

# SOAR SPOTLIGHT

## ASIA

### Ondede - India



Ondede distributes information on the importance of vaccination among vulnerable communities.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought new challenges to vulnerable populations in India, including sex workers, trans people and trans youth. Ondede used SOAR funding to hold a free vaccination campaign for members of vulnerable groups alongside educational initiatives to teach the importance of vaccination against Covid-19. Ondede provided vulnerable communities access to psychosocial services in coordination with a variety of hospitals and healthcare officials, raising awareness about the importance of mental health and gender-inclusive curriculum under mental health policy. The organization met with public and private hospitals to discuss the importance of gender-affirming surgery and facilitated the launch of a committee across multiple hospitals to create guidelines for medical care for trans people. Ondede engaged in advocacy work for the implementation of a 2021 order of the Karnataka High Court for welfare measures supporting trans people. Ondede researched the impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable communities and met with government officials to discuss community struggles and the inclusion of sexual minorities under its state education policy. The organization also organized a civil society gathering to discuss the challenges of vulnerable communities during the pandemic.



Ondede staff meeting in Bombay with his Excellency the Governor of Maharashtra and the Minister of Education.

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## Bandhu Welfare Society - Bangladesh

Online presence and social media usage in Bangladesh increased dramatically with the outbreak of Covid-19. Gender-diverse populations who use online spaces to express themselves and conduct advocacy and awareness campaigns were met with opposing forces, including religious extremists, who have targeted them with abuse, hate speech, threats, and violence, jeopardizing their mental health and overall well-being. As reliance on digital spaces increased with the Covid-19 pandemic, rising hostility brought new safety and security threats to gender-diverse populations. Bandhu Welfare Society received SOAR funding to develop a common safety mechanism for grassroots level frontline gender rights activists and gender-diverse populations. After conducting a risk assessment to analyze the situation of LGBTQI+ populations, the organization found that the majority of LGBTQI+ people in Bangladesh use social media, with 93% of respondents having experienced online violence.

The organization used SOAR support to raise awareness of different risks and vulnerabilities regarding well-being while using digital platforms. Bandhu Welfare Society created a module on combating digital violence to assist in capacity-building for grassroots community advocates alongside an animated video on gender diversity and digital well-being to circulate in trainings and on social media.

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## Best Practices Foundation - India



The Covid-19 pandemic and consequent lockdowns in India disproportionately impacted vulnerable groups, including sex workers and gender and sexual minorities, particularly in rural areas. Vulnerable populations faced increased incidents of homelessness, shrinking livelihood options, difficulty accessing gender-affirmative care, and higher amounts of stigma and discrimination. The Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that work within vulnerable communities at the grassroots level were severely compromised by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Best Practices Foundation used SOAR funding to develop a training manual on human rights focusing on domestic violence, abuse, criminal procedures, and fundamental rights in the Indian Constitution. The Foundation strengthened their crisis intervention documentation format and translated the resource to strengthen the visibility of violence. The Foundation also held legal trainings in three states of

South India to discuss the training manual and crisis documentation format. The Foundation's efforts increased understanding of human rights and the importance of evidence gathering of human rights violations among vulnerable populations and built networks with key stakeholders such as lawyers, healthcare providers, and government officials.