

Sankalp wins UN Red Ribbon Award 2008

Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust as one of the 25 recipients of the Red Ribbon Award 2008 which is sponsored by UNDP and UNAIDS. The award has been instated to recognize world wide Community Based Organizations and Non Government Organisations that have displayed courage and resilience in addressing the different development challenges created by the AIDS epidemic and offered practical, innovative and sustainable solutions to meet the unique needs of people living with HIV and vulnerable groups often in the face of deepening poverty and escalating stigma and discrimination.

Sankalp was selected from a pool of over 550 nominations.. At a pre Conference event hosted by the HIV/AIDS Group, Bureau for Development Policy of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), representatives of the 25 award winning organisations,

which included three other organizations from India, Sanghmitra, a women's collective to address the needs of sex workers, a CBO nurtured by PSI and People like US (PLUS), an organization of transgender youth dancers from Kolkatta came together to anchor a Community Dialogue Space, called the 'Community Tequio', (Community Equip), to share and exchange the stories of their successes, highlight the challenges and foster messages informing policy makers, international agencies, UN bodies and agencies in technical, research and implementation areas.

Mr. Eldred Tellis and Mr. E. Suseelkumar were present to accept the award on behalf of Sankalp at the felicitations that took place at the XVII International AIDS Conference held in Mexico City from 1st to 9th August 2008.



World AIDS Conference 2008

A lifetime experience !

Suseel Kumar

Participating in the World AIDS Conference and to be part of the 'Community Tequio', (Community Equip), was a lifetime experience. It was the first International Conference that I had attended and I must admit that I was not prepared to be part of such a huge gathering of 20,000 people.

We stayed with 50 other delegates representing the 25 award winning NGOs at the Best West Hotel Majestic in the heart of Mexico City, one of the boundaries of the grand open space , where flag hoisting parades are held every morning to pay tribute to the first Parliament instated in Mexico two decades ago. The Palace which stood there before the revolution is now the Parliament . A Cathedral and an administrative building , which are reminiscent of 18th century architecture in Mexico also lent a historic backdrop to the area.

We were first briefed on the Community Tequio and the Inaugural Ceremony that was to be held on 3rd August, with the UN Secretary General as the chief guest. The 'Community Tequio', the Community Dialogue Space became a forum created in the Global Village to showcase the stories of success and the challenges faced by the NGOs / CBOs as well as to highlight the effectiveness and pivotal role of grassroots action worldwide to combat HIV/AIDS.

My first observation regarding the activities of other world wide NGOs was that their programmes were mostly community driven, whereas in our country they are still carried out through NGO based programmes. The issues addressed were also different. In Africa and Latin America , social integration and issues related to stigma and discrimination were major issues that had to be dealt with. In general programmes round the world are looking into minute aspects of the adverse effects of HIV/AIDS on society, access to medicine and treatment , human rights, psycho social health, services to children orphaned by AIDS, vulnerability of other family members and advocacy, initiating changes in policy and legislations for child custody, asset and property inheritance as well as prevention of human trafficking.

We were also made aware of the efforts towards empowerment of women, involving more women in traditional councils, in generating community funds, in changing attitudes among the Police, Administration and Judiciary, and organizing special programmes for the deaf and blind communities, as well as building alliances with faith based organizations, religious and opinion leaders to



Award winners at Delhi

usher in an enabling environment for the society to respond to the problem..

India is yet to advance to that level as we still haven't moved much beyond the level of creating HIV/AIDS awareness and more recently have been focusing on the nuances associated with the delivery of ART and segregating the high risks behaviours into communities , furthering endangering them to social labeling.

An encouraging aspect of the Conference was the presence of transgender and other sexual minorities vocalizing their existence and their involvement in HIV prevention, working for the care and support of people living with HIV/AIDS and the concerns they felt as barriers in the effort.

Daily deliberations at the Community Tequio celebrated success, shared knowledge, priorities and concerns. There were opportunities to enter into dialogue with donor agencies, global leaders and government officials on how to partner with and support locally driven community efforts on HIV.

The main world Conference that followed was hosted outside the Global Village, and included presentations and discussions on various topics. The exhibitions and stalls displayed materials and publications on various research studies and interventions. Pavilions set up by multi national pharma companies presented their range of products and the advanced monitoring facilities available currently.

