

**developing an
enabling environment
support and care for MSM
PLWAs**



**Shivananda Khan
Naz Foundation International
www.nfi.net**

***7th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific
1st-5th July 2005***

Male-to-male sexual context in South Asia

- Sexual diversity
- Gender variance
- Multiple frameworks of male-to-male sex
- Gendered framework of sexual practices
- High risk sexual activities
- Bridging behaviours



Risk

- Polymorphous sexual behaviours
- Females less accessible than males because of social policing
- Multiple partners
- Anal sex as primary sexual activity
- Low condom and appropriate lubricant use
- Significant levels of STIs
- Sex with both male and female partners



Risk

- Gendered framework
- Sexual violence
- Poor access to treatment
- Low coverage of appropriate sexual health services
- Poverty



Stigma, discrimination and social exclusion

For feminised MSM

- **Double stigmatisation - feminisation and receptive partners in anal sex.**
- **Self-stigmatisation because of their gendered identities and social exclusion.**

Violence and abuse

From a study conducted by NFI in Bangladesh with feminised males who have sex with males.

- 71% faced with harassment from thugs
- 87% stated that they were subjected to sexual assault or rape because they were effeminate
- 64% stated that they faced police harassment because they were effeminate
- 33% reported sexual assault of rape by 'friends'
- 48% reported sexual assault by police

This level of violence and abuse exists across South Asia also and for the same reasons.

Vulnerability

- Invisibility and denial
- Stigma, discrimination and social exclusion
- Violence and abuse
- Low levels of self-esteem
- Lack of safe spaces
- Disempowerment
- Lack of resources and skills



Vulnerability

- Poverty
- Genderphobia
- Illegality
- Denial of human rights
- Conflict in state policies
- Low service delivery



Living with HIV/AIDS

For MSM living with HIV/AIDS, particularly those who are feminised, stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion is greatly reinforced.



A disempowering environment

What does this mean?

- **Stigma, discrimination and social exclusion affects the ability of vulnerable populations to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS.**
- **It disempowers them from support and care.**
- **It disenfranchises them from accessing what services may be available.**
- **It reduces opportunities to develop appropriate services.**

An enabling environment

What does this mean?

To enable: Authorise, empower, supply with means to take action.

To provide with adequate power, means opportunity, or authority.

Equity: A system of justice founded on principles of natural justice and fair conduct.

Thus to develop an enabling environment means to create systems of empowerment, social justice and equity for the most marginalised populations.

An enabling environment

What does this involve?

- **To reduce human rights abuse and violence.**
- **To reduce stigma and discrimination.**
- **To increase self-esteem and empowerment.**
- **To ensure that adequate sanctions exist so that the above are implemented appropriately and adequately.**

An enabling environment

What does this involve?

- To empower affected and infected populations to develop and deliver their own self-help services.
- To increase the technical skills of service providers.
- To ensure appropriate resources are easily available.



Key Recommendations

- **Legal, legislative, socio-cultural and judicial impediments to MSM sexual health interventions need to be addressed.**

At the very least, this means that there needs to be a positive dialogue between the Health and Home Ministries in regard to support for marginalised populations in the fight against AIDS.

Along with this is required concerted advocacy to repeal Section 377 of the India Penal Code.

Key Recommendations

- **Address human rights abuse and reduce the levels of sexual violence, harassment and abuse of MSM, and against staff of MSM sexual health service providers through:**
 - a. **appropriate sensitisation and training of law enforcement personnel at all levels, the judiciary, and the legal profession**
 - b. **ensure that laws against male-on-male rape and sexual abuse are on the statute books and that these laws are adequately implemented with appropriate sanctions**
 - c. **constructions of masculinity that support gender violence are challenged through appropriate education and awareness**

Key Recommendations

- **Empower local networks of self-identified MSM networks to develop their own self-help HIV/AIDS service provision including support and care.**

This means ensuring that

- ✓ **appropriate skills training, management support and safe spaces to meet are readily available**
- ✓ **adequate levels of on-going funding are provided**
- ✓ **appropriate resources and tools, such as low-cost condoms and water-based lubricant, education materials, STI treatment, ARVs are easily accessible**

Key Recommendations

- **Ensure that any enabling strategy include key indicators that can be measured in terms of impact assessment.**

This will also mean that sanctions will need to be place to ensure compliance by key stakeholders.

Key Recommendations

- **Central involvement of MSM in policy making, advocacy, and HIV/AIDS interventions at national, state and local level.**

This means that appropriately skilled MSM should be a part of decision making on policy and advocacy through direct involvement and consultation.

Key Recommendations

- **National, state and local HIV/AIDS agencies, both government and non-government, as well as the general community, should be sensitised to the specific issues, concerns and needs arising from male-to-male sex**

This means education and training programmes targeted at specific organisations, groups and individuals utilising a broad range of resources and Media along with mainstreaming anal sex as a male sexual practice.

Key Recommendations

- **Staff of STI treatment centres and VTCs should be provided with skills training to ensure that their services are appropriate, empowering and accessible to all sub-populations of MSM.**

This means that such staff understand issues, concerns and sexual health, support and care needs of MSM and can ensure that they provide a sympathetic and caring service.