

Naz Foundation International  
Shivananda Khan

## **Diagnostic visit to Belgaum, Karnataka, 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2005**

### **Background**

Shivananda Khan of Naz Foundation International (NFI) was contracted to provide technical support to PATH India who is providing technical assistance for development of Inter-Personal Communications (IPC) resources through Project Inter-Act, Learning Centre, Belgaum District, with the implementing partner, Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT) and local NGO partner, BIRDS, and a focus on males who have sex with males (MSM).

A review had been conducted on the PATH/Avahan document dated 7<sup>th</sup> April 2005, and comments provided to the PATH team members on the 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2005. This critiques the use of the term MSM in the document along with other issues and concerns that arose from the document. (See Annex 1)

Along with this critique a range of other documents were sent that reflected NFI's knowledge and experience around male-to-male sexual behaviours, practices and vulnerabilities in India.

While the original intention was to participate in a capacity analysis and IPC strategy planning 2 day workshop in Belgaum between 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> April, which was supposed to involve PATH representatives, along with representatives from Avahan, KHPT, and BIRDS, as well as self-identified MSM drawn from known networks by BIRDS, this was not what happened.

A lengthy discussion was held between Shivananda Khan and Nandinee Bandyopadhyay (PATH) in Belgaum, along with Aparajita Ramakrishnan (Avahan), Arvind Betigeri (Programme Office, PATH, Karnataka), and Paige Best (consultant) on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, designing the two workshop with the expectation that some 30 MSM participants for the 2 day consultation meeting. From this discussion, Nandinee drafted the following:

The workshop would involve:

- Enabling participants to explore why males have sex with males, who they are, where, and what risky activities take place. Further participants would explore what social networks such MSM belong to, and what risks and vulnerabilities they experience.
- Enabling participants to strengthen their understanding about the links between male sexuality HIV/STI, and how they themselves can play a critical role in addressing the HIV epidemic.
- Enabling participants to analyse their capacity to reach out to people involved in male-to-male sex and implement IPC.
- Enabling participants to plan the future steps for strengthening their IPC capacity.

The workshop was designed as follows

Day One	12.00 noon – 12.30pm	Welcome and introduction to workshop
	12.30pm – 2.00pm	Exploring male-to-male sexualities Why, who, where Through small working groups with presentations
	2.00pm – 3.00pm	Lunch
	3.00pm – 4.00pm	Mapping Belgaum district Small working groups with presentations
	4.00pm – 4.30pm	Tea-break
	4.30pm – 6.00pm	HIV/AIDS awareness and knowledge Small working groups with presentations  Sexual practices and acts leading to discussions on risks and vulnerability Small working groups with presentations
	6.00pm	Social and dinner
Day Two	10.00am – 11.30am	Understanding vulnerability Exploring risks and vulnerability regarding male-to-male sex along with developing strategies to reduce risks and vulnerability
	11.30am – 12.00noon	Tea break
	12.00noon – 2.00pm	Addressing stigma and discrimination What is necessary to developing an enabling environment for MSM
	2.00pm – 3.00pm	lunch
	3.00pm – 4.30pm	Reaching our to MSM in Belgaum district Small working groups exploring the different actors and institutions that are important to them. Interactive session linking all the sessions to explore most effective methodologies to reach out to as many MSM – how to talk with them and what to talk about.
	4.30pm – 5.00pm	Tea break
	5.00pm – 6.30pm	Future actions: an exploration and generation of ideas
	6.30pm	Social, dinner and farewell

### Issues of concern

The first problem was that in actually accessing the original venue, ASOGA in Khanapur Taluka. Due to demonstrations taking place, police had blocked the road and would not allow anyone to enter the town.

Close by to the police barrier was an open-air restaurant, and this was secured for the workshop immediately.

This required participants to be informed, and by the time everyone arrived at the new venue it was approximately 2.30pm. Further, the number of MSM participants was only some 15 people, not the anticipated 30. There were also some 6 BIRDS staff who were not MSM.

General discussions that followed clearly indicated that BIRDS had not responded well to identifying key MSM in the Belgaum district, and that there had been some confusion in regard to the activities of the workshop along with the number of days it would take. It appeared that relationships between MSM and BIRDS and the range of MSM social networks in Belgaum District was not based on trust or knowledge.

As a consequence, it was decided that the original workshop plan would be cancelled. However, it was agreed to conduct some sessions over the two days to gain a better understanding of the issues in Belgaum District.