As the Conference closed with the last speech delivered, I came away feeling more convinced than ever that we in India still have a long way to go in the fight against AIDS. But tiny drops an ocean make and Sankalp is doing just that to tell the world that we can indeed make it happen.

Struggling To Find Solace Sanjay's Story

Sanjay reached Mumbai at the age of 15. His journey to fend on his own in life began when he was just 10. He was troubled to see his father having to struggle to make a living and to meet the demands of his children so he decided to take up a job away from home. Sanjay's first travels took him to a village in Ambala where he found work in a village household. Later he took off to a village bordering Himachal, where someone offered him a job as a rickshaw driver. But this was not enough to ward off hunger. He thought Delhi may provide him better job opportunities but that didn't happen. At Delhi he slipped back into the same rickshaw driving job.

And that's when the problems started. He got mixed up with a group of boys and got pulled into 'outline'. The group were into everything, alcohol, ganja, nitrovars and brown. But a rift took place among them which turned out costly, ending in a murder. This forced Sanjay to flee Delhi.

Mumbai offered him instant jobs with caterers. However it didn't take much time for him to turn to drugs too. This time he graduated to injecting. About seven years ago he got to know about Sankalp through a staff who was an ex user himself. At Sankalp, he got inducted to substitution

therapy and after tapering it to low level, went through the detox camp programme and was clean. At least for some time.

As part of the recovery process, he decided to undergo HIV testing, which turned out to be positive. He relapsed, but with the help of Sankalp stood up again and was staff at Sankalp for one and half years. This is when he thought that it was time he visited his folks back home.

His family welcomed him most warmly and even started marriage plans for him. He lied to them that he was already married and had a family in Mumbai. He didn't want to disclose his health status, neither did he want to cheat his proposed wife.

He returned to Mumbai, but was not at ease. This pushed him to the point of relapse. He continued on drugs for some time until he has once again sought Sankalp's help and that of NA.

However he has also begun to realize that though he can count on Sankalp's services any time, he needs to learn on how he can stand on his own. For the past three months he is back on OST, carrying on till he finds the solace that he strives for.

Sanjay at the Drop in centre



Avert Society conducts training at Wardha

Three staff members of Sankalp's Community Care Centre, the Co.ordinator, Counsellor and an Out Reach Worker attended a week long training workshop organized by Avert Society on "Basic Facts of STI / HIV / AIDS, Sex and Sexuality" from 28th July to 2nd August 2008. The training was held at the Datta Meghe Institute of Medical Sciences, Sawangi (Meghe), Wardha.

A historical centre in Nagpur district of Maharashtra, Wardha is famous for its ashram, Bapukuti at Sewagram, one of the first established by Mahatma Gandhi and from where he initiated the freedom struggle. Vinobha Bhave, Mahatma's first disciple who had followed him throughout the struggle, also had an ashram one and half kilometers away. Participants were fortunate to meet with a few of the former residents of the ashrams who recollected the enlightened days they spent with their leaders.

The training workshop included intensive sessions on various aspects related to the topic starting with the basic knowledge of HIV/AIDS, routes of transmission and myths and misconceptions about how HIV infection spreads. The sessions that followed focused on reproduction, changes during adolescence, myths and misconceptions related to sexuality, sexually transmitted infections, condom usage, social marketing and quality control.

Counselling and Communication skills were also covered over the 6 day training and participants oriented on opportunistic infections and Anti Retroviral Therapy (ART).

Field visits were conducted to an Integrated Counselling and Testing Centre (ICTC) and a Centre for ART. Advocacy, Focus Group Discussion, identifying the needs of the target groups and application of various interventions in appropriate settings were other topics covered.

At its conclusion, a street play competition was held among the participants. Sankalp enacted a skit on stigma and discrimination, depicting how the family and society deals with the drug user even after all his efforts to come sober and bring change in his life. The play put up a message for the family and society to provide a drug user a chance to come back to them. It was judged best among the skits and won the first prize.

On the whole, the training provided by the resource persons and the host organization was found effective. It is recommended however that future workshops cover issues related to IV drug use more comprehensively.

