

Chennai Rainbow Coalition

2009 Highlights



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Message from Chennai Rainbow Coalition*

*“The great thing in the world is not so much where we stand,
as in what direction we are moving”*

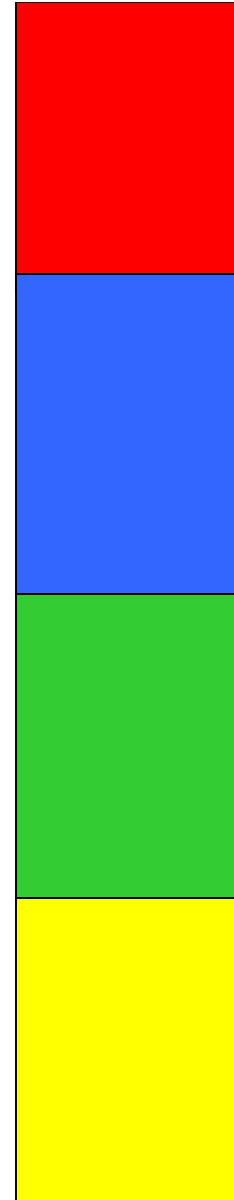
As we end 2009, we are reminded of these words in surveying how far we have come this year.

The Indian LGBT (Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender) movement took major leaps in the year 2009 and Chennai as a city made significant contributions to the movement.

From Chennai City's first ever rainbow pride march to LGBT Parent's meet, from transgender matrimonial website to Anti - LGBT Phobia campaigns, we have so many accomplishments to be proud.

We hope, you will join us in celebrating the giant steps forward we have taken together in 2009.

Sincerely,
Chennai Rainbow Coalition



*Chennai Rainbow Coalition was formed in 2009 to celebrate the essential humanity of all, across differences of sexual orientation and gender identity. Several formal and informal local collectives working on gender, sexuality, environment, media, youth, culture, HIV/AIDS and social justice issues including MP, Sahodari Foundation, the Shakti Center, Sangama, Sahodaran, Alliance Francaise of Madras, Center for Counseling, Centre for Advocacy and Research, South India Positive Network, South India AIDS Action Program, Corporate Accountability Desk, Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India (SAATHII), Youth for Social Change, Nalamdana, Lotus Sangam, and Social Welfare Association for Men, Chennai Dost are part of this coalition.

2009 – Chennai Rainbow Coalition Highlights - Spectrum View

L

G



- TG rights advocacy
- Community support
- Community empowerment
- Issue sensitization

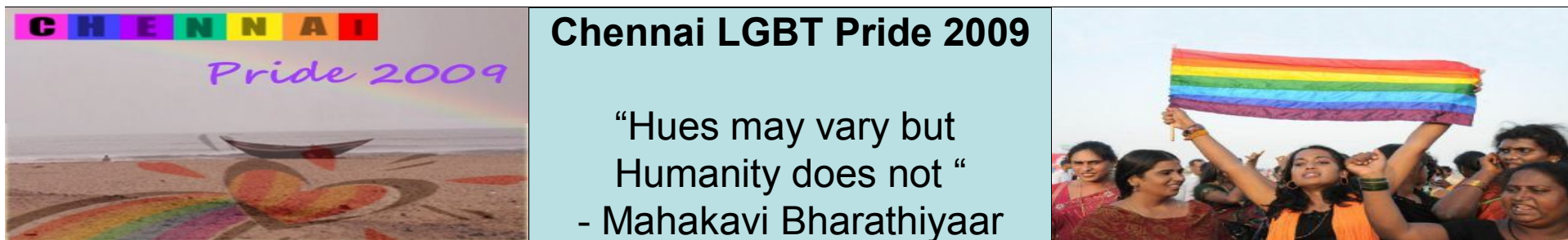
(Meeting on Sex reassignment Surgery, Street event on TG Issues, Support to Kerala TG Activists, TG Matrimonial website, TG woman entrepreneurship Program, TG Detoxification camp)

T

B

4

Note: Each Quadrant represents events pertaining to that community.
Please refer the report for more details.



Inspired by these words of Tamil poet Mahakavi Subrahmania Bharathi, the Chennai Rainbow Coalition was formed in 2009 to celebrate the essential humanity of all, across differences of sexual orientation and gender identity. Several formal and informal local collectives working on gender, sexuality, environment, media, youth, culture, HIV/AIDS, and social justice issues helped organize events around Pride, including MP, Sahodari Foundation, Shakti Center, Sangama, Sahodaran, Alliance Francaise of Madras, Center for Counseling, Centre for Advocacy and Research, South India Positive Network, South India AIDS Action Program, Corporate Accountability Desk, Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India (SAATHII), Youth for Social Change, Nalamdana, Lotus Sangam, and Social Welfare Association for Men.

Pride Celebrations:

Amour, a multimedia Bharata Natyam dance performance by , produced by Sathir Natya and sponsored by Alliance Francaise of Madras and SAATHII. Ode to the famous French sculptor and painter Rodin, Amour celebrated the right of people to express their love regardless of sexual orientation or gender.

