



# A manual on Hybrid Model of Outreach for HIV Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support

Created by  
The Humsafar Trust



## FOREWORD

The Humsafar Trust has been working on different aspects of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for the past 25 years. Being one of the largest and oldest community-based organisations of the country, we have a unique vantage point to understand the evolving needs of the community. As a result of which we were able to design and undertake some pioneering initiatives.

During the past decade of our work on HIV interventions with Men who have sex with Men (MSM) and Transgender (TG) communities, we realised that sexual behaviours and the manner in which community sought sexual partners changed rapidly. However, existing interventions, including those in the ambit of the national program, could not keep pace with these behavioural changes, resulting in several aspects of these interventions rendered obsolete or redundant and a large chunk of population falling outside the scope of these interventions.

One such aspect was reaching out to the population which was increasingly using virtual platforms to seek sexual partners or information about HIV, STIs and other health conditions. With insights from within the community, we quickly realised that the existing interventions under national program, which were exclusively centred on physical cruising sites, were not able to cater to this population.

In the light of these developments, we initiated work with youth, which formed the majority of this hard to reach population. An LGBT youth support group called Yariyaan, was started on social media in 2010. This group was managed by youth from the community aged between 18-28 years. Over the years, Yariyaan has not only become a sustained initiative of over 8000 online users, for the youth, by the youth, where young individuals can voice their concerns and engage in discussions pertaining to their issues, it has also become an effective platform to disseminate credible HIV and health-related information for young MSM and TG.

Encouraged by the overwhelming success of Yariyaan, we embarked upon institutionalising the process of outreach on virtual platforms with the aim of addressing the gaps that existed in outreach interventions under national program. When we started the program in 2013, it was an unknown turf for us but we continued to learn and evolve. Today we reach out to over 3000 online users every year on various virtual platforms. We have devised effective messaging that elicits better response, put together a team of dedicated internet outreach workers who respond to numerous queries of HIV, STI and sexual health and encourage online users to get themselves tested and codified a process of internet outreach that can be integrated in the physical outreach program seamlessly.

Through this manual, we aim to share our learning and the processes we have developed, which have proven to yield unprecedented results, with other community-based organisations. We also aim to inform a much-needed policy change in the national program which will result in reaching out to the unreached and help us collectively and meaningfully achieve the goal of 90-90-90.



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## Chapter 1

### What is a Hybrid Outreach Model?

Targeted Interventions in India primarily cater to populations that access physical cruising sites exclusively to seek sexual partners. With the advent of social networks and mobile technology, cruising for partners over virtual networks is fast gaining popularity. In the past decade, we have seen a progressive increase in internet use for seeking sexual partners and information about HIV, STIs and other health conditions. The latter is particularly true for men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender (TG) individuals who face challenges accessing healthcare systems or are considered hard to reach. These virtual sites have been beyond the scope of current outreach programs, and the young population remains much at risk for the want and uptake of HIV and STI services.

In the recent years, there has been an ostensible shift from HIV interventions in India. Importance of social networks, mobile technology and other virtual cruising sites is being acknowledged in designing and modifying the nature of outreach for HIV prevention and treatment.

While this shift is still at a very nascent stage in the national program, The Humsafar Trust (HST) had already initiated work with youth on social media with its initiative Yaariyan in 2010, which is a youth support group managed by a team of young LGBT individuals aged 18–28 years.

Yet there was a need of a structured program and support to further channelizing outreach interventions to such youth. Thus, HST started a structured Internet Outreach program in 2013. The long-term aim of this program has been to integrate virtual and mobile networks in the physical outreach strategy and connect populations accessing these cruising spaces to health services, thus strengthening the national program.

This integration of Internet-based Outreach in the existing Outreach Program on physical sites is what we refer to as a **Hybrid Outreach Model**. The hybrid outreach model is aimed to reach both the overlapping populations on physical and virtual sites and those who only cruise through virtual networks.

With no precedent to follow in India, this hybrid outreach model has been an outcome of learning through action and an archive of insights into the community garnered by The Humsafar Trust through its work spanning over 25 years. In the past 8 years, we have not only created systems and processes that enable us work effectively with online and overlapping populations, but also a set of best practices that can be shared with other community-based organisations in order to replicate and scale this model. From HIV prevention perspective, the 90-90-90 targets also focus on 'no one should be left behind'. It necessitates for the Humsafar Trust to reach out MSM on all the spaces physical and virtual so that no one should fall through the gaps.

## Chapter 2

### Integrating Internet and Physical Outreach

Integrating Internet and Physical Outreach is in itself a dynamic process, since both the platforms are evolving with evolving needs of the community. Community that is present on physical outreach sites shows very different behaviours and has very different needs from what it had 10 years ago. So are the dynamics of virtual environment. Ever changing and ever evolving. Social networking and dating platforms that were extremely popular 5-6 years ago are not so anymore. The population that frequented dating and sex-seeking sites some years ago now express preferences for location-based dating applications (LBAs) as well as platforms that aren't exclusively designed for dating but allow users to reach out and connect on common avenues such as e-groups and instant messaging.

Each application or website comes with a different set of functionalities and features and hence requires different strategy for outreach.

***So, how do we train our outreach workers on hybrid outreach methods and improving effectiveness?***

Training Outreach Workers on how to use a specific application or conduct outreach through a particular website is beneficial only as long as that platform is popular and being used by the target groups. It is important to stay in touch with dynamics of the environment and shifts on ground to be able to identify changes and incorporate them into future training programs.

Key is to make them aware of certain basic principles of internet outreach and how to integrate the same in their physical outreach strategies. What makes all the difference is when community outreach workers intuitively employ these principles, along with their own community experience to devise what works best for the populations they have been working with on their specific outreach sites or their own social and sexual networks.

## 2.1 Understanding needs of the target population and setting up goals

What are the needs of your target population that you aim to address using this hybrid model? The choice of platform, outreach strategies and the type of messaging will depend on the needs of the target population and the goals that you set up for the program accordingly.

Potential goals and objectives of the hybrid model can include the following:

### **Information, education and communication**

- Increase knowledge and awareness of sexual health issues including HIV and STIs
- Dispel myths concerning HIV and STIs (transmission, symptoms)
- Promote safe sex options and reduction in risky sexual behaviours
- Improve knowledge about consistent and correct condom use
- Increase awareness and knowledge of new biomedical prevention strategies, including pre- and post- exposure prophylaxis (PEP/PrEP)
- Highlight risks associated with alcohol/drug use
- Increase awareness about HIV/Syphilis testing and treatment services
- Increase awareness and knowledge of HIV viral load and risk reduction strategies for people living with HIV (PLHIV)
- Decrease HIV-related stigma

### **Health and psycho-social needs related support**

- Assist in partner notification
- Increase awareness about access to holistic healthcare services, available in the organisation or through referrals
- Provide links to reliable and accurate web-based information and online resources
- Provide contact information for community-friendly local healthcare service providers, psychiatrists, counsellors, lawyers
- Encourage open communication about sexuality
- Link hard-to-reach community members to peer-support groups that focus on health and sexuality



## 2.2 Understanding opportunities and limitations of different online platforms

Internet-based platforms do not offer a magic wand to reach the unreached population. It is important to understand the limitations and opportunities offered by different platforms.

Some applications such as Grindr allow outreach workers to message all profiles within a chosen radius and may further allow location-spoofing to increase the outreach area; however, those like Tinder would only allow messaging and further interaction if both parties match by “swiping right”. Further, it is likely that other users may feel discomforted by sexual health information being made available while they are seeking sexual partners, and could instead choose to report an outreach worker’s profile. This may lead to the profile and even the organization being blocked/banned permanently for spamming.

An example can be availability of filters to reach specific groups. Many platforms provide possibilities for selectively showing users based on physical, demographic or sexual characteristics. These filters are especially useful for active outreach work because they allow

you to send tailored messages to different subgroups. **Below are some examples for such tailored messages from CHALO, a pilot research study conducted by The Humsafar Trust to develop and test the feasibility and acceptability of a social-media based HIV prevention intervention.** (More about CHALO in Chapter 6)

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>TRAVELLING ACROSS TOWN FOR A DATE ?</p> <p>DON'T MISS OUT ON YOUR HIV TEST.</p> <p>STOP BY AT ANY OF OUR FIVE CENTERS FOR A FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL HIV TEST.</p> <hr/> <p>अपने डेट से मिलने शहर के पार जा रहे हो? अपना टेस्ट कराने से ना चूके।<br/>मुफ्त और गुपनिय एचआईवी टेस्ट के लिए हमारे पाँच केंद्रों में से कोई भी केंद्र पर जाये।</p> <hr/>  | <p>DON'T BAREBACK CAUSE YOU ARE AFRAID TO BUY CONDOMS.</p> <p>FEAR ONLY INCREASES YOUR RISK TO HIV. INSTEAD AVAIL FREE CONDOMS FROM HUMSAFAR TODAY.</p> <hr/> <p>काँडोम खरीदने के डर के कारण "बेर बैक" न करे। डर केवल आपके एचआईवी के जोखिम बढ़ाता है। आज ही हमसफर से मुफ्त काँडोम प्राप्त करे।</p> <hr/>  |
|--|--|

Filters can also work against the desired objective. Filtering out specific characteristics can inadvertently exclude a large proportion of the target audience. These profiles might be relevant but will no longer be visible to the outreach worker. Therefore, to maximise the quality of outreach work, it is always important to use the local community knowledge and knowledge the outreach workers have by virtue of being part of the local sexual networks on account of their interactions as well as their being a part of the community.

### 2.3 Selecting the most appropriate platform(s) as per needs and goals identified

Once the target population is identified, it gets much easier to tailor the intervention based on their needs. The first step towards this is to identify the right platform(s). In order to choose the right platform in a particular city or region, it is imperative to assess which platforms are the most popular. If possible, the platform can be contacted to find out how many users do they have in the region. However, an informal assessment within the social and sexual networks of the outreach worker also gives interesting insights about the popularity of the platforms, what population groups primarily access them or which sexual practices are prevalent on them.

