



## *Across the Continuum of HIV Services for Key Populations*

**India Quarterly Newsletter**



Dance performance in Maharashtra on World AIDS Day

### **COMMEMORATING WORLD AIDS DAY- DECEMBER 1, 2018**

LINKAGES India, commemorated World AIDS Day on December 1, 2018 with collaboration and participation in national and state level events across the country.

In New Delhi, LINKAGES participated in the World AIDS Day Event. The honorable Union Minister of State for Health Ms Anupriya Patel released the national guidelines on tuberculosis and HIV in prison and closed settings, which was developed with technical assistance from FHI 360. LINKAGES team also supported the development of a movie and laser show, showcased at the event. Secondly, LINKAGES also participated in the screening of a film festival (December 1-8, 2018) at the American center in Delhi, showcasing Hollywood and Bollywood movies with an HIV/AIDS theme.

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# LINKAGES INDIA COMMEMORATING World AIDS Day 2018



Pictured Above: Community Cultural Event in Maharashtra  
Top Left: A child receiving a school kit in Andhra Pradesh  
Bottom Left: A poster on modes of transmission in Andhra Pradesh

On the occasion of World AIDS day, an “Anand Melava” was organized for the children of key populations (KPs) registered with the Targeted Interventions (TIs) in Mumbai, Maharashtra. A health camp was organized for 58 children who were given a general checkup to elicit their children's' unmet health needs. A community event was planned in Mumbai, Maharashtra, where stakeholders and key population groups interacted in order to seek each other's support. A film screening was organized based upon the "Know Your Status" theme and several community groups along with LINKAGES staff also performed dances.

In Andhra Pradesh, LINKAGES mobilized 20,000 children to provide them with basic health and socio-economic services. Additionally, the program provided 20 children with school kits and distributed 200 gift hampers, with nutritious snacks to children affected by HIV. State AIDS Control Society showed its appreciation to the LINKAGES team with a memento and certificate for their contributions to HIV prevention and treatment.





## WORKSHOPS AND COLLABORATIONS

# Capacity Building for Social and Behavior Change Communication

On December 14 and 15, LINKAGES India conducted a workshop on social behavior change communication (SBCC) as part of a technical assistance initiative to the Information, Education, Communication (IEC) division of NACO and SACS. Topics included health behavior theories, introduction and implementation of social media to build integrated communication, designing communication to drive behavior change, and the role of research in communication. The team commented on NACO's new "Know Your Status" 100-day campaign. The workshop was catalytic for NACO, which is moving its focus from IEC to SBCC.

LINKAGES India's SBCC workshop was joined by NACO's Deputy Director General, Dr. Naresh Goyal and NACO's Joint Secretary, Mr. Alok Saxena.



Social and Behavior Communication Change Workshop Participants in New Delhi



Participants included (left to right): Mr. Ashish Verma (Project Officer, NACO), Mr. Ajay Kumar Singh (Regional Coordinator, IEC/Mainstreaming, NACO), Dr. Subash Ghosh (Technical Advisor, LINKAGES Sri Lanka), Dr. Naresh Goyal (Deputy Director General, NACO) Mr. Nahid Mohammed (Regional Coordinator, IEC/Mainstreaming, NACO)



## WORKSHOPS AND COLLABORATIONS

# National Workshop for Community - Based HIV Screening and Revamping Targeted Interventions under NACP



Community-Based Screening workshop participants in New Delhi



Participants included (left to right):

Mr. G.S. Shreenivas (LINKAGES India Country Representative),  
Dr. Asha Hedge (National Program Officer, Basic Services, NACO),  
Dr. Samiran Panda (Director, National AIDS Research Institute),  
Mr. Alok Saxena (Joint Secretary, NACO),  
Dr. Bilali Camara (Country Director, UNAIDS),  
Mr. Xerses Sidhwa (Director of Health, USAID India),  
Dr. Chris Akolo (Deputy Director, LINKAGES Global),  
Dr. Bitra George (Country Director, FHI 360 India/Sri Lanka)

On December 18 and 19, LINKAGES India provided support to the Basic Services Division of National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) to conduct a National Workshop on community-based screening (CBS). The workshop was attended by more than 150 participants from NACO, State AIDS Control Societies (SACS), developmental partners, NGOs and CBOs. Models of CBS, including network testing, index testing and health camp approaches were presented by LINKAGES India, NACO and SACS. The workshop recommended scaling up of the CBS models with FHI 360 providing technical assistance to NACO in development of standard operating procedures and manuals and providing onsite support to SACS.

