

Initiative



Teaching With Service: Field Level Exposure Of PARAS (PREVENTION, ADVOCACY, RESEARCH, ALLIANCE, SERVICE)



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Background:

It was in the year 1991, when the leading newspaper, The Times of India, reported, for the first time, detection of 17 HIV positive blood samples in the blood bank of New Civil Hospital, Surat. Many samples out of these were later found to be due to duplication, and so the actual number was much lower. However, the mere detection of these samples was reason enough to be concerned about. Realizing the need for immediate action, the Preventive and Social Medicine Department of Government Medical College, Surat promptly geared up into action. As a part of its public health activities, the Department undertook the task of an HIV sero prevalence survey amongst the various high risk behavior groups, i.e. FSWs in the Surat Red Light Area, STD patients, Prisoners, Truck drivers, Diamond workers and SRP Jawans of Surat City. The course of action at initial stage was to get information about the prevalent situation, to develop trust and good rapport with the above groups, and thus facilitate future activities. Targeted Intervention “PARAS (Prevention, Alliance, Research, Advocacy and Services) Project among FSWs was established in the year 1997 with the support of DFID, UK later supported by NACO since 2000. GMC, Surat is the only Medical College in India which implements targeted intervention just like NGO.

PARAS Project

Goal: Control of STI / HIV / AIDS among FSWs of Surat city.

Vision: To empower the sex workers for STI treatment seeking behavior and prevention of HIV/STIs.

PARAS initiated its activity by extending services to the FSWs on Condom promotion, STIs management, Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) and creating Enabling Environment as a part of Project.

At present (2012) PARAS is providing services to 3138 FSWs by three TI units.

Advancement of core duties and capacity of the department with simultaneous development of PARAS

- **Collaboration and Coordination:** PARAS Project has been a key to start collaborating activities with different departments within the college (Skin & VD, Microbiologist, Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Pediatrics, Medicine, and Chest & TB) and networking with various NGOs at City/State and National level.

- **International Level:** Various international bodies have teamed up with the department for research activities. International collaboration with a) University College Hospital London, b) University of South Florida, USA. Department has received International research projects and International PhD students (1) Dr. Sangeeta Dave- PhD student from University College Hospital London : “Survey estimation of sexual behavior, HIV/STI prevalence & development of HIV prevention intervention in male migrant workers in Surat, India (2005 -07) Well Come trust , UK, funded ”

- 2) Ms. Shilpa Patel (2012): PhD student from Emory University, Rollins school of

Public Health Atlanta, USA):
“Determinants of Risk Behaviors of Married HIV Sero-discordant Couples in Gujarat, India”

3) Ms Dilisha Patel (2011):MSc. Sexual and Reproductive Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, U.K:“An observational study looking into (a) the perception of FSWs regarding future of their children (b) perception of the children who are residing at residential schools under extended PARAS PSM project at Surat, Gujarat.

Bilateral learning happens between with international PhD students & resident doctors.

- Collaboration with USF has resulted into series of workshops (research methods, biomedical ethics, grant writing) at department and online courses & participation of faculties/students in various research projects.
- Collaboration for research studies with FHI for STI prevalence study, capacity building of FSWs to explore feasibility of RCT for presumptive periodical treatment by UNDP& Population Council, Out of school children project by UNICEF.

National Level:

- Department get mileage by visit of Director General NACO, NACO officials and SACS officials and other research team official visits .Faculties and resident doctors get an opportunity to interact with National & International Experts.
- **State Level:** GSACS has identified Department of PSM, GMC, Surat as nodal agency for State level training centre for STI/RTI. Department faculties are also involved as trainer for TI (Peer Educator Training / ORW training/ PO Training /TI Evaluation), Sentinel Surveillance monitoring and STI clinic monitoring.
- Working with GSACS, and various departments like Health Department, Social Welfare Department, Home Department and Women & Child Development Department.