Screening of Milk, as part of the South Indian Film Chamber's Oscar Film Festival, in association with the US Consulate.

Parents and siblings Support Group Meeting, facilitated by Center for Counselling, a non-profit organization, the meeting provided a supportive and confidential space where parents and siblings could ask questions, get factual information, and most importantly, meet other parents who are struggling to cope with similar issues relating to their adult children. Magdalene Jeyarathnam, Director, Center for Counselling moderated the first of its kind meeting in Chennai which was a huge success and paved the way for open discussions within families of LGBT folks in Chennai.

Pictures (1) Chennai pride 2009 logo
(2) Chennai City's first ever rainbow pride march

Pride Celebrations

Spaces - The Shakti Center and Human Rights hosted cultural performances and a discussion on colonial origins and everyday impact of sodomy laws. Panelists Kalki (Sahodari Foundation), Magdalene Jeyaratnam (Center for Counselling), Mangai (Theater activist, Chennai), Sudha Ramalingam (Lawyer and human rights advocate, Chennai), Alok Gupta (Lawyer and Activist, Mumbai), Dipika Nath (Researcher, LGBT Rights Program, Human Rights Watch), Sumathi Murthy (Sangama) Sunil Menon (Sahodaran) discussed sexual regulation laws in India and their effects on marginalized communities.

Kavya (Sahodaran), Kalki (Sahodari) and Sriji, Teja and the Sahodaran troupe performed cultural and classical dances on the event. Also staged was "Musical chairs", a play by LesBiT, Bangalore, a support group for Lesbians, Bisexual women and Transgenders

Rainbow Pride March - The Chennai Rainbow Pride march, at Marina beach, was the city's first ever, and represented the culmination of a month-long series of events. Shortly after the march on Sunday June 28, 2009, the country's queer citizens rejoiced to the July 2 Delhi High Court judgment decriminalizing consensual adult sexual behavior. Chennai Pride lent local visibility to our voices, cultures and struggles.

Pictures : (1) Rainbow pride march, Chennai
(2) Sunil Menon, Magdalene Jeyarathnam, Dr. L. Ramakrishnan and Kalki Subramanian @Pride celebrations press meet
(3) Rainbow pride march, Chennai



2009 Accomplishments– Center for Counselling

Founded by Magdalene Jeyarathnam, Center for Counselling (CFC), Chennai's mission is to serve as a resource for individuals and organizations by providing short-term, culturally- sensitive counselling, training, consultation, and other collaborative and programmatic services related to counselling.
<http://www.centerforcounselling.org/>

Magdalene Jeyarathnam is one of the few counselors in the area who offers supportive services to the LGBT community. She is a committed supporter and advocate of LGBT rights and takes every opportunity to fight LGBT phobia. Be it Church gatherings, religious seminars, TV talk shows, newspaper/magazine articles, Magdalene's voice as a straight ally makes a huge difference.

Group Therapy Sessions (Jan to Apr 2009) - Understanding that the psycho-social needs of the LGBT community in Chennai are not adequately being addressed and also not every individual from the community can afford one-on-one counselling sessions, Center for Counselling started its group therapy sessions. Conducted in both Tamil and English with 8 to 12 participants each, these sessions offered a safe space to ventilate emotions and discuss issues which are not easy to articulate. Some of the issues discussed were loss of self esteem, lack of family support and its impact, coming out to the family or friends, relationship break ups, current relationship, implication of getting married for gay and bisexual men, the need to go for SRS for TGs, physical and emotional violence in relationships etc.. Group members made decisions on future course of action with regard to the above issues.

Parents meet Center for Counselling conducted Chennai city's first ever LGBT – Parents meet during the LGBT pride 2009. It was a key player in the pride celebrations and participated in several events including "Spaces" event, LGBT parents meet, Pride March etc.. (please refer the pages 5 and 6 for more details)

Pictures : Magdalene Jeyarathnam with community members and allies during Chennai 09 pride march



"After attending the group therapy sessions I am more confident. I am courageous now to take a stand and not marry (a woman) which I might have done and regretted for the rest of my life. I have developed a deep bonding and caring relationship with other members of the group and I am more tolerant to the other sexual minority groups like the transgender people as well."

- Teja, Student, Group therapy participant



"I had no idea about men with men. When my son came out, I didn't know how to react! After my sessions with Magdalene I am slowly getting to know. I am able to understand and connect with my son"

- Mother of a gay man



“ The Theologians were very affirming and asked themselves many questions on dealing with the LGBT community. It was fascinating to know there is so much interest in the Chirstian community and that people engage in healthy debates”

- **Magdalene Jeyarathanam, CFC**



In Jan 2009, Center for Counselling hosted a meeting along with Sangama to discuss setting up a **human rights commission in South East Asia**. In Feb 2009, Center for Counselling and Shakti Center hosted several discussions on the Harry Benjamin standards of the **Sex Reassignment Surgery** for TGs. Another meeting organized by Sangama was hosted by Center for Counselling in Apr 2009, to discuss issues of violence among TGs. This meeting concluded with a decision to sensitize the general community on TG issues.

