



A life-skills education (LSE) session in Andhra Pradesh

Orphans and Vulnerable Children of Key Populations

The orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) component of the LINKAGES India project has reached and provided services to 3,654 people (2,933 children and 721 caregivers). The services provided include health, nutrition, education, psychosocial, life skills education, and social security.

Health: Apart from HIV testing services, various health camps are conducted to identify children's health-related issues and link the children to appropriate services. Children receive general health check-ups to identify chronic illness, anemia screenings for adolescent girls, dental screenings, and screenings for ophthalmological disorders.

Nutrition: Children and their families are being provided nutrition-related services through government schemes, local donors, and community groups.

Education: Children of members of key populations (KPs) are receiving highly needed education services, including educational scholarships through the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS). They are also receiving school supplies through private and corporate support from global brands such as

Amazon India, as well as from local brands. Additionally, Amazon India is providing menstrual hygiene products to adolescent girls.

Life skills education: Adolescent children (10-18 years old) are being engaged in life skills education (LSE), which enables them

to make informed decisions regarding their wellbeing and teaches them about safe behavior and how to avoid situations that put them at risk of acquiring HIV. These sessions enhance the children's abilities to deal with the vulnerabilities they face as a result of their identities as children of KP members.



Training of trainers: A five-day training of trainers on how to facilitate LSE sessions was conducted for OVC staff and lead partners, who would further train childcare facilitators on conducting effective LSE sessions for adolescent children.

Training of master trainers on LSE



LINKAGES and FHI 360 represented at the inauguration

Decentralized Care and Treatment: Link ART Center

LINKAGES—in collaboration with Mumbai District AIDS Control Society (MDACS), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and community-based organizations (CBOs)—implemented the following two community-based antiretroviral therapy (ART) service delivery models with the goal of improving KPs' ART adherence and retention through provision of community-centric services.

1. A Linked ART Centre (LAC)—targeted intervention co-location model, where a LAC is co-located in Aditi, a targeted

intervention in Mumbai for female sex workers. The co-located model at the Aditi targeted intervention was inaugurated on 6 March 2019.

2. Integrated care delivery model where HIV testing, LAC services, and specialized counselling services are provided under one roof at The Humsafar Trust, a LINKAGES implementing partner, also based in Mumbai. The integrated care delivery model at The Humsafar Trust was inaugurated on 7 March 2019 by representatives from government,

USAID, FHI 360, and other key stakeholders.

The services offered at these community-based ART centers include ART re-fills; adherence counselling and support and enhanced adherence counselling; care for minor opportunistic infections; and referrals for CD4, viral load testing, and major opportunistic infections. In addition, the integrated care center model offers HIV testing and counselling, index testing, and specialized counselling services such as psychosocial counselling.



Inauguration of the Linked ART Center in Mumbai, India



National Co-Creation Workshop for Developing SBCC Strategy for NACO

LINKAGES India organized a co-creation workshop in collaboration with the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), with representation from community members; key-population-led organizations; creative agencies; and information, education, and communication officers from the State AIDS Control Society from across the country.

Participants of the national co-creation workshop



Ideation and prototyping during the co-creation workshop



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The co-creation workshop used principles of design-thinking (<https://www.ideo.com/pages/design-thinking>) to empathize with key populations by understanding the eco-system around them (developed based on the communication needs assessment), define problem statements from the key population point of view, ideate for solutions, and develop

prototypes for testing the solutions with key population members. It is the first time that design-thinking principles were applied to solving HIV-related issues in India. This led to development of a comprehensive strategy document for the way forward on developing a social and behavior change communication (SBCC) package about HIV and AIDS in India.

Self-verified Adherence

LINKAGES India is strengthening its efforts to retain people living with HIV (PLHIV) on treatment to achieve viral suppression and to positively influence the treatment of these individuals. LINKAGES, in collaboration with USAID and NACO, initiated a real-time ART adherence monitoring project using an information and communication technology (ICT) called 'self-verified adherence' (SVA) to improve treatment and adherence rates of patients initiated on ART.

Patients who are enrolled in the project are counseled by their ART counselor to take their medications and to call a toll-free number from their mobile phone. This triggers an automated reminder-SMS to be sent to the patients, alerting them to take their pills, at a time

preferred by individual patients daily. The web dashboard (at the ART center) and the mobile application (used by the outreach workers who are linked to each patient) reflect whether the patient has called the toll-free number and taken their pills or not. Clients who do not call the toll-free number will be contacted by the outreach worker over the phone or through physical outreach (if the client is not reachable over phone or requires additional adherence support) to initiate supportive actions. If the outreach worker confirms that the client has taken pills but forgot to call, the call for that day can be manually marked by the ART center staff. SVA enables remote observation of ART pill adherence among PLHIV and could be a potential game changer in improving ART adherence outcomes.



reTHINK

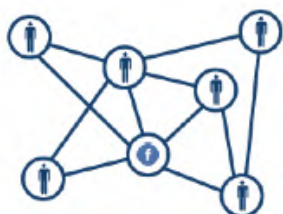
Grand Challenge

LINKAGES India completed the pilot phase of the RETHINK HIV Grand Challenge (www.rethinkhiv.in). The three innovators demonstrated out-of-the-box ideas to reach high-risk populations in virtual spaces.