Thus following lunch, all workshop attendees, including BIRDS staff, and staff from KHPT, Avahan and Path were taken through a session exploring male-to-male sexualities and their expression in Belgaum District. This involved small group work looking at:

- Why do males have sex with males
- Who is doing male-to-male sex
- Where MSM meet and also where they do sex
- What sex activities take place

By the time this session finished which also involved a tea break, there was no time for further activities. Some of the MSM participants had also organised a social gathering with performance, which was hosted by the BIRDS Belgaum office.

Participants were requested to attend Day Two of the workshop, to bring along any friends they wished to, and to begin at 10.00am.

However, while PATH/Avahan staff and Shivananda Khan were present at the venue on time, no other participant arrived until past 12.00noon (including BIRDS staff). Further only 5 MSM participants from the previous day, but they brought some 8 friends. So a whole different group was present.

This required further re-adjustments to the schedule, and in the end, the time remaining was spent of seeking more knowledge of MSM social networks, some attempts at estimating size of self-identified highly vulnerable MSM population, and some understanding of the nature of relationships between these social networks. This process identified some 3 different social networks in and around Belgaum.

Following the end of this session, a motivational session was held with the MSM participants, explaining why it was necessary to address HIV/AIDS issues for MSM and why they play a key role in this.

It was explained that further activities, including a training workshop, would be conducted in the near future with those present as key representatives along with other referrals that arise from them.

A meeting was also held with two representatives from a different social network in Belgaum by Nandinee and Shivananda.

Following a de-briefing session with PATH/Avahan staff the conclusions identified below were drawn:

- BIRDS does not have access to the range of social networks of MSM.
- They also have a significant lack of understanding on MSM issues, concerns and needs.
- That there would need to be a distinct and separate MSM intervention from that of FSW.
- Current BIRDS staff were inappropriate to work with MSM.

- It will require PATH to take on the local responsibility for developing an MSM intervention as a community-based response initially before IPC can be developed
- It was suggested that since the next significant PATH activity in Belgaum will probably be in June, a social activity be arranged in May to maintain momentum with those participants who had participated in the “workshop”.
- A local MSM Project Manager/Coordinator/Facilitator will need to be recruited to identify and recruit potential workshop participants.
- That some sort of fee be paid to workshop participants, along with a travel allowance.
- Further interactions will be necessary with key representatives from differing social networks towards identifying potential participants in the next workshop.
- That the next workshop would involve key representatives from the range of differing social networks.

Shivananda Khan  
2<sup>nd</sup> May 2005

# Annex 1

Summary Commentary on the PATH/AVAHAN document

Project Inter-Act

Learning Centre Profile, Belgaum District, Karnataka (7<sup>th</sup> April 2005)

Shivananda Khan

Naz Foundation International

14<sup>th</sup> April, 2005

## Knowledge and Experience

Naz Foundation International (NFI) has been working with male-to-male sexual issues and concerns particularly with self-identified MSM in India since 1997. Since then we have conducted some 12 situational assessments with MSM in various cities in India (including Bangalore), and developed some 17 MSM-led interventions.

We have also produced a range of development tools for MSM-led community-based HIV/AIDS interventions, including capacity building, project management, and monitoring processes.

For more information about NFI please see our website [www.nfi.net](http://www.nfi.net)

### 1. Use of the term MSM

Usually an acronym for men who have sex with men, but in the context of India, where male sexualities are diverse and where constructions of masculinity are based not on sexual orientation, but on penetrative sexuality, it may be more appropriate to see MSM as “males who have sex with males”. This is because two key dynamics in male-to-male sex involve hijras and kothi-identified males, who are perceived as not men by their masculine partners, and who perceives themselves as “less than men”.

Further there appears to be a broad population of males who also have sex with other males, some of whom will be identified as gay, kothi, hijra and usually accessible, if in a supportive environment.

Most often, the masculine partners of kothi, do not have a sexual identity, and refer themselves as men, or “real men”. These are called panthis by kothis, but they don’t use this label themselves. Further other frameworks of risky sex practices between males also occur in all male institutions, such as prisons and the armed forces, and also in neighbourhoods, hostels, village environments, occupational groups such as truck drivers, among street males, and so on, where females are either not accessible, or too socially policed. Some of this sex can be coercive, but much will be around desire for “semen discharge” rather than for same-sex preference, i.e. for the act rather than for the person.