In June 2009, Center for Counselling was invited by the US consulate for a meeting to honor people working on LGBT issues in the city. The evening was hosted by UN Counsel General and several LGBT activists attended the meeting. In Aug 2009, Magdalene on invitation by women’s development center ‘Gurukul’ went to a **gathering of Lutheran church pastors**, to sensitize them on the LGBT community. Teja and Ajay Gabriel accompanied her and together they were able to connect with the participants and made a huge impact. The church later came up with a very supportive statement.

Throughout the year Center for Counselling had a strong Tamil and English media presence. Magdalene Jeyarathnam was interviewed by several dailies, magazines and TV channels including The Hindu, The Indian Express, Vikatan, Thinakaran, NDTV, NDTV/Hindu. Through these interviews and discussions Magdalene did her best to sensitize the general public about LGBT issues. The NDTV Hindu , **“Chennai Speaks Out” program** aired Nov 09, with Magdalene as one of the panelists covered a broad range of community issues and proved to be very effective in reaching out to the general public.

In Nov 2009, Magdalene attended a consultation on Sexuality and Faith by at Asha Nivas. And in Dec 2009, National Council of Churches in India organized a **Theological round table conference** on “Sexuality and Churches”. Magdalene presented a paper on the LGBT community and participated on their debates and discussions. The NCCI latter came up with a policy statement to be inclusive and supportive of the community.

Pictures

[1] Magdalene on NDTV ;
[2] Magdalene speaking on TG issues

2009 Accomplishments – Chennai Dost

Chennai Dost (CD) came as a breath of fresh air to the gay and bisexual men of Chennai. Started in Aug 2009, Chennai Dost aims to connect with the community through entertainment. <http://chennai-dost.blogspot.com>

Vikranth Prasanna the founder, started CD as a blog . It now has 169 registered members and 72 non- registered members. The core group as eight members, with an the advisory board of five members.

Chennai Dost took it's first step with a big gay party aptly named, "Pink Xplosion". Around 160 Gay/Bisexual men attended the party. This was followed by Chennai Dost's movie screening event called the "October Blast" and "Screeeeem" their Halloween party in Nov 09

Chennaiites are not the typical party goers like people from other cities, so organizing parties is a huge challenge, especially if it is for the gay and bi community. But Chennai Dost strongly believes in bringing the community together through entertainment and social events

- **Vikranth Prasanna, Director**

Since then CD has hosted several additional movie screenings, including a documentary on Chennai Rainbow Pride Parade '09. Film screenings and opportunities to discuss "Coming out", "LGBT rights" and other topics of relevance to the community.

CD members participated in a conference based on "Christianity and Faith" as representatives of the LGBT community (Nov 09).

CD's ambitious 2010 plans include an online magazine, a queer carnival, a counseling helpline, a domestic partner program and many others.

Pictures : (1)Poster of Chennai City's first ever Gay party – Pink Xplosion by CD

(2)CD's October Blast poster

(3)CD's Halloween party poster





"There couldn't have been a better time to re-launch Orinam.net. Post 377 judgment and the pride events, there is a huge visibility to the community all over Tamilnadu, and having the contents in Tamil totally helps!"

– Web Team, Orinam.net



2009 Accomplishments – MP and Orinam.net

MP provides a non-sexual support space for lesbian/gay /bi/transgender (LGBT) people in Chennai.

MP is primarily an online group <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/movenpick/> but members also get together offline. This group encourages the exchange of views and opinions on any subject, not necessarily related to sexuality, but preferably relevant to the LGBT community.

Started six years ago, MP as a group has touched many lives and has given a strong sense of belonging and support to its members. MP members from all over the world, take active part in Chennai's LGBT activities in every way they can. Re- launching the first ever bilingual (Tamil and English) LGBT support website, fundraising for pride events, an online-offline anti LGBT phobia campaign were some of MP's accomplishments this year. For the Pride event "Spaces" (Refer Pages 5 and 6), MP members made a generous contribution of USD 990 through a fund raiser organized by **Ramakrishnan Kazhiyur Mannar** from the US. (Detailed expense report is available in Appendix A)

Around Aug 09, MP members re-launched **Orinam.net** (<http://orinam.net>) with extensive Tamil content.

With LGBT terminologies, coming out stories, FAQ's for friends and relatives, Letters of support and sharing of experiences by parents of LGBT individuals, information on crisis and support lines, Orinam.net is now a complete LGBT support website in Tamil and English. Its simple and easy design and regular updates are proving to be extremely useful for the LGBT community in TamilNadu.

Orinam.net recently published two lists - 2009 LGBT Hall of Fame, to show appreciation the allies of the community and 2009 LGBT Hall of Shame to call out people who are LGBT phobic. Orinam.net / MP also established a strong presence on twitter (@chennaipride) this year, which serves as a media watch. This is now part of a countrywide Twitter network that includes collectives and individuals from Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore etc.