Provisions to filter users on a particular platform is particularly useful in case there are applications or websites that specialise in specific sexual practices or population groups. Many dating apps allow users to “see” users who may belong to certain types that are preferred by the users. Filters could assist users to narrow down their choices based on age, sexual preference, body type, which are some of the more common filters. Further, users could also use designated fields such as “bio” and “looking for” to further talk about themselves, their sexual desires and dislikes to negotiate partner seeking on such platforms.

By choosing the right platform and by filtering users, we can improve the effectiveness and reach of our work and prevent negative feedback from users for whom the intervention is less relevant.

### **Overview of some popular virtual platforms**

The Internet is an everchanging environment, online venues and times for reaching a specific population online may change frequently. Therefore, flexibility and consistent monitoring of Internet trends among target population are very important.

Social networking sites are online communities where people can interact with friends, family, co-workers, acquaintances, and other individuals with similar interests. Most social networking sites provide multiple ways for users to interact, such as chat, instant messaging (IM) email, discussion groups, group chat, sharing of photos and videos, live video sharing etc. These sites could be used for varied reasons: to enhance existing relationships, to form new relationships (sexual and otherwise), to express oneself, to seek social support and peer interaction, and as a communication tool. How a particular social networking site is used will vary by demographics, geographic location, behaviours, interests, etc., but they all provide an immediate and personal way to deliver information.

Below is an overview of some popular social networking sites, particularly dating platforms used by gay and bisexual men and transwomen.





**Overview:**

Romeo or PlanetRomeo or PR is a social networking platform for gay, bisexual and transgender people. This is a website and location-based application which gives the location of another user in feet or kilometres.

**Platforms available on:**

It can be accessed free of cost through the PlanetRomeo website or Android or iOS mobile applications.

**Typical User Profile includes:**

To access PlanetRomeo, users create a profile which typically includes:

- a simple physical description
- personal interests
- one or more photographs
- Sexual preferences (Top/Bottom/Versatile, Size, Cut/Uncut, Body hair, Height/Weight/Waist preferences etc.)
- cultural interests and hobbies can be added optionally
- Birthdate, location, email address

People do not necessarily use their real names as their profile names and can be quite creative with that.

**Features available:**

- Chats/personal messaging facility to seek friendships, hookups, sex dates and relationships.
- Options to create club and guide profiles for connecting with people who share similar interests. Users can either join and/or link their private profiles to these club and guide profiles. Administrators of these club and guide profiles can send messages to all the members in one go. A club profile is usually created to share news or discuss certain topics. There are clubs for supporters of political parties, members of religious groups and employees of a particular company or sector. Fan-clubs of movie or music stars also exist. A club profile can be created by any PlanetRomeo user so uses of such a profile are limitless.

**Other information:**

A recent update in 2017 offers an option to travellers to add their destination and duration of stay in a particular place which creates possibility of planning future dates during chatting.



**Overview:**

Grindr is a dating application which brands itself as ‘the world’s largest social networking app for gay, bi, trans, and queer people’. It is a very simple, easy-to-use location-based social application which allows users to chat and meet with other users as near as a few feet away. People use Grindr for peer support, sexting, photo-sharing, bookmarking interesting profile entries, casual sex, sharing event information and much more.

**Platforms available on:**

It can be downloaded free of cost on iOS and Android platforms. It also offers additional features through its subscription service (Grindr Xtra).

**Typical User Profile includes:**

To create a profile on Grindr, one needs to have an email ID. A Grindr profile would contain:

- the user’s profile picture and user name
- age/age limit
- height, weight, body-type and ethnicity
- position, and information about what they are looking for.

**Features available:**

- Shows the exact distance of nearby users through a user interface that displays a grid of representative photos of men, arranged from nearest to farthest away.
- Tapping on a picture will display a brief profile for that user, as well as the option to chat, send pictures, and share one's precise location.
- It also offers an option to link one’s social media profiles.
- Users can block the profiles they don’t like or don’t want to see.
- Users can lock or hide their pictures on Grindr and have the option to send them only to selected people via message.
- It also offers an option to list the user’s HIV status or read resources on STIs.
- Grindr Xtra, the paid subscription version of Grindr, allows users to show profiles beyond the selected location. Subscriptions for 1 day, 6 months or 1 year can be bought. While the unpaid version shows 107 user profiles at a time the paid subscription gives access to 600 profiles at a given time.



- Filtering options available to filter users who remain online, display their profile pictures etc.
- Unlimited blocking, favouriting and other premium filter options are available as well.
- There is also an option to send more than one picture at a time for Grindr Xtra users.

**Other information:**

As this is an LBA, users can explore profiles and establish connections in faraway locations using location spoofing apps. Many users take advantage of it to chat with users in a different location from theirs and plan dates in case of impending travels to a different location in near future.



**Overview:**

Tinder is a location-based social mobile application used for dating or hook-ups. It is not as exclusively a gay-dating app as the others, but it lets users choose their preference and show options accordingly. Tinder has made notable efforts to be more trans and queer inclusive over the years by offering an above average number of gender options.

**Platforms available on:**

It is available on Google Play store. Tinder is free to download but it also includes an optional tier for a nominal monthly fee that allows users to see who likes them.

**Typical User Profile includes:**

It is very easy to create a profile on Tinder. It requires a username and a password to be created or a profile can be created linked to one's Facebook account or mobile number. The profile can later be linked to one's Instagram account as well.



**Features available:**

- Linking with social media sites enables users to share more information about themselves. Using Facebook, Tinder is able to build a user profile with photos that have already been uploaded.
- Basic information is gathered and the users' social graph is analysed. Candidates who are most likely to be compatible based on geographical location, number of mutual friends, and common interests are then streamed into a list of matches.
- Based on the results of potential candidates, the app allows the user to anonymously like another user by swiping right or pass by swiping left on them. It allows users to like (swipe right) or dislike (swipe left) other users and allows users to chat if both parties swiped to the right (a match).
- Other additional settings require setting up preferences for men/women, users within a maximum distance and users in a particular age range.
- There is an option for super like as well which is used frequently by the users for profiles they like a lot.
- Users also get an option to hide their profiles. Once they opt for hiding their profiles they can only chat with users they have been matched with and cannot find new users.
- Tinder has another feature called Tinder Plus which allows users to do unlimited swipes and likes. Tinder Plus gives users another chance for a right swipe after doing a left swipe. It also gives a free boost to users every month which allows them to be the top profile in their location for 30 minutes.
- Tinder Gold, along with all the options of Tinder Plus, allows users to see who all have liked them without doing a right swipe.

# SCRUFF

## Overview:

SCRUFF is a mobile application for gay and bisexual men. This application has been translated in 14 different languages of the world which makes it very popular in several countries.

## Platforms available on:

It is available on iOS, Android, and Apple Watch. Users can download it from Google Play Store or Apple App Store.

## Features available:

- Unlike other apps, SCRUFF gives gay and bisexual men an option to browse from nearby or global users at the same time.
- SCRUFF is hook-up oriented but does have a 'match' function, a photo-swipe feature, if users are looking for dates.
- It has a "Woof" option that enables members to express interest by "woofing" at another member instead of directly messaging them. Users have an option to see who "woofed" at them or checked their profile.
- The app also gives an option to share their private pictures and videos with other users.
- Using geolocation, the home interface displays a grid of user profile pictures, arranged from nearest to farthest away. Tapping a picture opens a users' profile displaying options to chat, send a "woof," save the profile as a Favourite, "Unlock" private photo and video albums, and other shared information from the user.
- Users can mention about their preferences and their orientation in their profiles. The chats do not get deleted on this app. It also gives information about gay parties, Pride marches, festivals and other events taking place in the user's location.
- SCRUFF PRO is the paid version of the application users can subscribe to. It gives access to 1000 users at a time. Users can apply unlimited filters on this, save old chats and messages and send photos and videos faster.



**Overview:**

Blued is currently the largest gay social networking app in the world with more than 30 million users (majority still in its country of origin, China).

**Platforms available on:**

It can be downloaded free of cost from Android and iOS platforms.

**Features available:**

- It is a location-based application in which the grid feature displays nearby profiles by distance. Users either follow those profiles or engage in one-to-one conversations.
- Filters are available to users to ensure that their preferred selection of profiles is displayed.
- There are options available for video chat, sending private pictures or messages and viewing unlimited profiles.
- Blued has a profile verification feature. Once the user creates a profile, a moderation team carefully compares a 10-seconds in-app recorded video against the uploaded profile picture in order to determine whether said picture is genuinely that of the person using the user account. Profiles showing a yellow tick have been manually authenticated as genuine profiles by Blued's moderation team.
- Blued gives its users the ability to go Live within a community of peers and to show what life is like around them. All users have the opportunity to partake and create their community of followers or even fans. Live streamings are monitored 24/7 to encourage a positive and fun experience. Through its feed users can scroll through an endless stream of photos or videos posted by guys they have chosen to follow. The feed can also show posts nearby or trending posts from around the world.
- Apart from individual conversations, group conversations are available for users to join depending on their interests or location. Many get together are organised and hot topics discussed on a daily basis.
- Further, Blued allows users to destroy their chats with the other users so that the chat cannot be accessed by either party after the conversation concludes



**Overview:**

Hornet is another one of the largest social networking applications which brands itself to be ‘fun and easy for gay, bi, and curious guys to connect with each other’. It is also pitched more towards being a community platform than just a gay dating app.

**Platforms available on:**

It is a location-based application available for free download on Android and iOS platforms and also has a premium subscription option.

**Features available:**

Users can create interactive profiles, read headlines that affect the gay community, and utilize a city guide written by and for other gay men to help users find hidden gems and the best underground events in their own neighbourhood or when traveling.

- Social profiles, lets users discover guys with same interests and keep in touch and up-to-date with the FOLLOW feature. It also allows users to join communities using hashtags like #geeks #jocks #gaymers #twinks #travelers #foodies #daddies.
- The grid for nearby profiles lets users view more than 100 profiles in one go. It also offers the option to see MORE GUYS by moving the user’s virtual location and explore another part of the city or across the world.
- Hornet runs the largest LGBT newsroom in the world, with editors reporting from around the globe.
- It with less intrusive ads and has interesting side features like in-app articles and more photos

## tumblr.

Tumblr is a dating application available on Android and iOS platforms. It started as a microblogging and social networking site where people can express themselves and share things about their lives or different subjects from philosophy, fashion to fandom and learn new things about each other.