Thus MSM should not refer to an “at risk group” which is usually perceived as a self-enclosed entity, but rather a behavioural category practiced by a significant proportion of males, including adolescents, adult men, and gendered males, where gay, kothi and hijra identified males may represent minority populations among all males who have sex with other males, intermittently, occasionally, regularly, or all the time.

Another factor to take into consideration is that many men who have sex with kothis and hijras may also be married, and kothi-identified (as well as gay-identified) men may also be married. Marriage is usually socially compulsory, and very often there is very little choice involved. It is a signifier for Indian masculinity. This means that female partners of males who have sex with males may also be at risk.

In looking at male-to-male sex then, we must look at these two primary frameworks

- Those who self-identify around desire and gender, i.e. kothis, gay men and hijras (and perhaps double-deckers – which is a behavioural term)
- Those who do not have a self-identity around sexual practice

Thus the use of the term MSM in this report is problematic

Note: in page 2 of the PATH report, 1.3 Desk Review, section b) Socio-demographic indicators, it is noted that there are a range of colleges and an army training camp, both risk-behaviour environments. Also noted that Belgaum district is primarily rural which does not preclude male-to-male behaviours and risky anal sex practices.

In the report, page 3, it states that “the gender identity and roles of MSM have been classified as dothi (masculine/active role), kothi (feminine/passive role) and double-decker (bisexual).” A word of caution here is required.

Kothi language arises from hijra language and terminology. Traditionally there were hijras/kothis and “real men”. While such men did not identify with their sexual practice other than as men, kothis/hijras labelled them as dothi/panthi. Double-decker is a very recent term to describe males who are penetrated and penetrate (not bisexual!) with other males.

Dothis/Panthis, do not call themselves dothi/panthi, but men.

Further do not assume that the kothi/hijra identity means being only the receptive partner in sex. There are kothi-identified males who penetrate occasionally, there are also hijra-identified males who are as yet not castrated who also penetrate occasionally, and there are “real men” who at times are also penetrated. There is no actual clear-cut sexual role divide. Behaviours and roles do cross over.

## 2. Religious identities and male-to-male sex

In the PATH report on page 3, *Jogathis* and *Jogammas* are mentioned, along with *Jogappas*. The question was raised as to whether these religious frameworks include male-to-male sex, which was answered because the report stated there was no knowledge.

NFI has anecdotal evidence that such male-to-male sex does occur in these settings, from Bangalore. In Andhra Pradesh where similar frameworks exist with the Shiv Shakti, there is significant evidence of male-to-male sex. Primarily is based on gender performance and desire for “real men”, but sometimes a cash/gift transaction can occur.

## 3. Class

Identities are often shaped by class and education status, thus in India, developing a gay sensibility and identity is prefigured by class and education, Kothi-identified males who perform a gendered identity, along with hijras tend to be from low-middle class and working class background (but not always), and their sex partners tend to come from the same background.

Often, relationships between these different populations can be difficult, class-based and gender biased.

It will be necessary explore whether the currently identified middle-class “MSM” group is the most appropriate intervention agency for working with low-income populations of MSM/kothis/hijras.

#### 4. Sex work

As with the diversity of frameworks for male-to-male sex, there is similarly a diversity for males who sell sex to other males.

Those from middle class backgrounds (usually students from schools, colleges and universities) making extra income for personal possessions) tend to use mobile phones, internet, and adverts. Those from low-income populations, kothis and hijras, tend to sell sex at specific sites, either full-time, or opportunistically. Primarily they sell sex as a survival strategy.

The rationale for selling sex cannot be easily divided into those who sell for money and those who desire male-to-male sex. With the levels of stigma and discrimination regarding male-to-male sex, and particularly being penetrated in anal sex, most middle-class sex workers would define themselves as “heterosexuals” and deny ever being penetrated. In terms of those selling sex from low-income populations, many kothis sell sex also, but would define themselves as kothis, and partner rates between those who sell sex and those who do not are similar, as are the sexual practices.

Street males who sell sex may also define themselves as “heterosexuals’ and deny being penetrated.

It would be unwise to try and separate males who sell sex from the category MSM within specific dynamics because the boundaries are so porous and amorphous. There is no separate category/identity males/men who sell sex.