On December 21 and 22, the National Workshop on Revamping of Targeted Interventions took place. Innovations piloted by LINKAGES India such as network testing, index testing, peer navigation, and virtual outreach were presented by NACO for potential scale up.

## HIGHLIGHT OF THE QUARTER

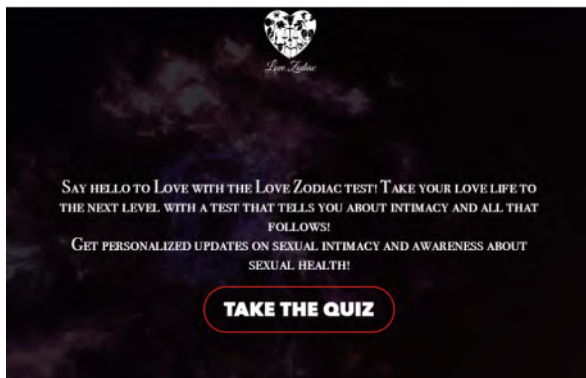
# The Grand Challenge: Innovative Strategies to Reach the Unreached



The LINKAGES India team was joined by Mr. Alok Saxena, Joint Secretary of NACO, in the FHI 360 India office to discuss updates and obtain feedback on the three Grand Challenge innovations and LINKAGES India's online outreach approach: Yes4Me. (See photo on left)

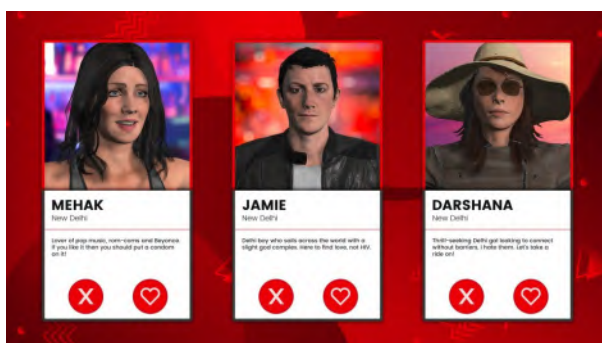


Jubi.ai is developing an artificial intelligence chat bot named Ira. They recently completed the process of defining intents and variations for the bot to be able to answer questions about HIV most appropriately for its users. All answers were reviewed and vetted by LINKAGES technical experts and appropriate responses are being drafted to make the responses more humanized and engaging. Jubi.ai will complete testing of the bot and development of the marketing plan to make Ira discoverable to users. The chat bot is expected to go live in February 2019 on Yes4Me.net and Facebook Messenger.



Twistle launched their social media campaign, named Love Zodiac, and completed the development and finalization of educational content in consultation with LINKAGES technical and communication experts. Twistle successfully registered 3,000+ users as of December 2018. They are now focusing on engaging the users through educational modules.

Onekey Care has started conceptualizing and developing ideas, concepts, themes, story lines, and the scripts for micro-games and the risk assessment game with help of a creative agency. The next step will be completion of microgames development and finalization of a partnership arrangement with a dating app provider. All games will be released in February 2019.



[Click here for a two minute video on LINKAGES India's virtual outreach strategies.](#)

For more information on the Grand Challenge: The Quint and Yahoo! published articles on the Grand Challenge click here:  
[Yahoo!](#) [The Quint](#)



## CASE STUDY

# Pushpalatha Drop-in Center: A Place of Hope



Varsha, LINKAGES counselor (left) and Rupa, a community member

I am Rupa, a transgender woman, and I depend on sex work and seeking alms to earn my living. My partner and I have been in a live-in relationship for two years and he knows about means of my earning and was fine with it until he was pressured by his family to marry a woman who could bear his child to carry the family name forward. Due to this family pressure, he started abusing me physically and verbally three months ago. While I could understand my partner's frustration, it was very painful for me to accept it and agonizing to go through.

In the darkness of sadness and excruciating mental and physical trauma, Varsha, from Pushpalatha drop-in center (supported by LINKAGES' partner India HIV/AIDS Alliance), came to my life as a savior. The Pushpalatha drop-in-center, situated near my home is a place that I have been visiting regularly even before I faced this problem with my partner. It is a safe place for transgender women like me, where I have been provided with services related to healthy living and life skills in a friendly environment.