On International Coming Out Day (Oct 11, 2009), Orinam.net launched the **Campaign for Open Minds**, a campaign to end LGBT Phobia in India. This online campaign was a response to the alarming surge in attempts at conversion therapy and other negative reactions to the increased visibility of LGBT people.

Orinam.net web team and several other MP members (*Velu Raju, Rajani, Aniruddhan Vasudevan, Shridhar Sadasivan, Sudhir Narayana, Ramakrishnan Kazhiyur Mannar, Rahul Gabrielle, and L Ramakrishnan*) launched the campaign with three open letters.

- Letter to be signed by Healthcare professionals against LGBT Phobia
- Letter to be signed by friends and family of LGBT
- Letter to be signed by the LGBT community.

Other activists groups across the country including Sahodaran, Sahodari, Chennai Dost, Center for Counseling, Bombay Dost and several eminent LGBTrights activists, health care professionals, psychiatrists, friends and families of LGBT community joined the campaign.

The Campaign for Open Minds was extensively covered by local Tamil and English media. It had its first negative reaction in the form of *Dr. Shanti Davidar* who compared homosexuality to domestic violence and alcoholism and also claimed to be able to cure it. Sunil Menon from Sahodaran took on Dr. Davidar in a debate hosted by NDTV/Hindu. Sunil made excellent arguments and countered Dr. Davidar's homophobia effectively. So far 325+ people have signed the campaign at <http://orinam.net>.

The campaign for healthcare professionals has been signed by several leading medical practitioners all over the country such as Dr.K.S.Jacob, CMC Vellore, Dr.Prabha Chandra of NIMHANS, Dr. Suresh kumar and Dr. Vijay Nagaswami.

Pictures (1) Menon Vs Davidar on NDTV Hindu
(2) Campaign for Open Minds logo





SAATHII, founded in 2000, strengthens and scales up the capacity of organizations working against the HIV/AIDS epidemic in India. <http://www.saathii.org>. Included in its mandate is support to efforts of MSM/TG groups to strengthen communities and advocate for their health and rights. Headquartered in Chennai, SAATHII has programs in eight states of India.

Selected 2009 accomplishments in the LGBT area – SAATHII

- Curriculum development and pilot of an initiative to equip peer educators and counselors from MSM and TG communities with knowledge and skills pertaining to treatment literacy, promote health-seeking behavior and basic knowledge around STI and antiretroviral therapy. Partnering community-based organizations in Tamil Nadu include Sahodaran, SWAM, Lotus Kumbakonam, V-Sukira Erode, and South India Positive Transgender Federation. The project has involved West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Manipur, thus far.
- Initiative to train and sensitize doctors and nurses in the private sector on issues pertaining to LGBT communities. Launched in Kanchipuram, Viluppuram, Trichy, Karur and Kanyakumari districts, and to be expanded to Tirunelveli and Tuticorin districts. Community speakers such as Jaya (Sahodaran) have been very effective in building rapport with medical professionals on LGBT issues.
- Contribution to a WHO-led medical in-service training curriculum revision initiative to sensitize and train medical professionals on LGBT issues including mental health implications of homophobia and HIV/STI.
- Participation in Pride marches in Chennai and Kolkata, and organizational support to the march in Bhubaneswar
- Support through coalition-based advocacy to MSM, TG and people living with HIV in Orissa, West Bengal and Manipur
- Strengthening community income generation initiatives for transgender people in Orissa
- Community mobilization and collectivization of groups in Meghalaya, Assam, Mizoram and Tripura

For more information, contact saathii@yahoo.com

2009 Accomplishments - Sahodari

Sahodari Foundation is a transgender rights group based in TamilNadu. Founded by Transgender activist Kalki Subramaniam, Sahodari works for social, political and economic equality for transgender people and campaigns for transgender civil and legal rights. <http://www.Sahodari.org>

Sahodari launched a LGBT network campaign at the beginning of the year (Jan/Feb 09) called "One Voice". Through the campaign, Sahodari held meetings with representatives of other LGBT groups from Chennai on the issues of "Sex Reassignment Surgery" and sensitizing the Censor Board of Films Certification about transgender issues.

Sahodari represented the TG (Transgender) community at several conferences throughout the year including the Media seminar at the Center for media studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai (Jan 09) , the International Conference on Sexology (Feb 09) and the National Study Conference on Human rights and Marginalized people, Madras Christian College, Chennai (Sep 09)

Sahodari conducted a first of its kind workshop in Chennai to sensitize the Tamil media about LGBT issues and struggles (Aug 09). They educated the media about using correct and respectful terminologies when writing about Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transgender people. On that occasion, Sahodari also released a reference book in Tamil that covered all the important aspects of the LGBT community and it's struggles. A similar workshop was conducted in Coimbatore latter (Sep 09).

