



EQueL: Emerging Queer Leaders

Workshop 2022

1st April – 2nd April 2022

Hotel Sun n Sand, Juhu, Mumbai

NARRATIVE REPORT



Introduction: The Humsafar Trust (HST) is a community-based organization (CBO) in Mumbai, India working on the health and human rights of LGBTQ+ communities since 1994. The organization has four verticals that include Health, Advocacy, Research and Capacity building of the communities. HST currently implements HIV prevention and treatment programs with an outreach to 3,000 Gay identified, Men Having Sex with Men (MSM) and TG/Hijra communities in Mumbai every year through outreach work on physical sites, and 100,000 + users through social media, dating apps and online programs.

Background: The Humsafar Trust in 2018, after the Supreme Court Judgement on Section 377, revised its strategic plan and initiated a conscious effort to reach out to LGBTQ+ communities in non-urban Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Various ways were identified under every vertical that HST operated in to ensure these masses do not get left out. Under the advocacy vertical, it was observed that crisis cases saw a rise after the 2018 judgment as communities started openly highlighting crimes that they earlier wouldn't be due to the fear of getting caught themselves. While it was a good thing that these cases were being reported, there weren't enough support systems in these towns and regions to handle community care. With an aim to offer aid, one of the ways to provide support in interior regions was to identify potential individuals who could act as leaders and lead the regional movement.

EQueL Workshop 2022, followed the suit of this strategy and went a step ahead by ensuring representation of various intersectionality in its selection criterion to select participants. A Google form was rolled out to collect applications asking for basic personal information, and contact information along with the town/ city the applicant was applying from. Additionally, it was also checked if they were associated with any initiatives or organizations, to ensure newer individuals were picked to broaden their visibility and give them opportunities. In the qualitative check section of the form below were the questions that were asked to gauge the involvement of an individual in the upliftment of the participants in their local region:

- 1) Why do you want to join the workshop?
- 2) Are you involved in any project/ activity related to LGBTQ+ issues or have ever been involved in the past?
- 3) Provide 3 instances where you have shown your leadership skills if any.
- 4) List down any 2 issues related to LGBTQIA+ Health/ Rights which is important to you, and you'd want to work on it.

The form received a good response of 135+ applications from various regions of the country involved in various Health and Human rights work for LGBTQ+ communities. With a qualitative analysis by the Advocacy team, 20 participants were selected to be a part of the EQueL workshop planned on 1st and 2nd of April 2022, in Mumbai at Hotel Sun n Sand, Juhu, Mumbai.

The agenda was crafted meticulously to ensure it complemented the background of every participant selected and added value to the already ongoing work they are doing or intended to do. The participants saw diversity within the LGBTQ+ individuals. Along with Cisgendered Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Polysexual, and Pansexual individuals, self-identified binary as well as non-binary individuals, on the various spectrums of caste, religion, serostatus as well as especially abled bodied individuals, were selected to strengthen the cross-learning component of the workshop.

The participants' composition was as below:

Cisgendered Male assigned at birth	9
Cisgendered Female assigned at birth	2
Transwoman	1
Transman	3
Trans – Non-Binary Male assigned at birth	3
Trans – Non-Binary Female assigned at birth	2

For the Cisgendered individuals the participation was as follows:

Gay	6
Lesbian	2
Polysexual	2
Bisexual	1

The participants travelled in the most efficient ways possible to ensure qualitative participation in the workshop.



On the first day of the workshop, the day began with registrations and documentation. Undertakings signed by participants to ensure the decorum of the space is maintained during the 2 days of training and to impart the seriousness of the workshop. During the introductions, a lot of participants shared small snippets of the work they have been doing on the ground in their respective regions.

After the introductions, Mr. Tinesh Chopade formally welcomed everyone with a welcome note and explained the agenda, to ensure expectations in terms of commitment are communicated to the participants. After that, Mr. Vivek Anand was invited to address the cohort and set the tone for the workshop.