Since my partner started abusing me physically and mentally, I stopped going to the drop-in center because I was afraid of what people would think about me when they found out my problem. Moreover, I was puzzled about what to do next and felt that my problem was too personal to share with anyone.

Because of my internal dilemma and dispute, I avoided speaking to Varsha because I was afraid of breaking down in front of her. Fortunately, Varsha did not stop calling me, and she even reached out to other friends of mine and was sending me messages through them. Finally, one day I could not stop myself; in fact, I needed somebody to talk to who would listen to me and understand me.

## CASE STUDY CONTINUED

# Pushpalatha Drop-in Center: A Place of Hope



Community members at Pushpalatha LINKAGES Drop in Center

Varsha's continuous efforts pushed me to visit the center, and her friendly and empathetic gestures helped me muster the courage to reveal everything I had been facing in the past three months. After knowing my situation, Varsha managed to call my husband into the drop-in center for a counseling session, where she explained to him that violence is never the solution to our problems, and his physical and mental abuse toward me could make him face legal repercussions.

My partner also needed to speak to someone other than me, who could help him understand more about his feelings and sensitize him to balance his emotions on practical grounds. Discussion about marriage as a matter of compulsion from family and ways to avoid this compulsion in the presence of a counsellor probably helped him to be rational rather than just being emotionally driven. I am very grateful for the help I received from Varsha and the LINKAGES drop-in center because it came to me at a time when I had no hope left for my life. Thankfully, my partner has stopped abusing me and now we are not pressuring each other in any way. I look forward to the future, although I am not sure what it holds for me and my partner, I am trying to enjoy the present moment. I am also certain that if such an incident occurs again, I can rely on Varsha and the LINKAGES Pushpalatha drop-in center to be there for me.

The Pushpalatha drop in center was established in the state of Andhra Pradesh November 2017 by India HIV/AIDS Alliance and is supported by LINKAGES. The center's staff members help provide services such as ART adherence and counseling on positive living and social issues as well as basic life skills. Additionally, community members enjoy activities such as singing, dancing, watching TV and eating meals together. These activities also provide an opportunity to discuss prevalent issues in the community and how to address them.



## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

# USAID Health Office Partners Meeting: Doing Business Differently



Participants included (left to right)  
G.S. Shreenivas (LINKAGES Country Representative),  
Dr. MR Parthasarathy (LINKAGES Technical Director), Ms. Purvi Shah  
(Regional Technical Specialist), Ms. Smriti Verma (Communication &  
Knowledge Management Specialist) at USAID Marketplace

LINKAGES India was invited by USAID to present its work on online outreach in the USAID Health Office Partners marketplace titled “Doing Business Differently.” The marketplace offered an opportunity for participants to engage with other USAID implementing partners projects. They could see products, experience services, and gain a deeper understanding of how these organizations are doing business differently.



Pictured above: Ms. Purvi Shah provides a demonstration of Yes4Me, LINKAGES India's virtual outreach tool

LINKAGES India was represented by Mr. G.S. Shreenivas, Country Representative; Dr. M.R. Parthasarathy, Technical Director; Ms. Purvi Shah, Regional Technical Specialist; and Ms. Smriti Verma, Communication and Knowledge Management Specialist. The team used iPads to showcase various virtual outreach strategies including Yes4Me, a virtual platform developed to reach the unreached, and ones being piloted through the Grand Challenge such as Ira, an artificial intelligence chat bot that answers queries about HIV; and Love Zodiac, targeted ads on social media that enable participants to take a quiz and register to receive educational information on HIV.



# Felicitation from State AIDS Control Societies



Dr. M.R. Parthasarathy awarded by Mumbai District AIDS Control Society

Dr. M.R Parthasarathy, Technical Director, LINKAGES India, was felicitated at the World AIDS Day event in Mumbai with a certificate of appreciation from the Deputy Municipal Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Mumbai, and Mumbai District AIDS Control Society for his contribution to HIV/AIDS efforts among key populations. In addition, behavior change communication materials related to HIV/AIDS, developed with technical assistance from the LINKAGES India team, were also released.