Sahodari's advocacy for the community continued at several lectures, discussions and meetings conducted among the student community in southern India. (Mahatma Gandhi University - Kerala (Aug 09), Madras Christian College, Madras School of Social Work)

*Pictures : (1) Kalki at the International Sexology conference
(2) Tamil media workshop organized by Sahodari*



"Kalki did an awesome job in sensitizing the tamil media on LGBT issues"

*- Aniruddh Vasudevan,
-The Shakti Center*





Transwomen - the Respectables (The hunt for dignity)

On the evening of **April 19th, 2009** Sahodari Foundation organized a street event under the Gandhi Statue at the Marina beach. This event aptly named , "Transwomen - the Respectables (The hunt for dignity)" was designed to clear myths and doubts about transgenders and create awareness among the public .

This hugely successful event started off with a play staged by Kalki and her friend Srijit. The play titled "Adayaalam (scars)" illustrated a transgender woman's cry against stigma and discrimination.

The play was followed by poetry readings by college students on the struggles of Transgenders. Several newspapers and television channels covered the event.

Thirunangai.net

The world's first Transgender matrimonial website www.thirunangai.net was launched by Sahodari this year (Aug 09). The website hosts profiles of transgender women who are seeking alliances for marriage. The website launch initiated discussions about love, marriage and adoption rights for TG women among public and the media (Tamil and English).

Pictures : (1) and (2) Sahodari street event @ the Marina beach, Chennai



"When one of our girls sold her first piece of jewelry, the pure joy I saw in her face is something divine. I was overwhelmed to see her happy and empowered"

- Kalki Subramaniam, Sahodari



Sahodari Foundation and Transgender Rights Association of Chennai organized a two-day regional consultation meeting to identify the needs of the transgender community of Tamilnadu and Kerala states (Jul 09). Budding transgender rights activists from Kerala were provided with an opportunity to learn on how to focus their work on the transcommunity problems. Sahodari assured it's continuing support and cooperation to the participants.

In an effort to end poverty among transgenders, Sahodari facilitated an entrepreneurship training program for transgender women(Sep 09). A group of 10 transwomen were identified and provided training in making fashion jewelry. Their creations were exhibited and sold for profit at the Duchess Show, Chennai. The project continues successfully with Tamilnadu government's grant of Rs. 1,68,000.

In Oct 2009, Sahodari and the students of Madras School of Social Work, conducted a tobacco and alcohol detoxification camp for transgenders. Around 40 transwomen accessed this free service.

Sahodari celebrated Children's day and World Kindness day in Nov 09. The Sahodari team and friends visited Chennai slums and surprised the kids with toys, gifts and educational materials. This event was organized to show the TG community's love towards children and the underprivileged.

Sahodari's members attended a national workshop on women empowerment organized by "Women Aloud" in Goa (Dec 09).The team was trained on video blogging and they have started making short video films on transgender rights and other social issues. This will provide an opportunity to further develop Sahodari's advocacy work through alternative media.

Pictures : (1)Sahodari team fashion jewellery sale at the Duchess camp, Chennai

(2)Sahodari and MSSW at the Detoxification camp, Chennai

Sahodaran A Male Sexual health project, Chennai

Sahodaran Chennai is one of the oldest community-based organizations for men who have sex with men (MSM) in India. It partners with the Tamil Nadu state government AIDS program to implement HIV prevention and community health promotion activities in Chennai, and has also spawned similar organizations in Cuddalore and Pondicherry. It is well known for mid-media cultural programming through events that employ arts, music and dance to raise awareness of the public on issues of sexuality and sexual health.

2009 Accomplishments

Health Promotion, Counseling, Outreach and Treatment Literacy:

- In 2009, 1008 individuals from central, north and south Chennai received outreach services such as peer counseling and referrals to HIV counseling and testing services. About 279,000 condoms were distributed to community members. Professional counseling was imparted to 757 individuals by a community counselor in the field, at hospitals and in the Sahodaran office. Information-Education-Communication (IEC) materials on STI/HIV, lubrication and flavored condoms were developed.
- Peer educators referred individuals for treatment of sexually transmitted infections: a total of 773 episodes of STI were treated as a result. Over 780 MSM were referred to the government Integrated Counseling and Testing Centers (ICTCs). Twelve MSM were identified as HIV positive and referred to service outlets such as the Anti-Retroviral Therapy Center (ARTc), Community Care Center (CCC) and providers of Directly Observed Treatment short-course (DOTS) for tuberculosis.
- A community event in Sept that raised knowledge of health issues and promoted the benefits of the government master health check-up program reached 210 individuals. In December, 17 MSM were referred for master health checkups to Madras Medical and Stanley Medical colleges.
- Sahodaran helped sensitize physicians from the private sector on issues of MSM and TG in partnership with SAATHII. This is part of a USAID/APAC supported initiative to engage private sector doctors in providing stigma-free HIV and STI services for MSM, TG and other marginalized groups.

Sahodaran

A Male Sexual health project, Chennai

Drop in Center and Crisis Response:

Sahodaran runs a drop in center (DIC) that gets a daily traffic of 15-20 MSM community members seeking a safe and supportive space. Sahodaran organized 21 meetings during the year at its DIC, during with visitors from the community were provided information on health and human rights. Sahodaran intervened in 36 cases of crises affecting MSM and TG individuals.