#### 5. Population estimations

One should always be wary of so-called “size estimations” of the “MSM population/group”, as is clearly indicated by the above comments. MSM is not a group, but an activity which is widely dispersed and includes a significant proportion of males/men.

What is usually captured in such exercises are self-identified MSM, either visible gay/kothi/hijra identified or easy to reach, but not their sexual partners, or other invisible networks.

#### 6. Mysore

There a small intervention project in Mysore working with kothi-identified males and HIV/AIDS.

#### 7. Condoms

The key issue is to make sure that water-based lubricant is readily available for reducing risks in condom and rectal damage in anal sex.

Flavoured condoms are primarily preferred for oral sex.

#### 8. Diagnostic tools

- a. How is peer education defined and what is their role?
- b. In terms of 2.3 KP-MSM network section:
  1. The use of the term MSM network (singular) when this should be plural.. there may well be different class/identity/age networks that co-exist but do not necessarily cross over, and be unknown to each other.
  2. Question 2: Gender identity: should include man/woman as well...

Along with this commentary I am also sending some additional documents.

1. NFI presentation on masculinities, (homo)sexualities, and HIV vulnerability in India
2. Bangalore Situational Assessment among MSM, 2000
3. Male-to-male behaviours in rural India: research paper

## **ANNEX 2**

### **Naz Foundation International**

#### **Process for developing an MSM sexual health project**

- Ø Identify and recruit a Local Focus Person/Project Manager (LFP/PM)
- Ø The LFP identifies and recruits potential participants in training and assessment programme from local MSM networks
- Ø Collect workshop materials and translate where necessary
- Ø Workshop venue identified and organised
- Ø Conduct first socialising meeting
- Ø Conduct 7 day Assessment workshop
- Ø Identify and recruit from workshop participants 10-15 Assessment Team members
- Ø Open an readily accessible drop-in centre and safe space where some of the Assessment work can be conducted, and socialising and networking meetings can be organised
- Ø Conduct Assessment
- Ø Implement initial networking and outreach work
- Ø Analysis of Assessment data
- Ø Report produced and dissemination meeting held
- Ø Advocacy work conducted among State agencies and NGOs
- Ø Identify 2<sup>nd</sup> training workshop participants from Assessment Team
- Ø Conduct 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop
- Ø Develop the group as a registered organisation (a trust or a society)
- Ø Identify potential staff from 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop participants
- Ø Develop and submit a project proposal
- Ø Funding secured
- Ø Implement project
- Ø On-going technical assistance and support provided by NFI

## Preparing for the workshop

This manual has been specifically designed for use in developing peer intervention sexual health projects for males who have sex with males in South Asia.

It is recognised that because of the specific specialisation in regard to peer intervention in terms of male-to-male sexualities and sexual behaviours, this manual may be inappropriate for use by other types of sexual health agencies, such as those working with women, and/or occupational groups like truck drivers. However, it is important that the issues of anal sex behaviours and male-to-male sex should be dealt within these agencies and services. With this in mind, it may be possible to use elements of the workshop for this purpose.

NFI firmly believes in a peer model of education and training. In the context of males who sex with males, it would also be more appropriate and effective for workshop facilitators to share similar sexual behaviours as the participants themselves, be willing to discuss them in ways that destigmatise and support them, and have a clear understanding of the socio-cultural context in which their sexualities and behaviours exist. Confidentiality must be assured and absolute. Nor should any judgement be passed on whatever sexual or gender choices the workshop participants make.

The workshop frameworks outlined in this manual have been developed after a range of similar workshops were conducted in South Asia. It is structured and timed towards a desired end, to achieve certain goals, and to flow in a specific manner. Whilst amendments may be made to the content and timetable, such changes should not interrupt the flow of the workshop towards its conclusion.

Facilitators should read the manual thoroughly as well as some of the suggested reading. It is essential that they understand the issues raised in the manual and the workshop programmes itself. They should feel comfortable dealing with these issues, and also understand the socio-cultural context in which male sexual behaviours and sexualities occur within the area in which the workshop is being conducted. Workshop participants will be reflecting these issues.

## Language

This manual has been produced in English. But it is most likely that many of the participants will not be able to access English, either in its written or spoken form. If the facilitators do not speak in the local language then an appropriate translator will be necessary. This could be one of the participants/workshop organisers. If this is not possible, then a translator will need to be recruited. It is essential to ensure that the translator will not have any difficulties dealing with sexually explicit language, and differing male sexualities and sexual behaviours. It would be more appropriate for the translator to also share similar behaviours as the participants.

