

# Innovating for Equitable, Integrated and Comprehensive Care for Transgender People: The Transgender Health and Wellness Centre in Manipur, India

A. Mongjam<sup>1</sup>, L. Shaiza<sup>1</sup>, M. Mukherjee<sup>2</sup>, G S Shreenivas<sup>2</sup>, A. Harshana<sup>2</sup>, **A. Aher<sup>2</sup>**, D. Gulati<sup>2</sup>, P.K. Choudhury<sup>2</sup>, N.M. Singh<sup>2</sup>, B. Singh<sup>2</sup>, N. Singh<sup>2</sup>, R. Singh<sup>3</sup>, S. Upadhyaya<sup>4</sup>, S. Verma<sup>4</sup>, S. Chawla<sup>4</sup>, C. Uthappa<sup>4</sup>, D. Joshi<sup>4</sup>, R. Allam<sup>4</sup>, M. Nyendak<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Manipur State AIDS Control Society, Manipur, India, <sup>2</sup>UW International Training & Education Centre for Health Private Limited, New Delhi, India, <sup>3</sup>Maruploi Foundation, Imphal, Manipur, India, <sup>4</sup>Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, New Delhi, India

## Background

- ❖ In 2020, HIV prevalence among transgender (TG) people in India was estimated at 7.5%.
- ❖ In Manipur state of India, 700 TG people were identified through mapping exercises, although this number may underestimate the true population size due to misclassification with other groups like men who have sex with men (MSM).
- ❖ I-TECH India, supported by CDC India under the President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), in collaboration with Manipur State AIDS Control Society and Maruploi Foundation (a community-based organization), launched the first "Transgender Health and Wellness Centre" (TGHWC) in North-eastern India.
- ❖ The overall aim of the intervention was to strengthen a comprehensive, integrated HIV and health response for TG people.

## Intervention

The TGHWC is a community-based wellness clinic and has a community-led health desk situated in the public hospital setting.

## Rationale

- ❖ To provide overall health, wellness and gender affirmation services (GAS) especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ❖ Improve capacity and skill building to empower TG communities using a community-led model.

## Key activities of TGHWC

- ❖ Young TG leadership opportunities through webinars
- ❖ Gender-based violence support groups
- ❖ Skill-building
- ❖ Income generation through an on-site beauty parlour

## Result

**Time period** : April 2021 to December 2021

Over 750 TG people have registered in the first six months of operation, which is higher than previous TG size estimates.

## HIV testing and treatment initiation

- ❖ 37% (n= 277) received HIV testing support
- ❖ 8% (n =22) were HIV positive and linked to ART through the community-led health desk

## Syphilis Screening

- ❖ 35% (n=262) agreed for first-time syphilis screening
- ❖ 10% (n= 26) diagnosed and linked to treatment services

## Conclusion

The TGHWC, a community-led model for comprehensive health for TG people, provided point-of-care diagnostic and treatment services to TG people while offering a wider spectrum of services for integrated care including gender-affirmation services and economic empowerment options. Substance use disorder has also come out as an added vulnerability among some of the TG people, and appropriate linkages are being worked out.

## Key lessons for the early success of the centre included:

- ❖ Strong political will
- ❖ Public sector engagement
- ❖ An engaged community-led response
- ❖ Health service integration



Inauguration of 'Transgender Health and Wellness Center' in Manipur, India

This community-led model is a sustainable model due to its integration into the public sector and is being recognized as a '**game changing model**' in the HIV response for transgender people in India



This publication was made possible by grant number U91HA06801 from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Office of Global Health, and grant number CDC.556035-01712374.CRT with PATH US.

**Acknowledgement:** The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, through Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has supported the National AIDS Control Organization, Manipur State AIDS Control Society and other implementing partners to provide innovative and comprehensive care for transgender people in Manipur, India.