Advocacy and Sensitization:

Sahodaran has had a long history of successful advocacy and sensitization to reduce homophobia, transphobia and violence from the general population and specific groups. In 2009, it conducted sensitization meetings with 36 auto-drivers in the cruising sites. A Sahodaran team of five staff was also involved in conducting 54 sensitization events with police officers, sub-inspectors and constables. During these events, the Sahodaran team provided an overview of issues of stigma and violence faced by MSM communities and appealed to the police force to avoid harassment of MSM and TG individuals in public spaces. Sahodaran, as a member of the Chennai Rainbow Coalition, participated in the Chennai Pride rally, and in a panel discussion and cultural performance evening held in June. Sunil Menon, founder, was featured extensively in TV and print media coverage of Section 377, and effectively took on a homophobic psychiatrist in an NDTV-Hindu feature in Oct 2009 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JL1bo-CVTDUandfeature=related>)

Research and Training:

Sahodaran helped conduct focus group discussions in Chennai and Karur with members of MSM and TG communities. These were in connection with a study led by SAATHII to develop treatment literacy materials on HIV/STI and anti-retroviral treatment for MSM and TG. Key staff also underwent training on the MSM-TG treatment literacy module developed by the WHO along with SAATHII, and are now equipped with knowledge and skills to increase health-related treatment literacy for HIV-positive MSM and TG. Sahodaran also partnered with the Tuberculosis Research Center (TRC, a government research institution), Brown University, USA and the Fenway Center, USA, on an ongoing behavioral research and intervention study aimed at understanding and improving Psychosocial health of MSM individuals.

Sahodaran ***A Male Sexual health project, Chennai***

Research and Training:

Sahodaran founder Sunil Menon co-authored the following scientific papers with Dr. Beena Thomas from TRC and others.

Beena Thomas et al. 2009. **HIV Prevention Interventions in Chennai, India: Are Men Who Have Sex with MenBeing**

Reached? AIDS Patient Care and STDs - 23(11):981-986

<http://www.liebertonline.com/doi/abs/10.1089/apc.2009.0092>

Beena Thomas et al. 2009. **Unseen and Unheard: predictors of sexual risk behavior and HIV infection among men who have sex with men in Chennai, India.** AIDS Education and Prevention: 21(4): 372-383

<http://www.atypon-link.com/doi/abs/10.1521/aeap.2009.21.4.372>

Recognition:

Sahodaran has served as a model center where national and international visitors visit to learn about successful community-led HIV prevention programs with MSM. Distinguished visitors in 2009 included Mr. Chandramouli, IAS, the current Director General of India's National AIDS Control Program (NACO), Dr. Vijayakumar, IAS, the Project Director of Tamil Nadu AIDS Control Society (TANSACS), and staff of the State Resource and Training Center (STRC) from Gandhigram, Tamil Nadu.

For more information, contact sunilmenoc@yahoo.com



2009 Accomplishments – Sangama

Sangama is a sexuality minorities human rights organization for individuals oppressed due to their sexual preference. Sangama aims to help live their lives with self acceptance, self respect and dignity. Sangama especially emphasize the concerns of sexuality minorities from poor and/or non-English speaking backgrounds and sexuality minority sex workers, who otherwise have little to no access to information and resources. Founded in 1999, Sangama operates in Bangalore and Chennai. <http://sangama.org/>

Crisis Intervention

Sangama has a 24*7 crisis intervention cell which offers support to the LGBT community at the time of crisis. The majority of the crisis occurs due to confrontations with the police, rouges or the individual's families. There are currently six telephone lines that are answered by Sangama's crisis team made up largely of community members, but also include exclusive Sangama staff. The crisis team responds instantaneously and if needed Sangama lawyers are asked to intervene. In 2009, Sangama handled 20 such crisis incidents mostly cases of police harassment, some of reconciling estranged kothis (MSM) with their families, and one issue of stopping parental coercion for shock treatment (aimed to alter their kid's sexual orientation).

Sangama also offers support and refers members of the community to appropriate counselling services.

Through out the year 2009, Sangama worked with the TN government to get ration cards for male-to-female transgenders(TG) and also to set up bank accounts for TGs, obtain name change in Government documents, and to get land allocated from the Tamil Nadu Government under their Aravaani (TG) welfare schemes.