Wherever possible all documents should be provided to participants in their own written language. Such translations will have to be carefully monitored to ensure that the correct translated terminology and meaning have been used.

Much of the language used in the workshop is sexually explicit. During the course of the workshop, equivalent terms in the local language are discovered and expressed. Wherever possible these terms should be used. Sexually explicit imagery is also used.

## Participant recruitment

Once it has been agreed to proceed with this training programme, potential participants are recruited by the local organising group/individual. Recruitment is done through a range of male-to-male sexual networks in the particular city in which the workshop is being conducted. All participants will of course be male, practising male to male sexual behaviours, and should be from any walk of life, employed or otherwise, street males, male sex workers, of differing classes, and levels of education. This will require the organising group/individual/Project to have access to these networks. Participants need not be literate, but should be comfortable with themselves and with their behavioural/identity choices.

For this to effectively occur, the organising agent should either have personal knowledge or access key “informants” from these networks. Participants should also be assured that confidentiality, respect, and acceptance will be key to the success of the workshop programme.

A preliminary social and introductory event will be organised in order for the facilitator and participants to meet each other. It may be necessary for the organising agent to conduct a screening process of the participants and select the appropriate individuals to attend the workshop. Participants must be willing to attend all seven days of the workshop, be interested in the issues, and with a desire to help others, as well as continue with the Assessment project. A commitment must be given.

It is not necessary for participants to have any prior knowledge of STDs/HIV/AIDS. However, it is considered useful to the aims of the workshop if all participants are currently sexually active, and have knowledge of the male-to-male sexual networks within the particular city.

The number of initial participants should not be more than 20 and no less than 10. Attrition may be likely during the course of the training programme.

## Workshop schedule

This manual presents a seven-day intensive workshop. Sessions will be between 9.00am - 6.00pm, with refreshment and lunch breaks.

A preliminary social and introductory session immediately prior to the actual workshop should be arranged where the organising agent, facilitator, and all participants are present. At this event, the facilitator and participants are introduced to each other, the programme described, commitments made, and a chance for socialising and “getting to know each other” offered in a relaxed and “fun” atmosphere.

The workshop schedule may need to be flexible in terms of working sessions. For example, Muslim participants may wish to visit the Mosque for prayers on a Friday at mid-day which would extend the working day.

Possible schedule

Sunday evening:	introductory session
Monday - Sunday:	workshop (7 days)
Sunday evening:	social and certificate presentation

## **Bursary**

It may be considered essential to provide travel bursaries to all the participants (who are not salaried Project staff) to attend the workshop, along with a small fee.

There may also be a need to consider reimbursements for those who are employed elsewhere and need to take time off work to enable them to attend the workshop.

## **Location and space of workshop**

This will depend upon the number of participants recruited and where they live. The workshop should be located in an area that is easily accessible by all participants without undue travel costs, and also allow a degree of privacy.

A large space that allows substantial movement is essential. This will enable participants to break into small working groups of 4 or more. Ensure that the space is adequate and spacious enough to accommodate all participants comfortably.

## **Equipment needs**

The workshop requires

- Ø flip-chart paper and stand
- Ø marker pens
- Ø name tags
- Ø pocket folders for participants, each of which include:
  - workshop agenda
  - writing pen
  - writing pad
- Ø overhead projector and screen
- Ø sticky tape (which does not damage the walls of the workshop space)
- Ø blank postcards (6 times that of the number of participants)
- Ø 2-3 dildos
- Ø sufficient bananas (straight) or cucumbers (appropriate size) for all participants
- Ø sachets of water-based lubricant (3 times that of the number of participants) or 3 tubes of KY jelly
- Ø condoms (about 200)
- Ø 4-5 local city maps
- Ø assessment questionnaires (translated)
- Ø evaluation form (translated)
- Ø overhead documents
- Ø certificates of completion

## **Refreshments and lunch arrangements**

During a full day of training, lunch should be arranged for the participants, with a morning and afternoon refreshment break of tea/coffee/soft drinks/snacks. Refreshments might also be considered prior to the start of a full day session.

## Socials

There are two social events as part of the workshop. The first is held prior to the workshop, and the second after completion of the workshop. Both should provide refreshments, snacks, and musical entertainment.