Users can connect with others according to their interests. They can post their photos, GIFs, text, videos, live videos, audio clippings etc. Users can also create their own GIFs and stickers. They can customise their blogs using a variety of colours, fonts and pre-set layouts. Users can find blogs according to their interest areas and follow them or explore new interest areas.

They can also connect with several other users through livestreaming or use of hashtags. The app also gives options for privately chatting with friends or simply following someone in case the user is not so outgoing.



## Gay Dating & Gay Chat – DISCO

DISCO is a dating application that brands itself as a network for 'all gay, bi, and transgender people (LGBTQ)'. It is a GPS-based app available for free download on Android and iOS platforms.

It shows the users all the nearby profiles and through a match game helps them choose who they like and who they don't. DISCO is an excellent way to discover new friends, start a relationship or keep it casual.

The app also brands itself to be 'safe and anonymous' for the users.



## 1man

1man is an Indian gay dating application. It is available for download on Android and iOS platforms.

It is a GPS based application that connects thousands of gay and bisexual men and transwomen in different parts of India and other countries as well.

It has a personal message system through which users can send each other private messages. Users get notifications when someone messages them or likes or visits their profile.



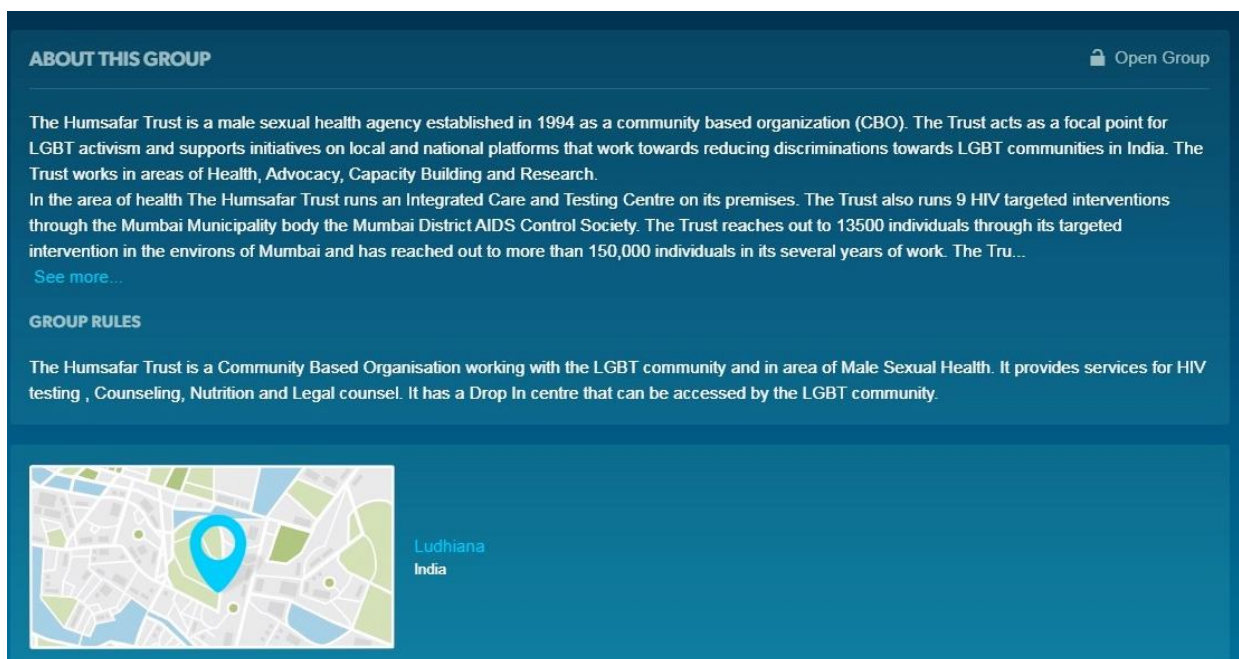
## 2.4 Creating an appropriate and trustworthy profile for outreach interventions

### *Profile name and description*

The screen name and profile for internet outreach are very important elements for an Internet outreach program. Screen names should relate or refer to the organisation and should not be sexually suggestive like other profiles on the platform.

Profiles should be developed with the objectives of the outreach in mind should not contain sexually explicit information. The profile description is like a brief resume of an organisation. Online users can learn a lot about a prevention program with a quick glance at the online profile. It is crucial for the profile to be as authentic and professional as possible. The profile description should include enough information for users to easily identify the organisation. We may choose to develop a mascot or online persona to improve the visibility and recognisability of the profile, or even connect to a campaign.

Below is a snapshot of The Humsafar Trust club profile description on PlanetRomeo.



An important point to consider here is that too much information about the services offered, in the profile itself, could violate the terms and conditions of the platform. Hence, it is imperative to always review the terms and conditions of each platform prior to drafting the profile name and description.

*Profile Picture*

Adding a picture to the outreach profile will attract more attention and personalise the service offered. Images of the organisation, project staff, events or activities can be uploaded as profile picture. It is safer and professional to use the organisation logo or stock pictures of the organisation instead of the outreach workers own photograph. It is also important to make sure that the organisation owns the copyrights of each image that is used, to avoid legal issues.

*Do's and Don'ts in a nutshell:*

| <b>Do's</b>   | <b>Don'ts</b>  |
|---|--|
| Profiles should specifically identify the organisations name  | Profiles should never contain personal e-mail addresses of outreach staff or any organisational staff  |
| Profiles should include an invitation to IM or chat with the outreach worker on the official profile ID or send an e-mail to the organisational email ID      | Profiles should never contain personal numbers of outreach staff or any organisational staff   |
| Profile pictures should contain logos of the organisation or the specific project, when possible  | Profiles should never contain personal pictures of outreach staff or any organisational staff or statements saying you can e-mail personal pictures  |
| Profiles should fit the platform in which they are posted. Internet Outreach worker should research the lingo and population groups of the platform in detail | Profiles should never contain links to any other commercial websites that sell any kind of products not related to the outreach goals  |
| Profiles should contain information about the organization as well as the purpose of being on the platforms in the bio section                                | Profiles should never contain links to pornographic websites or imagery  |
|   | Profiles should never contain discriminatory or judgmental statements  |
|   | Profiles should never contain the HIV status of the outreach worker  |
|   | Profiles should not contain sex statistics such as; penis size, sexual position of choice, sexual preferences, etc. (Some sites require information of this type be included within a profile. In those cases, options that include safer sex should be selected.) |

There is a possibility that some online users may come across an Internet outreach profile while performing a keyword search. Hence, it is recommended that profiles contain a variety of keywords related to sexual health and HIV/STI prevention.

The following keywords are examples: gay, bi-sexual, sex, health, sexual health, treatment, condoms, PrEP, PeP, HIV, STI, hepatitis, syphilis, herpes, barebacking, sexual addiction, safe sex, oral sex and drugs. These keywords should be used in a context that will convey to the users that the outreach worker is available to discuss these topics as they relate to sexual health and HIV/STI prevention.

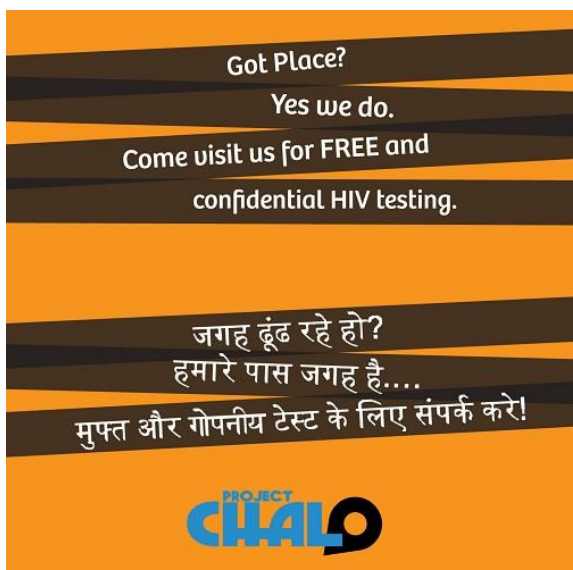
## 2.5 Designing intervention strategy and implementation plan

Following are the key components of designing an intervention strategy and implementation plan for internet outreach:

### 1. Developing messages

Most users cruising on online platforms may consider personal messages actively sent out by outreach workers to be intrusive. Hence, there is a need to be **creative, flexible and evolving**.

**Creative:** Funny, interesting and attractive messages and graphics to communicate.



**Flexible:** Messages need to be designed as per the need of the time or the population group. Everything does not have to be around World AIDS Day, important festival and other celebrations can be smartly used.

Remember to party every weekend?  
 Don't forget to test every three months.  
 Walk in to Humsafar today for a test.


हर वीकेंड पर पार्टी करना याद रेहता है?  
 फिर हर तीन महीन में अपना टेस्ट कराना मत भूलिये  
 हमसफर में आज ही अपना टेस्ट कराने आइये !



WORKING 9 TO 5?

NO PROBLEM, WE WORK 12 TO 8.  
 ACCESS OUR CLINICS FOR A FREE  
 HIV TEST AFTER WORK.

क्या आप ९ से ५ तक काम करते हैं? कोई बात नहीं, हम  
 १२ से ८ तक काम करते हैं! काम के बाद अपना HIV  
 टेस्ट मुफ्त में करवाने के लिए हमारे क्लिनिक में आइये।



**Evolving:** Create messages that are evolving with passage of time to include latest trends among the youth.

WHETHER YOU RIDE FROM SEAT  
 OR BACK SEAT, YOU BOTH NEED  
 A HELMET. USE A CONDOM  
 EITHER WAYS. DON'T ASSUME  
 YOUR RISKS. PLAY SAFE  
 ALWAYS.