- In 2009, Sangama completed study of the Aravaani Welfare Board and government schemes to disseminate information to the TG community.
- Sangama organized community meeting with advocate Mr. Babu regarding basic rights and actions to take when police arrest LGBT people
- In January 2009, Sangama held a meeting to setup human rights commission in South East Asia.
- Sangama was one of the key organizers of the Chennai LGBT Pride 2009
- With its media advocacy programmes and press meets, Sangama had a strong media presence in 2009 and served as a strong voice to the community.
- Sangama assisted in restoring property to an MTF transgender in Villupuram (Tamil Nadu) by using the Right to Information (RTI) act to determine from the government surveyor how much land was due to her
- Sangama also participated in Lawyer's Collective Regional consultation in Hyderabad on HIV/AIDS related human rights issues



*Pictures : (1) TG Activist Kalki with her
TN Govt ID
(2) Sangama Rally*



2009 Accomplishments – The Shakti Center

The Shakti Center is a collective of activists, performers, academics and everyday revolutionaries who are creating a public dialogue on gender and sexuality in Chennai. <http://www.shakticenter.org/>

The mission of the Shakti Center is to create a sustained public dialogue around issues of gender and sexuality through the use of fine, performing and technology-based art works as a medium of outreach and tools for community building. With its belief in the social value of the cultural discourses created by art and digital media, Shakti hopes to carve out a safe space for creating networks of thoughts, discussions, and creative collaborations with sexual minorities and their allies as a form of resistance against structuralized violence and discrimination.

- In the year 2009, The Shakti Center did several **outreaches in colleges** on issues of alternate sexuality
- The Shakti Center also facilitated several leadership and self-awareness workshops in schools
- The Shakti Center's **weekly film screenings** themed on Sexuality is a favorite event of the community, and provides a space for discussions.
- The Shakti Center is an active collaborator in many of the city's LGBT support group sessions
- **"Spaces" pride event** with cultural performances from the community and a panel discussion on Sexuality, Sexual health and Sec 377 is a widely appreciated event organized by The Shakti center in June 2009. Apart from this Shakti center also played an active role in Chennai LGBT pride celebrations. (please refer the pages 5 and 6 for more details)
- Shakti Center had a strong media presence in 2009 and did media outreach on several community issues.
- The Shakti Center is now **a registered trust**

Shakti's Resource library

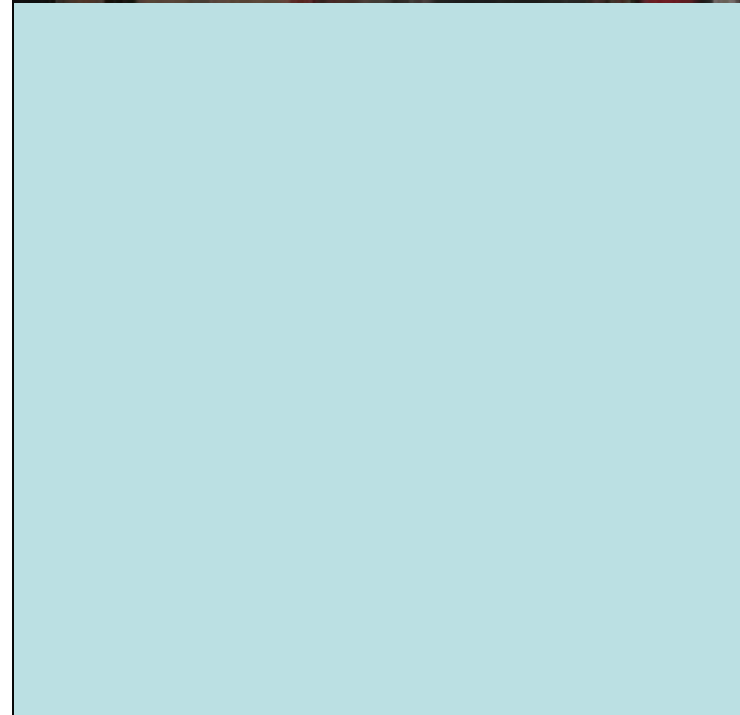
In recognition of the need for extended research resources in Chennai, Shakti has set up a library of books, films, and journals on social and cultural theory with an emphasis on sexuality, gender, and queer theory for interested members of the public. Shakti is particularly committed to providing a safe space for students, researchers, and activists to access resource material from other countries and institutions as a way of enriching and informing their work. As a method of increasing the growth of our library, In 2009 Shakti has started to ask for donations of books and films from authors and institutions (such as universities, publishers, and think tanks) both abroad and in India. By creating a free resource library that contains works not easily accessible for the general public (either because of structural or economic restraints), Shakti hope to increase the visibility of this field of scholarship as a legitimate site of political resistance and research, thereby widening the discourse on queerness and sexuality in Chennai.

Peer Counselling Training Program

The Shakti Center in collaboration with Center for Counselling started a Peer counselling training program in the end of 2009. This program, attended by several community members, aims to create peer counselors who can provide needed support to the community. Funded by LLH, Norway, the program spans for 6 weeks and attended by 10 participants. Vidya Reddy from Tulir and Deepa Vasudevan from Shayatrika are some of the guest speakers on this program.