The first session planned after the welcome was by Advocate, Suraj Sanap, a reputed and promising lawyer with vast experience in handling LGBTQ+ related issues and cases. The content covered advocacy at large, crisis management and its response, and lastly the laws that had relevance to these situations.

A brief overview of the below judgments and laws was given to the participants to make them acquainted with the exact details.

- Brief discussion on NALSA Judgement - 2014
- Brief discussion on KS Puttaswamy vs Union of India - 2017
- Brief discussion on Navtej Singh Johar vs Union of India – 2018
- Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019; rules 2020

The practicality of these laws along with the good and bad implementation practices became the discussion amongst the participants. Participants shared their personal experiences of Transphobia in the process of getting the Transgender ID cards as per the Trans Act 2019. The need for sensitisation of the bureaucrats on a national level was identified from this session.



Another challenge identified in the process of obtaining a Transgender Certificate card was the inaccessibility to good Psychiatric help in local regions. Since a Psychiatric evaluation is the primary premise for obtaining a TG Card, the need for more queer-affirmative psychiatrists was seen.

The discussion also identified a need for employment reservations in government spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals and a need for workplace policies to offer extra leaves during transition for Trans individuals. as there was a common fear of unemployment during the transition process due to reduced work contribution.

The conversations also swayed towards a need for Gender Neutral laws for sexual harassment, domestic violence, and other forms of gender-based abuse.

In the discussion about healthcare, an urgent need of making conversion practices illegal and assigning heavy penalties and punishments under CrPC was discussed in detail, where minors, females assigned at birth individuals from rural regions, and people from intersectionalities were discussed. The need for a mental health review board under the mental health care act was highlighted.

Crisis intervention was also discussed at length during this session. This became a platform for participants to share their personal experiences of handling offline as well as online crisis situations and a perspective from Suraj as a lawyer to that situation.

The session then was followed by lunch.

After lunch Ms. Shruta Rawat conducted an awareness session on HIV and STI awareness. Shruta began the session with an explanation of what STIs are and why they carry some extra seriousness when discussed socially. Some common STIs discussed were, Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis, Trichomoniasis, HSV, HPV, HIV, and AIDS. The discussion points included modes of transmission, symptoms, treatments available, and other social stigmas of each STI.



A focused conversation on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis was facilitated by Shruta, busting any myths or misunderstandings about them.

A generic conversation about Dos and Donts as an LGBTQ+ leader while handling mental or physical health crisis situations of PLHIV individuals was discussed to equip these EQueLs for that kind of situation. These included pointers on Confidentiality, offering mental health support, and correct terminologies to use.



After Shruta's technical session on HIV & STIs, Dr. Prasad Dandekar facilitated a session on LGBTQ+ inclusion in healthcare system.

This session addressed the elements of the healthcare system and the ways to sensitise them and seek support from these healthcare professionals. The conversations included public as well as private healthcare systems. The conversation covered visibility, acceptance, and support from various healthcare units. The last discussion of the day involved identifying further needs of healthcare and the most prominent need was stringer insurance provisions for PLHIV community.

The second day of the workshop was initiated with Mr. Suresh Ramdas a leading professional working on D&I across corporate platforms. Suresh deconstructed the concept of Diversity and Inclusion spaces, their origination, their ideology, their need, functioning and finally the aim of these spaces at corporate levels.

Suresh also spoke of recruitment of LGBTQ+ or other diverse workforce from an employer perspective and what employers are now doing better to make the workplace more inclusive. These good practices included policy-level measures such as spousal benefits, gender-neutral restrooms, equal growth opportunities, and recruitment policies.



While the participants understood an employer's perspective of inclusion at the workplace, we at HST also had a community perspective of the same setup and the practices we follow as a CBO to build a stronger diverse workforce. The next session facilitated by Ms. Anjali Siroya covered these good practices as a community leader to facilitate queer-friendly recruitment. This included sharing of challenges faced while doing this, the limitations of communities, and the scope of affirming workplace experiences with the queer communities.



