



# We are family: Inclusive human resource policies to ensure greater engagement and opportunities for transgender employees

## Experience from India HIV/AIDS Alliance

### Authors

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### Background

Lack of employment opportunities is one of the biggest challenges faced by transgender people in India. Even when they are able to find a job, their options are extremely limited as they face routine discrimination. Stigmatization and harassment at the workplace further compound this issue. An enabling work environment that respects individuality and is sensitive to gender differences is crucial to address the unique challenges faced by transgenders and other sexual minorities in the workplace.

### Methods

India HIV/AIDS Alliance follows a community-centric approach in its programmes and actively recruits qualified staff from affected communities. The core principles followed by Alliance India in its human resource policies and procedures are:

- A strong belief in the values of equal opportunity and non-discrimination that respects individuality, including the free expression of gender identity;
- A zero-tolerance approach towards all gender-based discrimination. Alliance India has developed its sexual discrimination and harassment policies to support gender-sensitive responses at all times;
- Periodic sensitisation training programmes provided to staff, implementation partners, and service providers associated with India HIV/AIDS Alliance;
- Confidentiality of staff members' health information maintained at all times, including HIV status;
- Positive steps are taken to ensure equity among all staff members keeping challenges due to their gender identities in mind. Some such steps are:
  - ◆ psycho-social support to overcome traumatic situations;
  - ◆ legal assistance to help secure identity documents that reflect the chosen gender; and
  - ◆ subsidies for private accommodation during hospital stays.

### Results

Alliance India has succeeded in fostering an inclusive and enabling workplace environment by ensuring safety, comfort and holistic development of all staff, including transgenders or gender non-conforming employees. We successfully negotiated a comprehensive private health insurance policy that includes provisions for partners of transgenders and sexual minorities. This has enabled workplace integration by sending a clear message of support and has helped reduce stigmatizing behaviours and attitudes at the workplace.

### Conclusions

A clear and supportive human resource policy nurtures better psychological health and job satisfaction among all employees. There may be initial costs in ensuring supportive policies at the workplace, such as extending health benefits to partners of LGBT employees or establishing policies responsive to the needs of staff living with HIV. However, sensitive human resource management helps attract and retain talented people, fosters a supportive and innovative workplace, and creates greater value proposition for stakeholders within the organization.



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