- PG’s and Faculty members are exposed with key population at field level so they get sensitized towards this marginalized population. This will lead to change in their perceptions, attitudes and behavior towards marginalized community (FSWs/MSM/IDUs). The final goal of mainstreaming of marginalized community for utilizing health services will be achieved.
- Residents Doctors get opportunity for training in various components of TI and carry out dissertation & utilize this data for presentation on state and national level conference.
- Department of Skin & VD, Obs & Gynecology and Microbiology are involved in different research studies and they depute their resident doctors to run field level static STI Clinics with residents of PSM Department.
- Faculty members also get opportunity for participation in State, National level and International training and involve in different research projects. They are involved as resource persons to impart training to MO’s, paramedical staffs, NGOs staff and Peer Educators.
- Hands on training is given to Post Graduates by involving them in HIV Sentinel Surveillance, DIC projects, TI and Link Worker scheme evaluation.
- Project has motivated FSWs to establish community base organization (CBOs), Sahyog for Red light area and Ekta for Non red light area. Many a time resident doctors visit CBOs to provide technical inputs.
- PSM Department is mentor for these CBOs and providing technical services. Department supports conduction of elections in these CBOs in a democratic way. One of the resident doctors has worked as election officer.
- Faculties & resident doctors are actively participating in various events celebration along with CBOs and PARAS like Rakshabandhan, Navratri, Eid etc.
- Department has taken lead for educational rehabilitation for children of

sex workers by admitting them to various schools and hostels. Resident doctors are providing their services to conduct health check-ups & celebrated bal-mela at juvenile home for girls & boys.

- The Project has developed self help groups and motivated them for vocational training. Intern Doctors and UG students get exposure with HRGs.

- Resident doctors are exposed with various facilities like ART Centre, ICTC/PPTCT/ STI clinic/ OST Centre and blood banks. Faculties have facilitated Red Ribbon Club in which PG/UG and intern doctors are involved.

- On the observation of World AIDS Day PG/UG and intern doctors have participate in quiz competition, poster making, debate competition and involvement in project activity like candle lighting and being a judge at various events carried out by the project or other CBOs of Surat.

- The Department has also hosted deliberation on MSM (IPC-III 377) and IDU issues by inviting various TI partners.

- Lawyers collective (group of Lawyers) have conducted workshops on the issues of Immoral Traffic Act, Women rights and Human rights. Crisis management training received by resident doctors help in training of peer educators and KPs.

- Resident doctors get opportunity to observe monthly/quarterly review meetings of TI/ICTC/STI Clinic.

- Students from Master of Social Works & various specialties different universities are posted for field level exposure within the project.

- Community Engagement: FSWs are visiting PSM Department to attend various trainings & meetings, so under graduate students also get opportunity to observe various activities of FSWs at department. FSWs are motivated to avail services of ICTC/ART clinic, STI Clinic as mainstreaming strategies. They share their experiences during PG session & academic activities in the department.

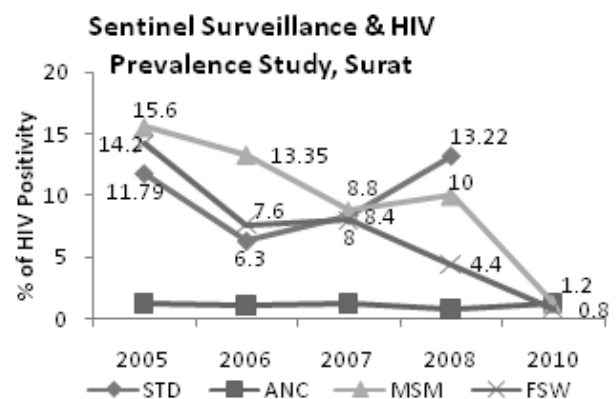
Category wise distribution of beneficiaries (FSWs) of PARAS Project

Category	Risk	Vulnerability	Other	Total
Home Based	760	481	601	1842
Street Based	629	426	241	1296
Total	1389	907	842	3138

Total key Population receiving services (March 2011 to April 2012)

- Ever Contacted : 3138
- Regular contact : 3054
- Total Condom Distribution : 985062
- STI Treated : 401
- No. of Counseling Sessions : 13143
- No. of HIV Positive detected : 3
- No. on ART since 2005 : 11

The graph suggests the reduction in HIV prevalence among FSWs since 2005



*STD not done in 2010

Conclusion:

Thus, as an initiative on one side, project is benefited by support from large team of a technically qualified person of the Department. On the other side the Department of PSM, GMC, Surat, has also reaped the benefits, as faculties & resident doctors are getting hands on experience in basic epidemiological understanding & applied epidemiology i.e. prevention & control measures in HIV/AIDS. Also, it has led to a number of the good quality field oriented realistic research in the HIV/AIDS.