आगे की सीट से सवारी करो या पीछे की सीट से; आप  
 दोनों को हेलमेट की जरूरत है। कंडोम दोनों तरीकों के  
 दौरान इस्तेमाल करे। अपने जोखिमों के प्रति धारणाये न  
 बनाये। हमेशा सुरक्षित रहे।



IT DOESN'T MATTER YOU  
 SLEEP WITH 4 OR 5. IT  
 ONLY TAKES ONE.

COME GET TESTED REGULARLY.



It is important to ensure that the messages are as inviting and acceptable as possible. While it is important that all essential information is given up front and is ***catchy, innovative, jargon-free and memorable***, it is also important to be careful with the tone of message so that it might not sound preachy, judgemental or too academic. Further, messages must ensure that they are limited to 140 characters as longer messages may be ignored by other users. Pictorial messages with non-distracting backgrounds could also be used and convey more information in easier-to-read formats. Contact information of the centre as well as timings should be included in all instances applicable. On platforms that support sharing weblinks, websites to information resources or the centre's website should also be included.

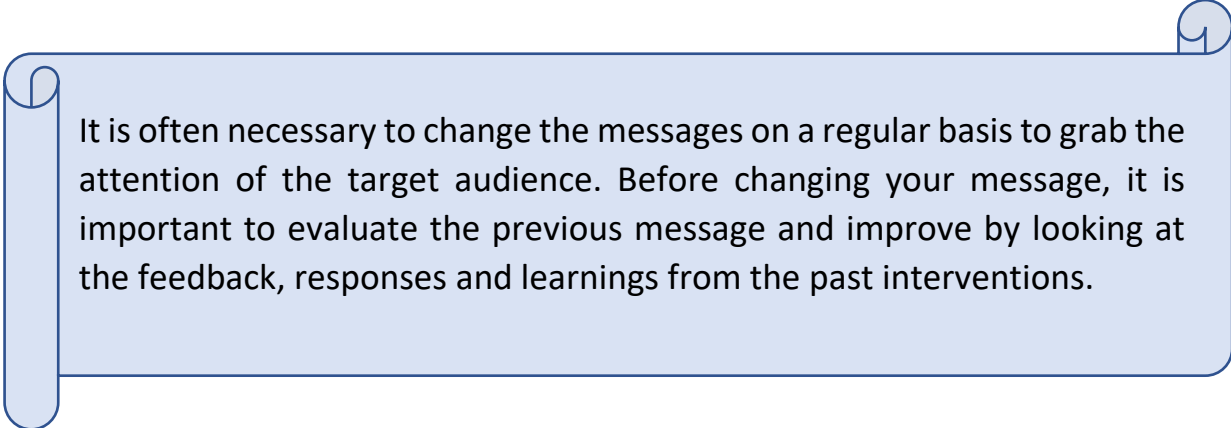
Objectives of the message should be easy to understand and motivate target audience to find more information or share their questions and comments.

## 2. Pre-testing and improving the message

To ensure the relevance and increase receptibility of messages within the target population, it is important to pre-test and continuously improve the messages. There are different ways through which messages can be pre-tested:

- Invite colleagues and people who are already receiving services from the organisation to give feedback on the messages
- Develop two or three versions of a message and see which one gets better response
- Test the messages with different population groups, using different filters available on the platform
- In instances where new messages are to be developed, employ community-based groups/community individuals to identify relevant themes and develop messages accordingly. Conducting adequate focus group discussions with community members could also assist the exercise.
- Translate the messages into local languages as a substantial number of users communicate using local languages. They may either use a local-script enabled platform or use English to type out words in a local language.

Once the messages are pre-tested, they can be improved based on the feedback received.



It is often necessary to change the messages on a regular basis to grab the attention of the target audience. Before changing your message, it is important to evaluate the previous message and improve by looking at the feedback, responses and learnings from the past interventions.

3. Referrals and Resources

In addition to sending across messages related to outreach, an important component of an internet outreach worker's job will be to respond to queries posted by users on a particular platform. In order to address these queries, the outreach worker should be equipped with two things:

- **Links to web-based information** on commonly asked topics like HIV/STIs, ART, safe sex, correct usage of condom, HIV testing, nutrition, gender and sexuality, mental health, legal support etc. These links can be of resources developed within the organisation or reliable sources of information available online. Any new resource should be duly verified and vetted before the link is shared with others
- **Information about local service providers for referrals** regarding healthcare and holistic care services. It is important for the organisation to collaborate with various government and private organisations that offer services that are not available in-house
- **Information on community events** that can be provided to users to invite them to physical spaces and offer community- and peer support
- **Information on verified e-support groups** that an online user can be referred to for peer support, guidance and education on support systems on online platforms

Internet-outreach workers should be familiar with and knowledgeable about these resources so they can readily respond to queries posted by online users. Referrals to resources should be appropriate to the users' needs and should be documented and tracked when possible.

Types of Resources and Referral information that should be available with Internet outreach workers are:

- Detailed information about HIV
- Prevention and treatment of different STIs (particularly viral hepatitis, syphilis, herpes etc.)
- Sexual health and safe sex information
- Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)
- Post exposure prophylaxis (PEP)
- Access to emergency support services for PEP and PrEP
- Test and Treat Provisions
- Details of ICTC centres, ART centres
- Nutrition-related information for PLHIV
- Support groups for PLHIV
- Mental health information and counselling services
- Substance abuse information, counselling, and treatment
- Crisis helpline numbers
- Legal awareness and contact details of LGBT-friendly lawyers
- Youth-oriented information and resources
- Transgender information and resources
- Child protection services and information
- Connection to e-support groups

\*It may be necessary to expand this list to meet the needs of the community

\*\* When these online resources are promoted or referred to, it is important to ensure that the websites are mobile-optimised or at least mobile-friendly.

## 2.6 Training of Outreach Workers

Training of outreach workers on basic HIV and STI health and testing information, developing messages, pre-testing and improving the messages, learning thoroughly about the referrals and resources and adequately responding to queries is an ongoing process. Once training, developing and testing of messages and collation of referrals and resources is complete, the outreach worker is ready to start reaching out online.

### Key Training Components:

#### Passive and Active Outreach

The outreach worker should have a profile on every possible platform which is frequented by the target population. However, it might not be practically possible to spend equal amount of time on these platforms. Hence, platforms with greater number of users will require a greater time investment and a dedicated outreach strategy while others may just require an online profile to respond to queries as and when they arise.

In addition to deciding which messages to send, an active outreach strategy will typically also include the frequency of sending out messages to a particular user. The frequency should be optimal to ensure that a user does not get too many messages in a short duration or too few messages for them to be registered in the user's mind. (More about HST's active outreach strategy in Chapter 4)

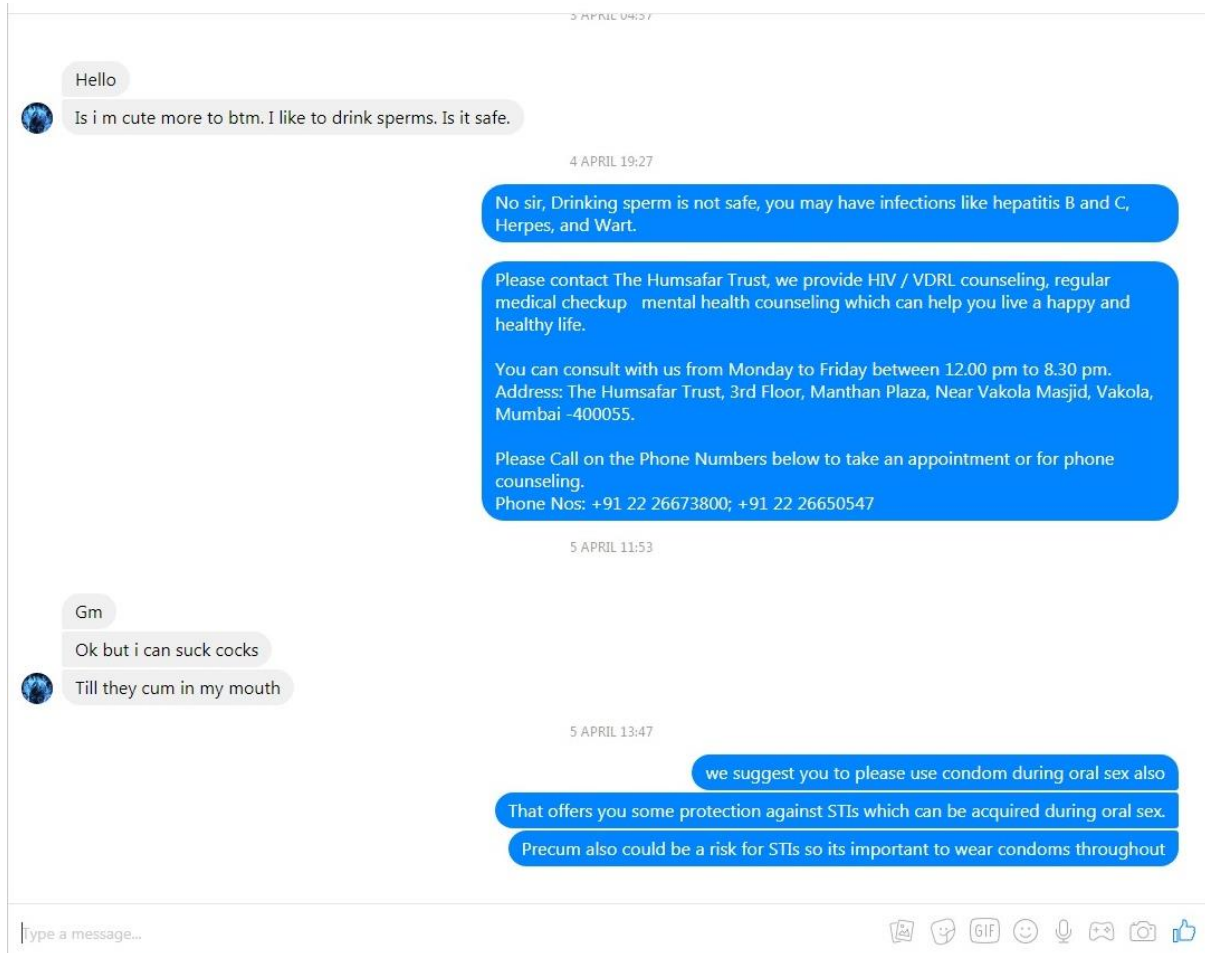
#### Responding to queries

While responding to queries received by the internet outreach worker following need to be kept in mind:

- It is important **NOT** to make any assumptions about the users based on their query or their profile information
- Outreach worker should ask open-ended questions as often as possible to gain more information about the query posted. They can use third-person techniques to probe further about what is the level of knowledge the user has. (e.g. "Most people consider AIDS to be the final stage")
- Including relevant risk and harm-reduction messages already available in stock with the outreach worker as part of the responses
- If the user wants immediate reply to queries, it is better to answer them with facts (e.g. "We know that condoms are not completely effective against many STIs")
- It is always preferred to provide relevant resource links or referrals as often as possible for a complete resolution of a query
- Outreach workers should not give personal advice or tell users what they should or shouldn't do and try to keep their responses professional and non-judgmental
- Privacy of other users is extremely important. In instances where the users can be easily identified, all information received must be treated with complete confidentiality and must not be revealed outside the discussion. Identifiers must be avoided when requesting a senior's assistance on a case, and additional care must be taken if the user reveals his HIV/health status.