To have a successful workshop, careful planning must be undertaken. A checklist is provided below.

1. Establish Objectives for the workshop
  - develop training objectives (see Learning Process)
  - determine number of participants
  - assess training needs
  - develop a detailed budget
  - identify workshop facilitator
  - check on availability, subject knowledge, skills and abilities
2. Arrange Logistics
  - decide on date and location of workshop
  - determine costs per participant for bursaries, food, transportation, materials, etc.
3. Identify Participants
  - recruit through male to male sexual networks
  - Project staff, “site friends”, volunteers
  - interview where necessary
  - select most appropriate individuals
4. Review Curriculum
  - check manual
  - determine resources to be used
5. Prepare Materials and Equipment
  - prepare handouts - translate where necessary
  - arrange overheads, slides, newsprint/poster paper, tape, flipchart paper, marker pens (water-based), pens, etc.
  - arrange slide and overhead projector, etc. as needed
  - ensure refreshments/meals are available on the day
6. Social events
  - organise social events, prior and post the workshop

# Introductory social session

## Purpose

To bring together possible participants, training organisers, and the facilitator(s), for an introduction to the training programme and its purpose, as well as to socialise and get to know each other. To also break down barriers between workshop participants and facilitator.

## Equipment needs

- flip chart paper
- stand
- marker pens
- paper and pens
- name-tags
- workshop registration form
- refreshments and snacks
- music cassettes and appropriate cassettes (dance music?)
- Introductory session bursary form

## Space

This needs to be a large enough space to accommodate up to 30-40 people comfortably. It should be a private space that can allow open discussion without any “outsiders” being able to hear anything.

Chairs should be available for all attendees.

Refreshments should be laid out.

## Time

An evening session prior to the workshop.

## Timetable

- Welcome address
- Introductions
- Purpose of the evening
- HIV/AIDS presentation
- MSM concerns
- Brief presentation on workshop
- Signing up for the workshop
- Music, refreshments and socialising

# Workshop Agenda

## Day One

### Setting the context

registration and welcome  
outline of the workshop  
ground rules  
what is sex?  
sexual behaviours  
sexual messages  
sexual stereotypes  
cultural and social expectations  
labelling  
stigmatisation, denial and invisibility

## Day Two

### The sexual body

welcome  
feedback from day one  
knowing your own body  
knowing a woman's body  
talking sex  
the practice of sex

## Day Three

### Males who have sex with males

welcome  
feedback from day two  
personal sexual experiences  
desire or semen discharge?  
local frameworks of male to male sex in....  
male sex work  
female partners  
mapping MSM

## Day Four

### Sexual health: part one

welcome  
feedback from day three  
what is sexual health?  
what are STDs?  
HIV and AIDS - knowledge and attitudes  
HIV and AIDS - The Facts  
HIV/STDs - risk behaviours  
spreading the virus  
who is vulnerable?

## Day Five

### Sexual health: part two

welcome  
feedback from day four  
what are risk behaviours?  
STDs: get treated  
personal risk analysis  
sexual hygiene

practising safer sex  
condoms and lubricant  
condom myths  
condoms: advantages and disadvantages  
condom care  
negotiating condom use

**Day Six:                    Sharing the knowledge**

welcome  
feedback from day five  
am I OK?  
personal and social impact of STD/HIV infection  
changing sexual practices  
sharing information  
developing a peer-intervention programme  
where do we go from here?  
closing

**Day Seven                Developing a situational/needs assessment**

welcome  
feedback from day six  
what is a situational/needs assessment  
what information needs to be collected  
methods of information collection  
    questionnaire  
    focus group discussion  
    observation analysis  
    in-depth interviews  
secondary-stakeholders - who are they  
ethical issues  
the way ahead  
evaluation

**Social event**

## **Summary Commentary on the PATH/AVAHAN document**

### **Project Inter-Act**

### **Learning Centre Profile, Belgaum District, Karnataka (7<sup>th</sup> April 2005)**

Shivananda Khan  
Naz Foundation International  
14<sup>th</sup> April, 2005

### **Knowledge and Experience**

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Thus the use of the term MSM in this report is problematic

Note: in page 2 of the PATH report, 1.3 Desk Review, section b) Socio-demographic indicators, it is noted that there are a range of colleges and an army training camp, both risk-behaviour environments. Also noted that Belgaum district is primarily rural which does not preclude male-to-male behaviours and risky anal sex practices.