The District AIDS Prevention and Control Unit, Thane, congratulated the LINKAGES team for their work on HIV prevention. The Andhra Pradesh State AIDS Control Society recognized LINKAGES' lead partner, RIDES, for its work in Andhra Pradesh for HIV prevention. The District Medical and Health Officer from Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, also expressed appreciation to the LINKAGES team.



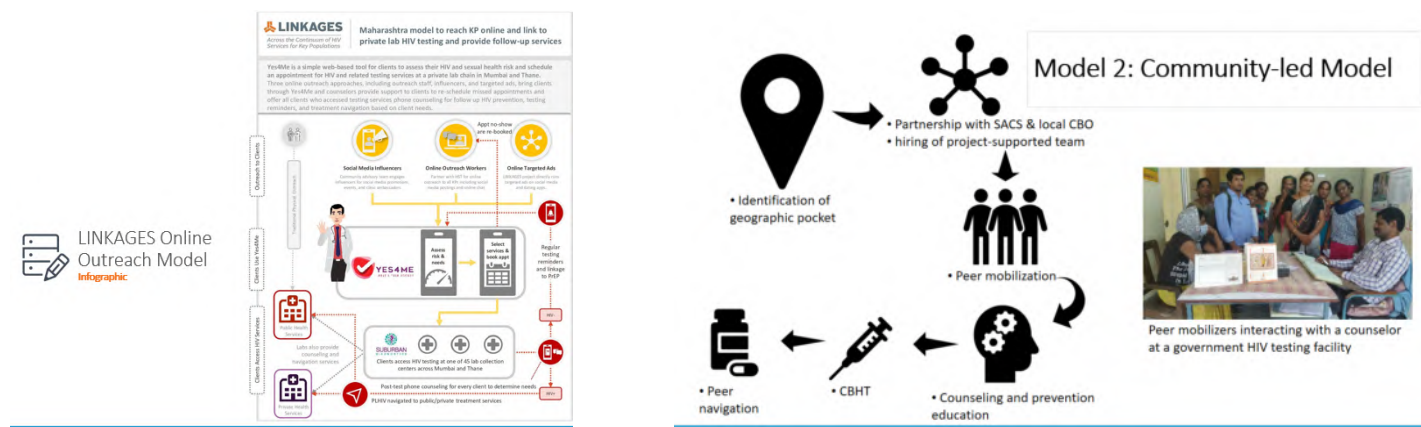
Mr. Sapan Jadhav (Senior Program Officer, LINKAGES) awarded by Mumbai District AIDS Control Society



Mr. Narasimha Murthy (Senior Program Officer, LINKAGES) awarded by Andhra Pradesh State AIDS Control Society

## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

# ASICON: National Conference of AIDS Society of India 2018



Pictured Above (left to right): A slide on online outreach and a slide on community-led case detection



Ms. Purvi Shah's oral presentation

LINKAGES India was represented at the 11th National Conference of AIDS Society of India (ASICON) by Dr. M.R. Parthasarathy, Technical Director, and Ms. Purvi Shah, Technical Specialist. Dr. Parthasarathy presented “Leveraging Community Surveillance and Community-Driven Case Detection Methods among Key Populations” on LINKAGES’ innovative case detection strategies. The presentation won second prize under the awards section. Ms. Shah’s oral presentation “India Moving Online: Its Implications for HIV Intervention Programs for Key Populations” won third prize. The posters “Enhanced Peer Outreach Approach as a ‘Reach’ Strategy among Key Populations: LINKAGES India Experience” and “Exploring the Epidemic Drivers: Risk Vulnerability Profiling at HIV Testing Centers, Mumbai” were also presented.

## ABOUT US:

LINKAGES India, funded by USAID and PEPFAR, partners with key populations, civil society, and government stakeholders to improve the impact, quality, and efficiency of HIV services being delivered under the National AIDS Control Program IV. LINKAGES aims to strengthen India’s TI efforts while engaging new and non-venue-based KP individuals facing the greatest HIV infection risks.

### Editorial Team:

**G.S. Shreenivas**, Country Representative, LINKAGES India  
**Smriti Verma**, Knowledge Management and Communication Specialist, LINKAGES India  
**Trishna Govil**, Program Officer, LINKAGES India  
**Stevie Daniels**, Editor, Research Utilization, LINKAGES

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