**Below is a snapshot of a chat on Facebook where The Humsafar Trust outreach staff responds to queries on sexual behaviour by a user.**



### Follow-up on referrals

It is good practice to seek permission from the users who have chatted with the outreach worker or asked a query if they can be contacted again. If they give the outreach worker permission to contact them after the initial contact, it is recommended that the outreach worker follows up with them to see if they reviewed or used the resource(s) provided or went for the referral service. These follow-up chats should also be documented.

### Communication etiquette

There are some basic communication etiquettes, outreach workers need to be trained on which conducting internet outreach.

- They should respond to all messages and emails in a timely manner. If they do not have time to send a detailed response immediately, a brief message/email should be sent giving a referral or stating that a detailed response will be sent soon. An email or message should only be ignored if it is abusive. The user must be explicitly told that further communication from

them will be not receive a response unless they adopt a tone that is deemed appropriate for communication. However, it must be also mentioned that the user can approach the centre and access health services/information and that access has not been blocked.

- If the outreach worker has to step away from the computer or needs to attend to an urgent or a priority query (e.g. a crisis situation), they should tell the other users on other IMs they were attending to that they will 'be right back' (brb)\*.
- Internet outreach workers will often encounter individuals who will want to casually chat with the outreach worker. Just like in physical outreach, casual conversation can help establish rapport and normalize the organisation's presence on the platform. Internet outreach workers should be trained on maintaining appropriate boundaries between themselves and the users. They should not become too casual, 'talkative', or familiar with the client. They should always keep the conversation focused on the outreach objectives defined by the organisation.
- Internet outreach workers should also be trained on maintaining courtesy in conversations and being respectful to the users. Additionally, they should maintain the etiquettes of typing messages (e.g. not typing in all caps which is considered equivalent to shouting in cyberspace or using appropriate cyber lingo only which is non-offensive and acceptable)
- Internet outreach workers must not encourage or entertain requests for their personal contact information, photographs, private meetings irrespective of the context or the situation.
- Internet outreach workers must not engage in deception or unrealistic promises/commitments with regard to health and services. The waiting times for health appointments and costs incurred must be conveyed as factually as possible. Further, internet outreach workers must not lure, threaten or scare users into going for a test.

## 2.7 Collaboration with dating platforms

Most platforms do not explicitly invite organisations to do online outreach. In case an active online outreach is considered too intrusive by the users, they may report and block the outreach profile. In case there are many block requests against a profile, it can be permanently taken down by the online platform which might be a difficult situation to counter.

Hence, it is prudent to always contact the platform on which outreach is planned on, in advance. The objectives can be discussed and a mutual strategy to achieve them can be framed. Endorsement from dating platforms might further help in building trust and credibility among online users.

***Paid subscriptions of dating platforms can also be considered for outreach.*** As outlined in the earlier section on overview of popular dating platforms, paid subscriptions on most dating platforms offer options for reaching out to a larger number of profiles and access to many more features.

A challenging but a long-term approach would be to approach points of contact on the dating platform and to seek their support toward outreach. This could be in the form of acquiring verified profiles, advertisements (banner and popups) or simply allowing profiles to conduct outreach in instances where verification is not offered. Some platforms may offer small grants or financial aid for outreach work; they could also offer services and products such as advertisement at discounted rates or even pro bono. Thus, initiating conversations with a platform should be an option to explore.

Summary of Best Practices for integrating internet and physical outreach:

- Thorough understanding of needs of the target population and setting up clear outreach goals
- Understanding the online dating and social networking landscape of the region (different websites and mobile applications available, their relative popularity, opportunities and limitations of each platform etc.)
- Creating a profile appropriate for individual platform which is reliable and attracts and engages online users at the same time
- Creating engaging and creative messages that are periodically tested and improved
- Equipping the Outreach worker with a rich pool of reliable online information resources and tested local resources for referrals
- Training of Outreach workers on passive and active outreach on relevant platforms, adequately responding to queries while adhering with the communication etiquette outlined by the organisation and regular follow-ups on referrals
- Collaborating with dating platforms to conduct outreach in an unhindered manner and get assistance with provisions offered on the free and paid versions of the platform to maximise effectiveness of outreach

Chapter 3

Documentation and Evaluation

The success of online outreach will always depend to a certain degree on lessons learned in the course of outreach. Hence it is crucial to optimise and evolve the outreach strategy based on constant monitoring and evaluation and detailed documentation. Organizations conducting Internet outreach should have mechanisms in place to ensure that the intervention strategy and implementation plan is meeting the outreach goals and objectives set by the organisation.

3.1 Documentation

Consistent and accurate documentation procedures can go a long way to ensure effectiveness of internet outreach. Outreach on different dating and social media platforms should be documented separately on a separate Excel sheet (Microsoft Excel is an ideal documentation platform for data entry and analysis of online outreach activity). Documentation for internet-based outreach, on any platform, should typically capture the following information:

- Profile ID of the user: Unlike names and other identifiers, profile ID is a unique identifier on any online platform. Hence, it makes for a unique entry on the Excel document for outreach, making it easy for analysis. A simple formula on the Excel sheet can also alert the outreach worker if a duplicate message is being sent to a particular user. (Refer to the snapshot below of documentation format used by The Humsafar Trust).

| C         | D           | E                 | F               | G                  | H                | I   | J                                   | K               | L   | M                       | N                             | P              | Q           |          |
|-----------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-------------|----------|
| Date      | Profile ID  | PR profile Number | Duplicate Alert | Text Template sent | Action for Today | Query/comment 1   | Query/comment 2                     | Query/comment 3 | Response 1  | Response 2              | Response 3                    | Referral (Y/N) | Referred to | Comments |
| 18-Jul-13 | anu1968     | 5994838           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | josie_paris | 4134790           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | essaye      | 7586647           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | rocky11115  | 11298271          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | Alphonso0   | 4067501           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | rajeev66    | 3948149           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
|           |             |                   |                 |                    |                  |   |                                     |                 | Yes, You can come to our Vakola office at the below address |                         |                               |                |             |          |
|           |             |                   |                 |                    |                  |   |                                     |                 | The Humsafar Trust, 3rd Floor,                              |                         |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | TridzBee    | 12535934          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action needed | I would like to get myself checked, w he should I call and seek an appointment. Thanks once again for ur email .. |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | Y           | Doctor   |
| 18-Jul-13 | ungs        | 9029157           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | e           | 13612952          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | 83          | 12866712          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | yHair       | 13615487          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | mandar123   | 11545377          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | zackherr    | 10795815          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | deeparker   | 13320171          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | body_wax    | 12084317          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | jhangorox   | 11206125          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | ronakjain01 | 12268679          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action needed | Cn I bring my wife  | chargeable or its free consultation |                 | you lik elo bring your wife ? to the                        | You can bring your wife | our listed services are free. |                | Y           | Doctor   |
| 18-Jul-13 | shannky     | 4028493           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                 |   |                         |                               |                | N           |          |

In the absence of any profile ID, name of the user can be used which will present limitation of the platform in terms of capturing data on number of unique users reached out to. If possible, a link to the profile should be maintained on web-based dating platforms.

- *Date of interaction:* Date of sending a message during active outreach or responding to a query by an online user during an active or passive outreach should be recorded. This enables track the number of interactions, plan the frequency of future interactions and monitor if and when a follow-up message is to be sent in case of a referral.
- *Message sent:* Active outreach on dating platforms or social media sites will typically involve a number of different messages sent to online users. It is important to record which message was sent on a particular date to a particular profile ID. It might be easier to record if the messages are given a unique code or identifier.  
This will enable the outreach worker to plan the dates for sending follow-up messages. A simple formula on the Excel sheet can alert the outreach worker about which profile IDs need to be sent a follow-up message on a particular day. (Refer to the snapshot below of documentation format used by The Humsafar Trust).
- *Queries and Responses:* Individual queries should be entered in separate fields in the same row as the Date, Profile ID and Message sent (in case of active outreach) fields. These queries should have responses recorded in the adjacent columns. It is prudent to have multiple columns for queries and responses since there is a possibility of multiple queries in a particular session by the users.
- *Referrals and Follow-up:* These columns record if a referral to an online or a local resource was made as a result of the conversation between the online user and the outreach worker. Based on the date of referral, a simple formula on Excel sheet can alert the outreach worker about the date of following up with the user regarding a particular referral provided.

Documentation formats are likely to change with the changes in the respective platforms. For example: With changes in the interfaces of PlanetRomeo and Grindr where the feature of Profile ID of users was removed and only User name and Bio visible, renders tracking of outreach work much more difficult. It is crucial for Outreach workers to remain aware of these changes and keep devising new ways of documenting the work done by them.

