HIV plan for 200 organisations

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 29

It took more than a decade for Abheena Aher, a transgender, to finally, be allowed to be in her skin. While her mother had started cursing the forefathers after Abheena disclosed her identity to her, the fear of getting deprived of studies never allowed her herself to come out in open for the "self declaration".

At 35, Abheena is at ease—she dresses up like a female, looks good in a kajal and lipstick and can very well manage walking with high heels. Abheena was just 13 when she realised that she was different. In her words, she knew that she was the "chosen one" and it was at that young age that she decided that she could not be a loser. "I knew that I would make my life meaningful," she said with confidence.

The change, however, did not come handy. She struggled hard till the age of 28.

The programme is building capacity for 200 community-based organisations to provide HIV prevention programming.

"After all I had to put an act of being a man. My mother and friends would tell me every now and then to be a man. But it was really difficult. I was eve-teased and went through a lot," she said. After completing her studies in college, Abheena decided it was a time for the changeover she grew her hair and her wardrobe had changed-filled with all women clothes.

Things looked different on Tuesday as the marginised groups—men having sex with men (MSM), transgenders and hijra community—came out in open in their support to the Pehchan Programme, which is implemented by India HIV/AIDS alliance. The programme is building capacity for 200 community-based organisations to provide HIV prevention programming for this marginalised group of society.

James Robertson, India HIV/AIDS alliance country director, said it was an "opportunity to unite and renew the commitment of stopping new HIV infections". The programme helps mitigate the gaps in the National programme by their interventions. Thanks to this that lot of ownership for community is there now," said Abheena, who works as a programme manager for a global fund project for MSM, transgender and Hijra community.

Things may have changed for Abheena but the suffering still persists.