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Track B - Provision of HIV related care and therapy in difficult to treat populations

CDB0598 - Safe Sailors Club; A support for HIV positive MSM and Tg in Mumbai metro

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Issues: In 2002, Humsafar Trust realized that no services are available to MSM and TG after testing positive for HIV. The services available in public health systems for providing treatment of opportunistic infections were not effectively reaching positive persons. For the reason of confidentiality no personal contacts were taken which follow-up with the HIV + MSM / Tg populations difficult HIV positive were taking treatment from private practitioners who did not bother with baseline investigations. This led to the issue of providing quality Care, Support and Treatment.

Description: In April 2003 Humsafar initiated a support group "Safe Sailors' Club" that would be managed by self identified HIV + MSM / Tg members. The support group started with small weekly meetings which further led the incorporation of quality treatment for the opportunistic infections, STIs, referrals for DOT, referrals for ART, linkage with the international NGO, MSF, appointment of peer educators from TG community to work towards providing quality care and support. The support group strategically decided that its services would be made available to all people who are living with HIV and not just restrict its services to MSM and TG. It became the first initiative from the MSM and TG community to mainstream and not further marginalize itself. In January 2008, Safe Sailors Club has 250 registered members who are accessing treatment, nutrition support, mental health counseling, medicine, ART services.

Lessons learned: Forming a support groups helped Humsafar to mobilize HIV + MSM / Tg population and provide quality care, support and treatment.

Next steps: Efforts to be made to mobilize MSM and TG living with HIV to become part of the support group to enable access to treatment services being provided under the government free ART program.

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