### 3.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the hybrid model of outreach will aim to assess the progress towards goals and objectives of the program defined earlier. Assessment of quality and effectiveness of internet-based outreach program will contain broadly three components:

#### Process evaluation:

Process measures for evaluation will include the following:

- Number of internet-based platforms where active or passive outreach is active

## THE HUMSAFAR TRUST

- Number of individuals reached out to on these platforms (aggregate and on individual platforms)
- Number of messages and follow-up messages sent during active outreach (aggregate and thematically segregated)
- Number of referrals made (aggregate and segregated service-wise and thematically, online and offline referrals made)
- Time spent for internet outreach (aggregate and segregated activity-wise)
- Number of queries received and the nature of queries (PeP/PrEP, STI information, events information)
- Which type of message received responses (negative or positive)
- Approximate number of users who have blocked them

### Outcome evaluation:

Suggested indicators for outcome evaluation will include the following:

- Number of people reached and in touch
- Direct feedback received on effectiveness of messages
- Number of responses to messages received by the outreach worker (aggregate and segregated platform-wise and thematically segregated)
- Number of queries received by the outreach worker (aggregate and segregated platform-wise, through active and passive outreach, thematically segregated)
- Number of clients linked to organizational services citing that they were referred by the internet ORW
- Number of users using referral information or linked to referral services (captured through follow-up responses, records of service providers)

### Impact evaluation:

Impact evaluation will delve into long term positive behavioural changes observed in the online profiles and the offline sexual behaviour of the target population, changes in the number of individuals tested positive for HIV and other STIs, increased uptake of holistic services, reduction in HIV-related stigma amongst various stakeholders and increased positive discussions on various aspects of gender and sexuality.

## Limitations and Other Considerations for Internet Outreach

While an increasingly large number of people are moving to virtual spaces for cruising and seeking sexual partners or for information about different aspects of safer sex and HIV/STIs, there is still a considerable size of population in India that cruises exclusively on physical cruising sites. And there are overlapping populations as well which are present on both physical and virtual sites. Hence, it is impossible for internet-based outreach to completely replace the traditional model of outreach on physical cruising sites and hotspots, resulting in need for this hybrid model which aims to equip outreach workers on physical sites with tools and techniques for internet outreach.

Besides being inadequate in solely catering to the entire target population, internet Outreach comes with its own set of limitations as well, owing to the limitations posed by online platforms and the skill and competency levels of outreach workers in effectively making use of online outreach strategies and techniques outlined in the previous chapter.

The level of engagement and attention on online spaces requires a different approach and retaining and ensuring attention may require greater level of engagement from internet outreach workers.

### 4.1 Flexible Working Schedules

There are numerous social media and dating platforms available where the target population is present. It might not be possible for an organisation to cover all the platforms on account of cost incurred and time available with the outreach worker in addition to covering physical sites. Hence it is important to not only select the websites judiciously, but also identify the most appropriate times of the day to perform outreach. To be as cost effective as possible, organisations may need to create options, such as flexible work schedules, to ensure that Internet outreach is being performed at the peak times when the high-risk target population is online.

## 4.2 Coordination between organisations

Similar to the geographical division of populations among different organisations in case of physical outreach to avoid duplication of services, it is important that community-based organizations are aware of online outreach conducted by other organisations to minimize over-saturation of active messaging within a venue or area. Most platforms, being GPS based, offer options to filter the geographical area of intended outreach. Here, it is important to keep in mind that, not unlike physical outreach, such geographical segregation might not be perfect or extremely effective, considering the fact that community keeps shifting and moving within both physical spaces and virtual platforms. Further innovative strategies such as opting for paid subscriptions as well as location spoofing apps may allow outreach workers to reach more people.

## 4.3 Technological Competency

Online outreach requires a basic familiarity of outreach workers with web-based platforms and mobile applications. While we have seen a significant rise in usage of smartphones and internet, internet usage among outreach workers for office work notwithstanding, there might still be challenges of technological competency among several outreach workers. Majority of the outreach staff, especially those who come from the transgender/hijra community are school dropouts. They might not be well-versed with navigating through the features of web-based platforms and mobile applications to conduct effective outreach. They might also find it difficult to complete complicated documentation and monitoring and evaluation formats.

Hence, it is imperative to include training on basic usage of internet and mobile applications in the training modules for outreach staff. It is also crucial that the documentation formats are easy to understand and use.

## 4.4 Community Insights and Linguistic Competency.... A silver lining

It is crucial that internet outreach is conducted in a culturally and linguistically competent manner. A key element of any successful HIV/STI related outreach is an understanding of the community. This includes the linguistics or language of the community members and the ability to communicate with them in meaningful ways. It is important to understand the beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, norms, and values of a target population, and to be able to understand and convey information to them in their 'language.' This competence includes awareness and understanding of health education messages and a strong awareness and comfort level with communication that may be sexually explicit, including depictions of sexual imagery, detailed sexually explicit language, or conform to community standards that could be in conflict with the personal ethics or values of the outreach worker.

Hence, outreach workers who come from the community and are hence themselves a part of the social and sexual networks of the target population, are in the best position to conduct online outreach.

Apart from the linguistics of the community, outreach workers also need to be well-versed with the language of the online communities. Online communities, just like offline communities, have their own 'culture' and 'language'. Online language is typically rich in abbreviations, acronyms, and inferences. Different online platforms might also have different languages, fads and cultures. Outreach workers must be able to pick these up and incorporate them in their outreach work.



## Chapter 5

### Ethical Guidelines

All Internet outreach must adhere to the highest standards of ethics. Online spaces are less regulated and hence susceptible to breach of ethical conduct that might potentially harm both the outreach worker or the online users from the target population of outreach. Hence, there is a need for well-defined ethical guidelines which are incorporated in the orientation and training of outreach workers. Below are a few key components of ethical guidelines that organisations can adapt and outreach workers can adhere to:

#### 5.1 Maintaining strict confidentiality

Organisations conducting Internet outreach must have a comprehensive confidentiality policy that specifically covers internet-related activities and processing of client-identifying information.

- Under no circumstances should outreach workers share any information about one online user to another individual, whether it is in the 'virtual world' or in the 'real world.'
- An outreach worker should not make any client-identifying information public, either on internet or in physical spaces. Screen names, e-mail addresses, HIV status, and any personal or sexual information are considered to be identifying information and must be held to the same level of confidentiality as a client's first and last names.
- Outreach workers should sign a confidentiality agreement where the above clause is explicitly stated. The confidentiality agreement should include consequences for any violation of the policy.
- Any printed documents, such as reports or transcripts of chats, containing screen names or e-mail addresses, if used for any organisational research should be stored in locked file cabinets and destroyed once the research is completed.

#### 5.2 Protecting identity of outreach staff

- Internet outreach workers typically create profiles with organisation's name as their profile names. If there are more than one internet outreach workers, it is best to give them screen names and the organisational affiliation clearly stated in their profiles. This gives credibility to their presence on a particular platform. Not professionally identifying oneself may be interpreted in the online world as lurking, spying, or some sort of possible entrapment.
- However, it is important that outreach workers never share or use their personal e-mail address or screen names nor should they give out email address or contact details of their colleagues. Outreach workers should never share their personal information such as a personal telephone number, home address, or any other individual contact information.
- Outreach workers must not set up meetings with others users with their official IDS for personal or professional reasons. If a user insists on meeting for health support, then the outreach worker must refer them to an appropriate healthcare worker for further follow up.

### 5.3 Separating the personal and professional

While conducting Internet-based activities, it is imperative that outreach workers separate work-related use from personal use.

- Outreach workers may never use an organisational profile to solicit and/or accept sexual invitations. Similarly, they must never use a personal online profile or chat name to conduct internet outreach even on their own time.
- If an online user is trying to “pick up” an outreach worker, the user should be politely informed that it is inappropriate for outreach workers to participate in that type of conversation or behaviour. Relationships made during online outreach work cannot be used to pursue personal, sexual, or illegal activities in any way. It should be communicated to outreach workers that failure to abide by these guidelines may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
- While responding to queries or following-up on referrals, outreach workers should never appear solicitous or start a conversation with an online user as if potentially looking for sex, friendship, or money. They should also not try to “bait” anyone using sex or any other favour to get them avail the organisation’s services. During conversations, while some casual chatting may be needed to develop rapport and normalize an active outreach, they should redirect the conversation to their intended purpose. If unsuccessful, they should politely inform the user of their responsibility and job role on the online platform. It must be conveyed that threatening, luring or baiting a client is a serious breach of ethics and the outreach workers must thus not allow information learned or obtained during work to be leaked in anyway during personal interactions.
- The organization must also make efforts to ensure that an outreach worker is assigned areas that do not overlap with their personal networking areas; however, this approach may have limitations as the internet functions as a singular large community with users who change locations very frequently.

### 5.4 Adhering to platform guidelines

Every Internet Service Provider (ISP) and website has their own Terms of Service that can include rules of user conduct, regulations, privacy policies etc. It is important that outreach workers understand the Terms of Service and other guidelines on any ISP or website on which they are conducting outreach. They must avoid violating any guidelines of the various online platforms because it is within a site administrator’s domain to remove a user found in violation from a website or terminate any account for violation of their online policies.

### 5.5 Adopting a client-centred approach

It is important for outreach workers to adopt a client-centred approach and provide an environment of empathy, unconditional positive regard, and acceptance to the users they are interacting with. Outreach workers should be encouraged to accept their clients without judgement and understand where they ‘are’ at the moment to offer every possible support. For the outreach worker, being

supportive to the client while providing information, is key to the overall success of outreach in online communities.

## 5.6 Other security issues

Other security issues that need to be taken care of are as follows:

- Outreach workers may encounter malware or malevolent software hidden inside advertising banners on some online platforms. It is important to avoid such security issues by installing recommended updates to the operating system, applications and web browsers on the systems used by internet outreach workers. Security and anti-malware software should also be installed on computers, laptops and mobile devices used for internet outreach.
- Internet outreach should only be carried out on private, password-protected Wi-Fi networks. Third parties can easily scan unprotected or public Wi-Fi traffic and steal sensitive data.
- Outreach workers may come across profiles that may be set up soliciting minors or may interact with users who appear to be/are minors. In such instances, outreach workers must work in accordance to local laws around sexual offences with minors or refer to the organizational policy for interactions with minors. Under no circumstances should the outreach worker engage in any interaction that could invite legal repercussions for themselves or the organization.