Jubi.ai developed Ira, a conversational platform powered by artificial intelligence through which people can seek answers to their pressing HIV and AIDS queries. Ira can be accessed at <https://yes4me.net/IRA>



3,000,000+
Impressions



300,000
Targeted
Facebook Reach



250,000
Total Messages
Exchanged



61,000+
Total user who
chatted with the bot

Achievements of Ira through 31 March 2019

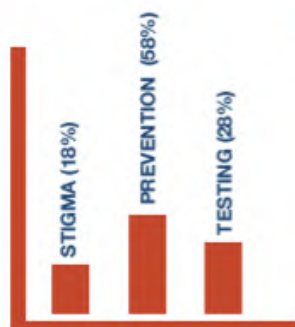
OneKeyCare Venture's innovation 'Game. Set. Match.' aimed to incentivise dating app users, ages 18-35 years, to play a short microgame on perceptions about HIV and get rewarded. Based on choices users made in the first microgame, they are targeted with other microgames that reinforce behaviours related to HIV prevention, testing, and stigma.

PERFECT MATCH GAME

Total Participants - 901



11% Female 89% Male



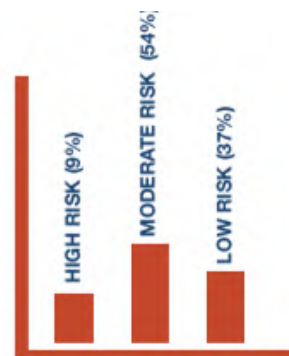
58% users fall into the 'prevention' message category based on their choice in the perfect match game

RISK ASSESSMENT

Total Participants - 698



9% Female 91% Male



63% user fall in high and moderate risk based on their risk profile

Achievements of Game. Set. Match. through March 2019

Twistle uses a technological approach to engage users who are at risk of contracting HIV through the Love Zodiac campaign, a website where users are encouraged to register online to receive automated messages on sexual health, safe sex, and HIV testing.

27,88,971

IMPRESSIONS

109,795

TOTAL CLICKS

1,33,704

VISITORS

15,188

QUIZ COMPLETED



3704 REGISTRATIONS
70% MEN AND 30% WOMEN

Achievements of Love Zodiac through February 2018

Hidden Population Coming Forward

Story of a CBO Formation

HIV has always affected the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. In India, transgender people and men who have sex with men (MSM) face compounded inequalities due to social stigma, violence, high levels of criminalization, and fear of identity disclosure leading to lack of family support and nonacceptance in the society.

These factors force vulnerable populations to the periphery, where they remain hidden because of structural and social barriers. It is our collective responsibility to dismantle these barriers and to provide a safe environment for HIV prevention, care, and treatment. LINKAGES' enhanced peer outreach approach (EPOA) has helped to reach these hidden populations so they may receive the services they require. The network that formed among some of the people reached through EPOA generated a sense of empowerment, broke the fear of isolation, and garnered trust among the group.



Trans people and MSM mobilized through LINKAGES in Andhra Pradesh

Trans people and MSM of the East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh felt a growing need to organize and address their challenges. As a result, LINKAGES supported them in setting up a CBO called Parivar Godavari. A series of consultations with community members was organized to identify the mission and vision of the CBO. LINKAGES played an instrumental role in guiding the members throughout the process of registration, from opening a

bank account, drafting bylaws, registering the CBO under The Society's Registration Act 2001, to organizing an election to select an executive body to preside over the CBO proceedings.

This step of forming a CBO will help the community members to seek support beyond health-related services and develop a strong social support system.

Conferences and Recognition:

LGBTI Health Symposium: The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health Symposium was organized by the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), jointly with development partners including LINKAGES and USAID. Representatives from NACO, SACS, National AIDS Research Institute (NARI), World Health Organization (WHO)-India, community representatives and other development partners participated. Dr. Bitra George, Country Director, FHI 360 (India/ Sri Lanka), as chief guest addressed the participants, and emphasized the need for comprehensive health care services for the LGBTQ community, especially trans women in the context of HIV. Dr. M. R. Parthasarathy, Technical Director, LINKAGES, presented the rapid assessment done by LINKAGES/FHI 360 and need for a comprehensive service model for trans women in Mumbai, India. Additionally, he presented on various models of comprehensive service delivery for trans women in Mumbai.



Picture of LINKAGES team members attending the LGBTI Health Symposium

National Consultation on the Changing Patterns of Sex Work in India: The India HIV/AIDS Alliance, with support from NACO, conducted a one-day workshop on March 18, 2019 to understand the changing solicitation patterns of sex workers and propose better ways to link

them to treatment using technology. LINKAGES India country representative, G.S. Shreenivas, and the LINKAGES India Yes4Me coordinator presented on technological innovations and strategies being used by the project to reach hidden populations.

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.

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