Women's Centre

Upon returning from AIDS 2008 in Mexico City, and reflecting on the messages of gender equality heard at the conference, Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust opened a new Drop-in center specifically for women injecting drug users. The centre was inaugurated by the first client and will be looked after by an Outreach worker and a Peer Counsellor, both of whom have come through Sankalp's Oral Substitution programme at Mumbai Central. On this occasion they invited their Red Ribbon Award winner colleagues, the women's collective Sanghamitra, among others.



Client cutting the ribbon with Trustees

Eldred Tellis Awarded the Ashoka Fellowship

Shivangini Tandon and Samuel Fernandes (Ashoka India)

Eldred Tellis, Founder and Director of Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust, was awarded the Ashoka Fellowship in 2008 for his outstanding work with the street drug user community in providing aid to them through targeted and sustained interventions. Eldred was officially inducted to the Fellowship at a public event in Pune hosted by Tata Motors.

Ashoka: Innovators for the Public, is a non-profit organization supporting the field of social entrepreneurship. Ashoka was founded by Bill Drayton in 1981 to identify and support leading social entrepreneurs through a Social Venture Capital approach with the goal of elevating the citizen sector to a competitive level equal to the business sector. The organization currently operates in over 60 countries and supports the work of 2000 social entrepreneurs or Ashoka Fellows.

Eldred was hand picked as a leading social entrepreneur and had to pass through a stringent time tested selection process. From nomination to election as a Fellow, candidates go through an extensive series of in-depth interviews, a judging panel, and a final executive board vote. While local Ashoka staff visit to evaluate candidates in their work environment, international experts review candidates against Ashoka's criteria. Nominees are rigorously questioned by international staff and local experts about practical implementation the blueprints that will make their ideas come to life as well as personal background, values, motivations and aspirations. Eldred having being through the entire search and selection process of Ashoka met all five of Ashoka's criteria:

1. New Idea- a new solution to a social problem,
2. Creativity- Ashoka Fellows are creative both as goal-setting visionaries and as problem solvers capable of engineering their visions into reality.
3. Entrepreneurial Quality- the candidate needs to be completely absorbed by and committed to their vision of change
4. Social Impact of the idea- Ashoka looks for the potential of systemic change in the field and region of work
5. Ethical Fiber- It is crucial that any individual introducing major structural changes be absolutely trustworthy. Every participant in the Ashoka selection process is asked to evaluate candidates for these qualities rigorously.

Eldred's passion and commitment to his cause as well as his cutting edge work in prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, such as the unprecedented program for Injecting Drug Users in prisons convinced Ashoka of his abilities as a leading social entrepreneur. Eldred was publicly inducted into the Fellowship along with 17 other new Ashoka Fellows from India at a ceremony hosted by Tata Motors and supported by Google India. The guests of honour at the ceremony were Mr. Nihar Kothari, who is the owner and Chief Editor of "Rajasthan Patrika" the largest selling vernacular daily in India and veteran Ashoka Fellow CK Ganguly of the Timbuktu Collective.

(reproduced from.....)



Art of Living Workshop

Prasad

After months of weekly meetings and not being sure of how to proceed, members of the

HIV support group of Sankalp felt that getting an idea of the 'Art of Living' concept may be a way forward to promote Positive Living. An "Art of Living" Workshop was thus conducted at Sankalp's Support Group Premises at Grant Road from 28 July to 1 August 2008 and participated by 14 members.

Meditation, Vajrasan, Pranayam, Bhastika, and chanting of Omkar and Ram Nam were taught to us. The benefits of value based living and basics of 'Panchthathva' (Agni, jal, vayu, dharti and aakash) were also explained to help us turn towards a positive way of thinking and living.

After the workshop I tried to apply the principles taught to us in my day-to-day life. Gradually I started to feel changes in my breathing and felt better day by day. During meditation, I forget my problems and on waking from it I experience happy moments.

I benefited a lot from the workshop. I got over the tobacco chewing habit. I feel my mind is now more balanced.

There is a change in my perception of life, from negativity to positivity. I feel confident now that I can give more support to my HIV positive brothers in Sankalp.

More than anything, I feel that I have come closer to my trust in God.



Clients at the Art of Living workshop



*This Newsletter Comes To You
with our Christmas Greetings
and our very Best Wishes for a
Happy and Peaceful New Year*



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