## The Humsafar Trust Experience

The Humsafar Trust has pioneered in devising new intervention methods and techniques to meet the evolving needs of the community ever since its inception in 1994. The last decade saw a fatigue set in the HIV interventions run on physical outreach sites. Ironically, this fatigue was not a result of saturation of populations on physical outreach sites, but inability of interventions to evolve and reach a significant section of target population. This included people, particularly youth, gradually shifting to virtual cruising sites. There were several other aspects of youth social and sexual behaviour that remained largely unaddressed by the traditional modes of intervention.

In the wake of these developments, Yaariyan (Friendships), a voluntary LGBTQ youth support group was founded in 2010 by The Humsafar Trust to understand behaviours of LGBTQ youth and facilitate access to health and social support.



### 6.1 Yaariyan

Yaariyan (Friendship) is a voluntary LGBTQ youth initiative and an internet-based peer support model by The Humsafar Trust (HST) which functions as an online forum, organizes offline events and facilitates youth access to health and social support. Yaariyan was founded in 2010. Yaariyan is autonomous, unregistered and is managed by volunteers (core team) who are selected following an annual call for interviews to take place of members between ages 18 and 28.

The following are Yaariyan's objectives:

- To improve health-seeking behaviour and access to health services among LGBTQ youth
- To be a safe space and platform for dialogue and peer support among LGBTQ youth
- To nurture and support LGBTQ youth leaders
- To foster awareness around LGBTQ health and rights among LGBTQ youth
- To sensitize the mainstream society on LGBTQ issues

Yaariyan mainly operates via a secret Facebook group with a membership of over 8000 LGBTQ members. The forum is a safe space and an active group that sees over 100 posts from members daily.

- The group organises a diverse range of offline and online events and activities that see participation from 50–1000 members depending on the event:
- Yaariyan aims to be a safe space that fosters dialogue and peer support in online and offline spaces
- It facilitates access to mental and sexual health services among LGBTQ youth with an added focus on halting and reversing the HIV/AIDS epidemic among MSM and transgender youth by:
  - encouraging dialogue around safer sex practices
  - responding to queries on HIV, safe sex, general wellbeing and crises
  - improving access to and uptake of condoms and lubricants
  - facilitating HIV/STI testing by organizing camps
  - referrals to appropriate resources and spaces such as LGBTQ community-based organizations, testing centres, healthcare providers, mental health professionals or physical safe spaces
  - linkage to HIV/STI treatment and care
- It works towards addressing societal stigma towards LGBTQ by increasing community visibility and initiating dialogues on various aspects of gender and sexuality by:
  - organizing events for the Mumbai Pride month
  - Acceptance meet for parents, siblings, workplace colleagues and friends of LGBTQ
  - LGBT-themed movie screenings,
- It also organises community mobilisation events in the form of outings and bonding events
- Yaariyan also implements a service delivery and outreach project titled “Bridging gaps between LGBTQ youth and HIV/AIDS healthcare via innovative strategies” for HIV-AIDS prevention program among young men who have sex with men and transgender youth. Implemented since 2017, this project has enabled Yaariyan in creating videos discussing safer sex practices and living with HIV; implementing innovative HIV testing campaigns for internet-using MSM and transgender youth; and distributing over 5000 condoms, lubricant pouches, and safer sex educational material (Khushpudi- Pleasure packs) via social marketing to internet-using MSM and transgender youth.
- Yaariyan also creates education e-information–education material that can be viewed on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and be circulated via IMs such as WhatsApp. Yaariyan further collaborates with other internet-based apps and platforms frequently for joint events and activities that promote safer sex behaviours on the internet.

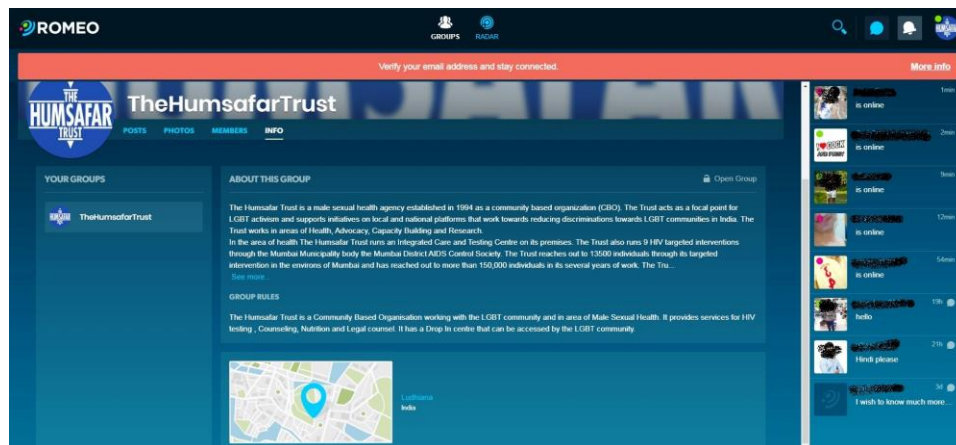
In 2013, a structured and active Internet Outreach program was launched by The Humsafar Trust covering dating platforms like Planet Romeo and Grindr and social networking platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp.

Since 2013, dedicated Internet Outreach workers have been employed to conduct outreach on popular dating and social networking platforms.

## 6.2 Outreach on PlanetRomeo:

The PlanetRomeo offers options for filtering users according to their geographical locations. This feature allowed HST to conduct targeted outreach with users in Mumbai and Thane districts.

PlanetRomeo was one of the most popular platforms in 2013, when Internet Outreach was formally started on this platform. A profile by the name of The Humsafar Trust was created on Planet Romeo using the organization's official logo to establish credibility. Users were only contacted from the official Humsafar account.



There were three default messages to be sent to site users. These default messages were respectively titled "Introduction, Message 2, Message 3." These messages were part of a referral-based service to encourage HIV testing, nutrition counselling, regular medical check-ups, and support groups. These messages were periodically modified and re-worded based on user response.

In case the internet outreach worker received specific queries, the online users were subsequently referred to a physician, lawyer, counsellor or nutritionist in HST itself or with local hospitals or organisations where HST had linkages with.

The internet outreach worker started with sending twenty messages each morning and an additional twenty messages in the evening. It was found that the frequency of responses in the morning were on average less than the evening. There were approximately 200 people that were online during morning hours, while nearly 2000 members were active during evening hours. This could be explained by the fact that many of the users were college students and working adults who had commitments during the day and were free during the evening.

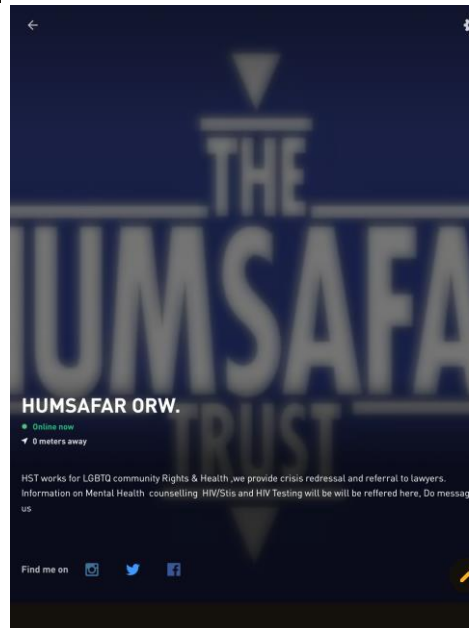
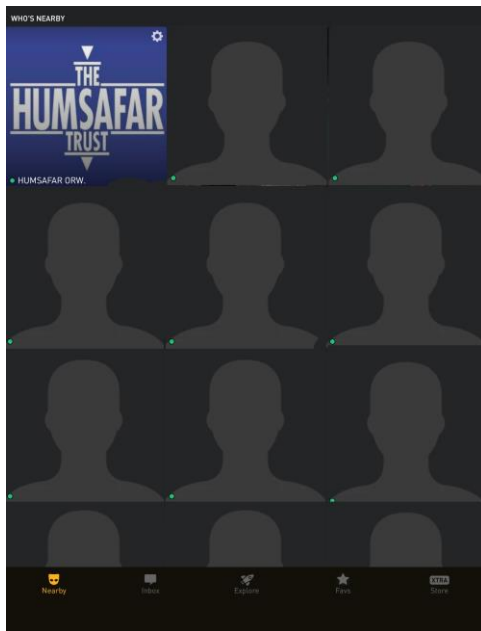
Approximately, 200 messages were sent per month with an average response rate of 2%.

This process was extensively documented. Every time a user was identified, their profile ID was recorded and copied into the excel document along with the unique profile ID number. The profile ID number of a user stayed consistent regardless of username changes and was used as a tracking identifier. This ensured that one person was not contacted multiple times. The date the message was sent, type of message sent (Introduction, Message 2, Message 3), and any actions needed to be taken were also recorded. As soon as a user responded, their response was recorded under a column titled "Query/Comment 1." Follow up responses from Humsafar were recorded under a column titled "Response." For every person contacted, the outreach worker documented if a referral was made and to whom or where was the referral made.

| C         | D           | E                 | F               | G                  | H                | I   | J                                   | K                | L   | M                              | N                             | P              | Q           |          |
|-----------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|---|-------------------------------------|------------------|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-------------|----------|
| Date      | Profile ID  | PR profile Number | Duplicate Alert | Text Template sent | Action for Today | Query/ comment 1  | Query/ comment 2                    | Query/ comment 3 | Response 1  | Response 2                     | Response 3                    | Referral (Y/N) | Referred to | Comments |
| 18-Jul-13 | anu1968     | 5994838           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | jodie_paris | 4134790           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | essaye      | 7586647           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | rocky111115 | 11298271          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | Alphonso0   | 4067501           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | rajeev66    | 3948149           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
|           |             |                   |                 |                    |                  |   |                                     |                  | Yes, You can come to our Vakola office at the below address |                                |                               |                |             |          |
|           |             |                   |                 |                    |                  | I would like to get myself checked... who should I call and seek an appointment. Thanks once again for ur email |                                     |                  |   | The Humsafar Trust, 3rd Floor, |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | TridzBee    | 12535934          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action needed |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               | Y              | Doctor      |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | ungs        | 8029157           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | e           | 13612952          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | 83          | 12866712          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | yHair       | 13615487          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | mandar123   | 11545377          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | zackherr    | 10795815          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | deerparker  | 13320171          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | body_wax    | 12084317          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | jiangorox   | 11206125          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
|           | ronakjain01 |                   |                 |                    | No action needed | Cn I bring my wife  | chargeable or its free consultation |                  | you lik eto bring your wife ?to the                         | You can bring your wife        | our listed services are free. | Y              | Doctor      |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | 43          | 12268679          | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |
| 18-Jul-13 | shannky     | 4028433           | Duplicate       | Introduction       | No action        |   |                                     |                  |   |                                |                               |                |             |          |

### 6.3 Outreach on Grindr:

In terms of number of users reached out to, Grindr offered limited options, since unlike Planet Romeo, this application uses a geolocation feature to solely locate users who are nearby. The Internet outreach worker sent a standard message on Grindr detailing the holistic services provided by The Humsafar Trust for the community. For every application user that responded, a follow up message was sent.



