



# Implementing Avahan in Andhra Pradesh

**Expanded Access and  
Increased Impact**

India HIV/AIDS  
**Alliance**



**Avahan India AIDS Initiative** is a focused prevention initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that works in six states of India to reduce HIV transmission and the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in vulnerable high-risk populations—female sex workers (FSWs), men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgenders—through prevention education and services. The programme’s main components are condom promotion, STI management, behavior change communication, community mobilisation, and advocacy. Avahan also supports the creation of an enabling environment through individual and organisational capacity building to increase the effectiveness of the HIV response.

**India HIV/AIDS Alliance** is a state lead partner for Avahan in Andhra Pradesh. Alliance India’s efforts in the state have strengthened the capacity of NGOs and CBOs to implement quality HIV and STI programming in close partnership with the State AIDS Control Society (SACS) and in accordance with the National AIDS Control Programme.

Alliance India’s work with Avahan in Phase I covered 13 districts of the Telangana and Rayalseema regions in Andhra Pradesh and reached nearly 72,000 FSWs and MSM. Now in Phase II, Alliance India is transitioning programme activities to the state government as planned and supporting efforts to further strengthen community mobilisation with beneficiary groups to ensure sustainability of prevention activities under government support.

## Community-Centered Approach

Alliance India keeps communities at the heart of our work. Community mobilisation empowers beneficiaries, builds systems to sustain change, fosters solidarity, and increases understanding through knowledge sharing. Alliance India has facilitated the evolution of community structures and norms to achieve more equitable access to information and services. Our efforts have increased awareness among community members of their rights to basic health and social services and have strengthened their ability to claim these rights.

## Behavioral Change Communication

Changing community attitudes to safer sex and increasing their willingness to access STI and HIV prevention and treatment services requires actively influencing behaviour. Alliance India has supported peer education and outreach activities using community-specific Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials that are culturally responsive and gender-sensitive. Our Behavioral Change Communication approach builds skills for negotiating safer sex and using condoms and lubricant consistently and correctly.





## Clinical Services

Alliance India developed a chain of branded clinics to provide services to better control STIs in target populations. Mythri Clinics provide counselling services, diagnosis and treatment of STIs, and referrals to higher levels of healthcare if needed. Presumptive treatment is provided to new community members and those who have not accessed clinical services for more than 6 months, along with regular screening for syphilis and hepatitis B. A simple finger prick test is used to screen clients at the clinics for Syphilis, and treatment is provided to all those found positive.

## Outreach

Outreach is an integral part of Avahan's engagement with target populations. Alliance India has developed IEC packages specifically for dissemination by community members who work as peer educators and outreach workers. By using peers, this approach ensures that information and strategies for STI control and HIV prevention, positive living with HIV, and community mobilisation reach and accepted by the intended beneficiaries. Outreach also provides an opportunity to distribute condoms, lubricant and IEC materials along with information on other services within and outside the programme.



## Sexual & Reproductive Health

HIV infection can affect pregnancy, childbirth and breast feeding, and the stigma, discrimination and ignorance that prevent people from accessing HIV services often limit them from seeking reproductive health services as well. Alliance India uses Mythri Clinics as a platform for integrating sexual and reproductive health with HIV services to help meet the broader health needs of the communities served by Avahan. This integrated approach has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of a range of services but has increased uptake of clinical services by FSWs.

## Advocacy

Under Avahan, Alliance India has mobilised and empowered high-risk communities to create enabling environments to improve their safety and wellbeing. A model called Community Advocacy Groups (CAG) was designed after a series of community consultations to take issues and concerns forward with government and other stakeholders. A 24-hour Crisis Response Team was also developed to address issues of violence and harm to FSWs, MSM and transgenders supported through Avahan.



# Impact

With Alliance India's implementation support, Avahan has had a significant impact on the HIV epidemic among high-risk populations in Andhra Pradesh:

**Health seeking behavior** increased from 5% to 70% in the programme's first five years.

**Condom distribution** increased from 6.5 million to 102 million in six years.

**HIV prevalence** decreased among key populations in intervention districts, and an estimated 10,000 HIV infections have been averted.

**Mythri clinic visits** quadrupled in four years, and more than 40,000 STI episodes have been treated.

**Symptomatic STI rates** decreased from 31% in 2005 to just 4% in 2011.



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