utkal Sevak Samaj (USS), Cuttack: Works all over Orissa

Location of Sampark Member Agencies



Supported by



Photos: Peevee, SAATHII



Sampark also provides direct access to SRH and HIV information and services for PLHIV and sexual minorities in Orissa through the following:

- ✓ A **phone helpline** (call 0674 657 1222 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 12 - 5 pm)
- ✓ An **email helpline** (saathiihelpline@rediffmail.com)
- ✓ A **reference library** situated at the Sampark secretariat (library hours Tuesday to Friday, 12 - 5 pm; please call 0674 657 1222 to fix date and time of visit)
- ✓ **Mobile libraries** that travel through the districts to ensure that information reaches all corners of the state
- ✓ A **legal aid unit** (call 0674 657 1222)
- ✓ An **electronic resource centre** available at www.saathii.org

For more information on Sampark's activities log on to www.saathii.org/orissapages/dfid-cscf-interact-coa-project-components.pdf