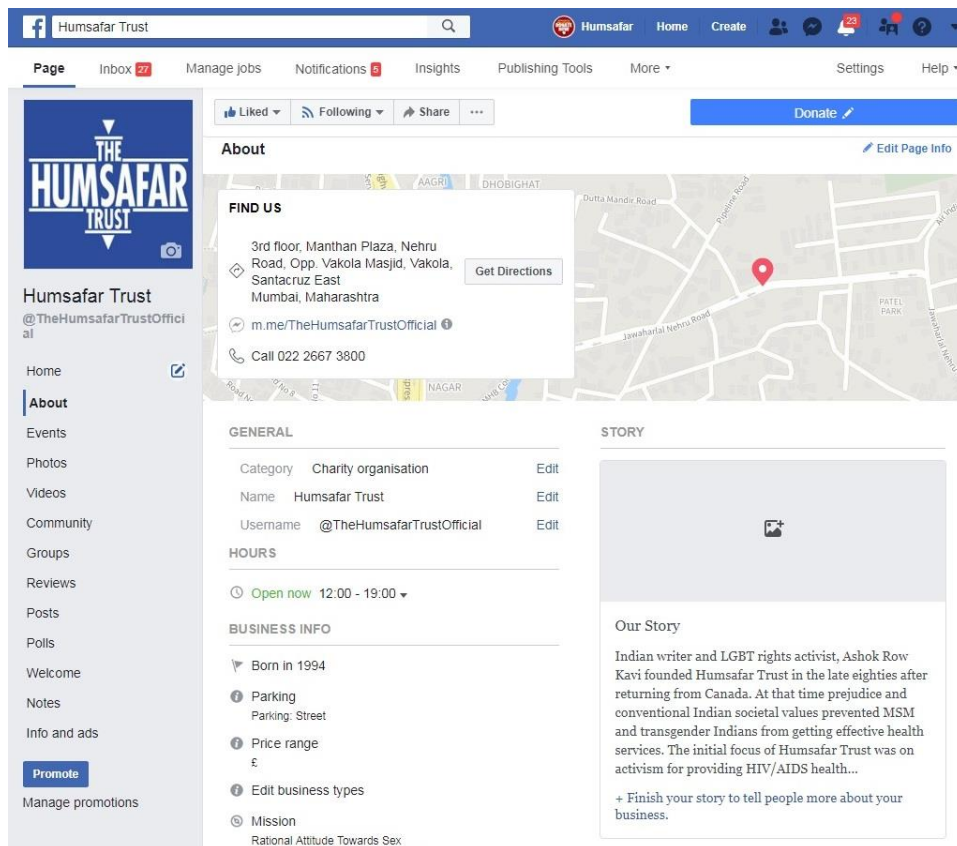


## 6.4 Outreach on Facebook:

The Humsafar Trust has its own official Facebook page. Apart from the official page the Internet Outreach worker also manages pages on specific initiatives like Bombay Dost, the oldest LGBTQ magazine in India, Sanjeevani, the PLHIV support group started by The Humsafar Trust and TRANScend, an initiative to enhance transgender inclusion and rights.

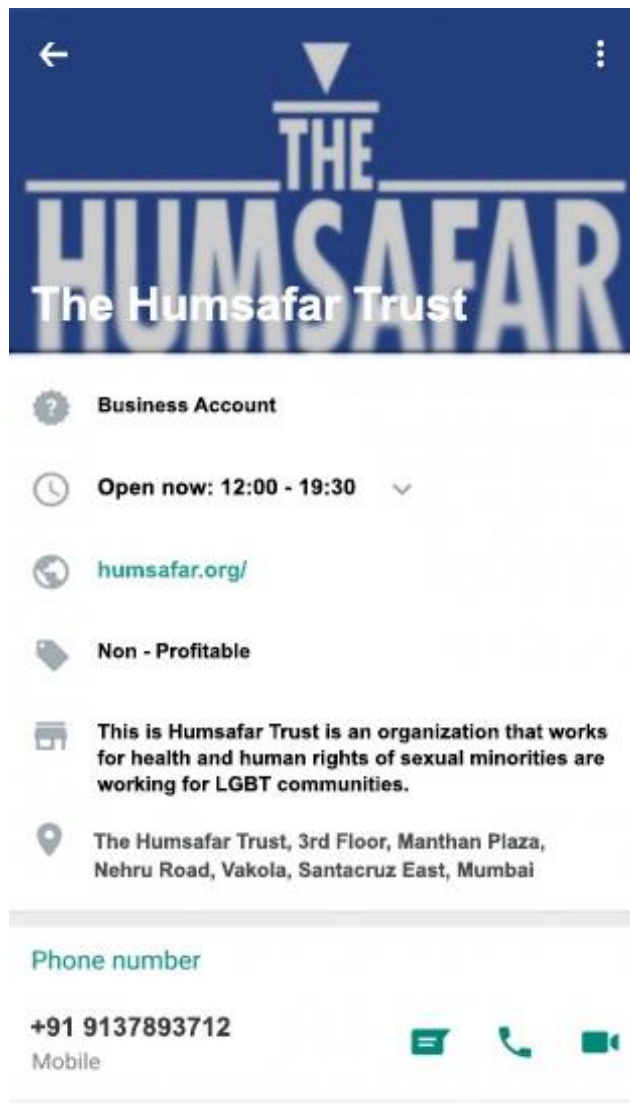
Facebook posts are short and use catchy taglines to increase visibility. The content of the posts varies from advertising Humsafar's services to promoting safe sex behaviours.

The Humsafar Trust official Facebook page is primarily used for organizing events or conveying information about events and activities conducted by different teams in the organisation. Every message sent to the Humsafar Facebook account is read. Profile of the sender is screened to ensure the authenticity of the request. Friend requests are only sent if the user is a member of the LGBTQ community. A polite and professional demeanour is maintained while responding to each message. Appropriate internal or external referrals are also made in case of a query.



### 6.5 Outreach through WhatsApp:

WhatsApp allows multiple contacts to receive the same message at once, using the 'G"group"' or 'Broadcast' conversation function. The Internet outreach worker was able to reach out to more than 1300 members of Key populations (KPs) in a span of one year after outreach through WhatsApp began. Consent of people were obtained before they were added to a group. The outreach worker ensured that the group maintained a conversational tone and remained active. The group was used to send safer sex messages, promote Humsafar Trust events, and alert the head office at Humsafar of any crisis cases.



## 6.6 Research Studies on online outreach and interventions: ISHKonnect, CHALO, and Zero Meters Away

The Humsafar Trust conducts research to not only assess existing interventions but also inform future ones. The organisation has a dynamic and eclectic research team, comprising of both domain experts and community researchers, who have conducted numerous studies in collaboration with several globally recognized centres of HIV and LGBT research. Some of the major studies conducted to study HIV prevention needs, online behaviours and feasibility of certain internet-based interventions were - ISHKonnect, CHALO and Zero Meters Away.

### ISHKonnect

ISHKonnect was a formative research to identify HIV prevention needs of MSM who use the Internet to seek sex with men and differences in their online and offline sexual behaviour conducted in collaboration with India-based Tata Institute of Social Sciences and U.S.-based University of Minnesota's HIV/STI Intervention and Prevention Studies, University of Texas (UoT) and the University of California San Francisco's Centre for AIDS Prevention Studies and funded by NIH.

This study explored the feasibility and acceptability of creating a web/app-based intervention for MSM and transgender women through interviews with m-health professionals and focus group discussions/interviews with community members. In addition, over 440 surveys were conducted online with users on internet-based dating and social media platforms with MSM and TG community members to explore risk and safer sex behaviours of the community. Lime survey was used for conducting the survey and the survey was advertised on Facebook and PlanetRomeo using banner advertisements as well as in offline spaces. Participants were compensated using e-vouchers for products on a LGBTQ friendly merchandise website.

### CHALO

CHALO was a pilot research study to develop and test the feasibility and acceptability of a social-media based HIV prevention intervention to increase consistent condom use and linkage-to-care for HIV testing and other services, conducted in partnership with the Albert Einstein College of Medicine based in Bronx, New York, and Montefiore Medical Center.

CHALO recruited 240 MSM and TG women from internet-based platforms via a baseline who were then enrolled into a randomized control trial to test two types of messaging frames: acceptance and avoidance. Fifteen messages were created under each of these frames and participants were randomized to receive either. The same participants received an endline survey after the intervention to understand acceptability of both messaging frames as well as measure any difference in reported condom and intention to go for an HIV test. The results were compared between reports at baseline and endline as well as between the two arms.

### Zero Mts Away

Zero Mts Away was conducted by HST to understand awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and acceptability towards PrEP and potential needs to inform PrEP implementation for Indian MSM and TG communities, to determine rates of HIV testing and condom use and associated factors among online MSM/TG and to determine feasibility of reaching online MSM/TG across India to inform future potential interventions and online outreach approaches.

This study was conducted in partnership with Albert Einstein College of Medicine based in Bronx, New York, and Montefiore Medical Center along with Grindr for Equality.