In the report, page 3, it states that “the gender identity and roles of MSM have been classified as dothi (masculine/active role), kothi (feminine/passive role) and double-decker (bisexual).” A word of caution here is required.

Kothi language arises from hijra language and terminology. Traditionally there were hijras/kothis and “real men”. While such men did not identify with their sexual practice other than as men, kothis/hijras labelled them as dothi/panthi. Double-decker is a very recent term to describe males who are penetrated and penetrate (**not bisexual!**) with other males.

Dothis/Panthis, do not call themselves dothi/panthi, but men.

Further do not assume that the kothi/hijra identity means being only the receptive partner in sex. There are kothi-identified males who penetrate occasionally, there are also hijra-identified males who are as yet not castrated who also penetrate occasionally, and there are “real men” who at times are also penetrated. There is no actual clear-cut sexual role divide. Behaviours and roles do cross over.

## **2. Religious identities and male-to-male sex**

In the PATH report on page 3, *Jogathis* and *Jogammas* are mentioned, along with *Jogappas*. The question was raised as to whether these religious frameworks include male-to-male sex, which was answered because the report stated there was no knowledge.

NFI has anecdotal evidence that such male-to-male sex does occur in these settings, from Bangalore. In Andhra Pradesh where similar frameworks exist with the Shiv Shakti, there is significant evidence of male-to-male sex. Primarily is based on gender performance and desire for “real men”, but sometimes a cash/gift transaction can occur.

## **3. Class**

Identities are often shaped by class and education status, thus in India, developing a gay sensibility and identity is prefigured by class and education, Kothi-identified males who perform a gendered identity, along with hijras tend to be from low-middle class and working class background (but not always), and their sex partners tend to come from the same background.

Often, relationships between these different populations can be difficult, class-based and gender biased.

It will be necessary explore whether the currently identified middle-class “MSM” group is the most appropriate intervention agency for working with low-income populations of MSM/kothis/hijras.

#### **4. Sex work**

As with the diversity of frameworks for male-to-male sex, there is similarly a diversity for males who sell sex to other males.

Those from middle class backgrounds (usually students from schools, colleges and universities) making extra income for personal possessions) tend to use mobile phones, internet, and adverts. Those from low-income populations, kothis and hijras, tend to sell sex at specific sites, either full-time, or opportunistically. Primarily they sell sex as a survival strategy.

The rationale for selling sex cannot be easily divided into those who sell for money and those who desire male-to-male sex. With the levels of stigma and discrimination regarding male-to-male sex, and particularly being penetrated in anal sex, most middle-class sex workers would define themselves as “heterosexuals” and deny ever being penetrated. In terms of those selling sex from low-income populations, many kothis sell sex also, but would define themselves as kothis, and partner rates between those who sell sex and those who do not are similar, as are the sexual practices.

Street males who sell sex may also define themselves as “heterosexuals’ and deny being penetrated.

It would be unwise to try and separate males who sell sex from the category MSM within specific dynamics because the boundaries are so porous and amorphous. There is no separate category/identity males/men who sell sex.

#### **5. Population estimations**

One should always be wary of so-called “size estimations” of the “MSM population/group”, as is clearly indicated by the above comments. MSM is not a group, but an activity which is widely dispersed and includes a significant proportion of males/men.

What is usually captured in such exercises are self-identified MSM, either visible gay/kothi/hijra identified or easy to reach, but not their sexual partners, or other invisible networks.

#### **6. Mysore**

There a small intervention project in Mysore working with kothi-identified males and HIV/AIDS.

#### **7. Condoms**

The key issue is to make sure that water-based lubricant is readily available for reducing risks in condom and rectal damage in anal sex.

Flavoured condoms are primarily preferred for oral sex.

#### **8. Diagnostic tools**

- a. How is peer education defined and what is their role?
- b. In terms of 2.3 KP-MSM network section:
  1. The use of the term MSM network (singular) when this should be plural.. there may well be different class/identity/age networks that co-exist but do not necessarily cross over, and be unknown to each other.
  2. Question 2: Gender identity: should include man/woman as well...

Along with this commentary I am also sending some additional documents.

1. NFI presentation on masculinities, (homo)sexualities, and HIV vulnerability in India
2. Bangalore Situational Assessment among MSM, 2000
3. Male-to-male behaviours in rural India: research paper