The last session of the workshop was facilitated by Mr. Vivek Anand – a session on Resource Mobilisation for community work. Vivek began the session by identifying what qualifies as resources. This was done to highlight a point that we seldom have a lot that qualifies as resources but not the funding and takes a pessimistic approach to the situation. Once established, with help of an example, the resources were distributed into financial and non-financial categories. For the

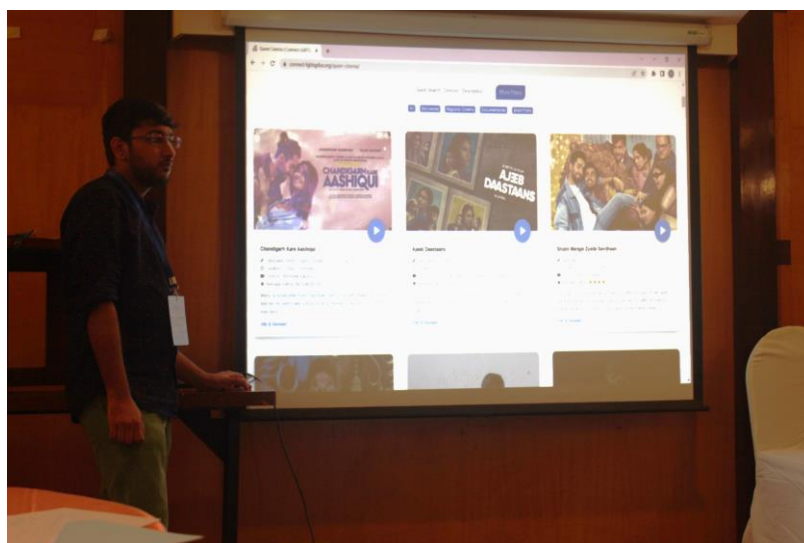
financial resources, he explained the traditional funding agencies, CSR projects, consulates and embassies, crowdfunding, ticketing, barter, sponsorship, donations, consultancy charges, etc.



Once the conversation established accessibility of resources, he directed the conversation towards the management of finances, cost-cutting, and financial sustainability. This was done with an activity of making a sample budget for a small activity. Once the sample budgets were made, an evaluation of them was done to hone the projection skills of budgets.

Once the financial aspect of resource mobilisation was completed, the conversation moved toward linkages. This became a cross-learning opportunity for the participants to share their strengths and weaknesses with the cohort and to identify if anyone can offer any form of resources to each other.

This ended the formal sessions of the workshop. Tinesh and Sudhanshu then launched CONNECT NORC www.connect-lgbtqplus.org offline as well as online. The participants were given a brief tour of the resource center to encourage them to contribute to the NORC.



Tinesh then announced the EQueL fellowship on INR 5,000/- with detailed instructions on how EQueL participants can apply for it and conduct an activity in their local regions. He explained the parameters of applying for this fellowship and what the deliverables would be to ensure the fellowship is used for an activity.

After the announcement of the EQueL fellowship, to ensure the attendees' participation is appreciated and recognised, certificates were distributed by the HST Team.



Tinesh then gave a vote of thanks and concluded the EQueL: Emerging Queer Leaders workshop 2022.

Part 2: EQueL Fellowships

In order to claim the EQueL Fellowships, participants were required to use the knowledge received during the workshop and send a proposal for an activity that would conduct with a relevant budget and details on the expected outcomes of this activity. They were also expected to deliver a report at the end of the process to share their learnings and experiences from their activity.

5 EQueL Participants applied for this fellowship and carries out activities in the cities of Nagpur, Delhi, Kolkata, and Gandhinagar. The activities ranged from health-focused discussions, visibility podcasts, sensitisation session, and mental health-focused activities.

Below are the reports sent in by the participants:

- 1) [Workplace sensitisation session by Jatin P](#)
- 2) [Queersidency by Zaheer](#)
- 3) [Psyqology by Anaam](#)
- 4) [Vocally Virgin by Kavyan S](#)
- 5) [The Rainbow Reckons by Dr. Surabhi Mitra](#)