Aniruddh Vasudevan, Director of The Shakti center took part in a panel on LGBT activism in South Asia organized by the St.Thomas Episcopalian Parish, Washington, DC, in November 2009

Aniruddh Vasudevan was a guest speaker at Trikone Bay Area's "Chit Chat Chai" event in December 2009



2009 – Chennai Rainbow Coalition Highlights - Calendar View

<p><i>Sahodari – One Voice Campaign</i></p> <p>JAN</p> <p>CFC – Meeting with Sangama to setup human rights commission in SE Asia ,Group therapy sessions for LGBTs</p>	<p><i>Sahodari – Meetings on sex reassignment surgery (SRS) , International conference on Sexology. Meeting with Censor board of film certification.</i></p> <p>FEB</p> <p>CFC – SRS Meetings, Group Therapy sessions for LGBTs</p>	<p><i>Sahodari – People's Panchaiat on resisting phobia</i></p> <p>MAR</p> <p>CFC –Group therapy sessions for LGBTs</p> <p><i>Shakti – Weekly film screenings</i></p> <p><i>Sahodharan – Drop in centre operations</i></p>	<p><i>Sahodari – Street event on TG issues at the Marina beach.</i></p> <p>APR</p> <p>CFC – Meeting with Sangama, Sahodari on Violence against TGs, Group therapy sessions for LGBTs</p>
<p>MAY</p> <p><i>Sahodharan – Community group discussion</i></p> <p><i>Sangama – Study on TN government TG welfare schemes</i></p>	<p><i>Chennai city's first ever LGBT pride celebrations – A collective effort by all groups.</i></p> <p>JUN</p> <p><i>MP/Orinam.net – @Chennaipride twitter presence.</i></p> <p>CFC – Chennai's first meet of parents of LGBT, Media presence and issues sensitization</p>	<p><i>Sahodari – Meeting with Kerala TG activists</i></p> <p>JUL</p> <p>CFC – Post pride party</p> <p><i>Sangama – Crisis Intervention</i></p>	<p><i>Sahodari – Tamil media workshop on LGBT issues & TG Matrimonial website launch.</i></p> <p>AUG</p> <p>CFC – Discussions and meetings with pastors of Lutheran Church, Parents Support group session</p> <p><i>Sahodharan – Police department workshop</i></p>
<p><i>Sahodari –TG woman entrepreneurship training program.</i></p> <p>SEP</p> <p><i>MP/ Orinam – Re-launch of Orinam.net with extensive tamil content</i></p> <p>CFC – Psychodrama group sessions for the LGBT community</p> <p><i>Sahodharan – Community Health event</i></p>	<p><i>Sahodari – Detoxification camp for TGs</i></p> <p>OCT</p> <p><i>MP/Orinam – Campaign for Open Minds.</i></p> <p><i>CD – Chennai city's first ever Gay party</i></p>	<p><i>Sahodari – Children's day celebration @ Chennai Slum, UN meeting on HIV/AIDS.</i></p> <p>NOV</p> <p><i>CD – Halloween party & film screenings.</i></p> <p>CFC – Participated on Sexuality and faith conference and represented LGBT community</p> <p><i>Shakti – Resource Library</i></p>	<p><i>Sahodari – National workshop on women's empowerment.</i></p> <p>DEC</p> <p><i>CD – Kodaikanal Tour.</i></p> <p>CFC – Participated on he theological round table conference on "Sexuality & Churches"</p> <p><i>Shakti – Peer counselling training program</i></p>

Note: Please refer the report for more details.

Acknowledgements

Our Sincere thanks to...

Aniruddh Vasudevan, The Shakti Center
Jaya, Sahodaran
Kalki Subramaniam, Sahodari Foundation
Dr.L.Ramakrishnan, SAATHII
Magdalene Jeyarathnam, Center for Counselling
Rajani, MP/Orinam.net
Shiva, Sangama
Sunil Menon, Sahodaran
Jaya, Sahodaran
Vikranth Prasanna, Chennai Dost

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Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Want to get involved?

Contact us – orinamwebber@gmail.com

Appendix A - Expense report – Pride Celebrations - “Spaces” Event

Revenues	Amount in INR
US Donors	46000 (USD 990)
India Donor	2000
Total Revenue	48000
Expenses - "Spaces" Event	
Event performance remuneration - LesBiT	5000
Event performance remuneration - Sahodaran	5000
Event performance remuneration - Sahodari	5000
Event performance remuneration - Teja (Artist)	2500
LesBiT (Bangalore-Chennai-Bangalore Train Tickets)	3926
LesBiT (Travel Allowance – autorickhaw – Rs. 100/- per person for 11 persons)	1100
Bangalore Panelist Travel expense	995
Videography and Sound Arrangements	8000
Lights	2200
Rent for "Spaces"	2000
Banners (Rs. 300/- * 2)	600
Photo print-outs	339.5
Food (breakfast and lunch) and Tea	1705
Travel (auto, share-auto)	1250
Cab Rental (Train Station to venue and back)	2000
Cleaning	450
Water	90
Photocopies	1045
Expenses - Pride March	
Towards the flag	1000
Towards placards	500
Face masks	1000
Transport (Auto rickshaw)	240
Total Expenses	45940.5
Balance (towards corpus fund for Chennai pride)	2060