

## India Takes Center Stage: Youth Influencer Forum in Bangkok



Siddhant, Former Project Manager of QueerBazaar, represented India with pride at the Youth Influencer Forum in Bangkok. He showcased our innovative approach to providing self-test kits through social media outreach, sparking meaningful conversations about accessibility and awareness. Read more about his impactful presentation and the forum's significance for the LGBTQ+ community in India.

Siddhant's presentation not only highlighted the effectiveness of our methods but also emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing the healthcare needs of marginalized communities.

The Youth Influencer Forum served as a platform for exchanging ideas and forging connections, paving the way for continued progress and empowerment within the LGBTQ+ community."





## Sasoon Hospital Unveils Transgender Ward



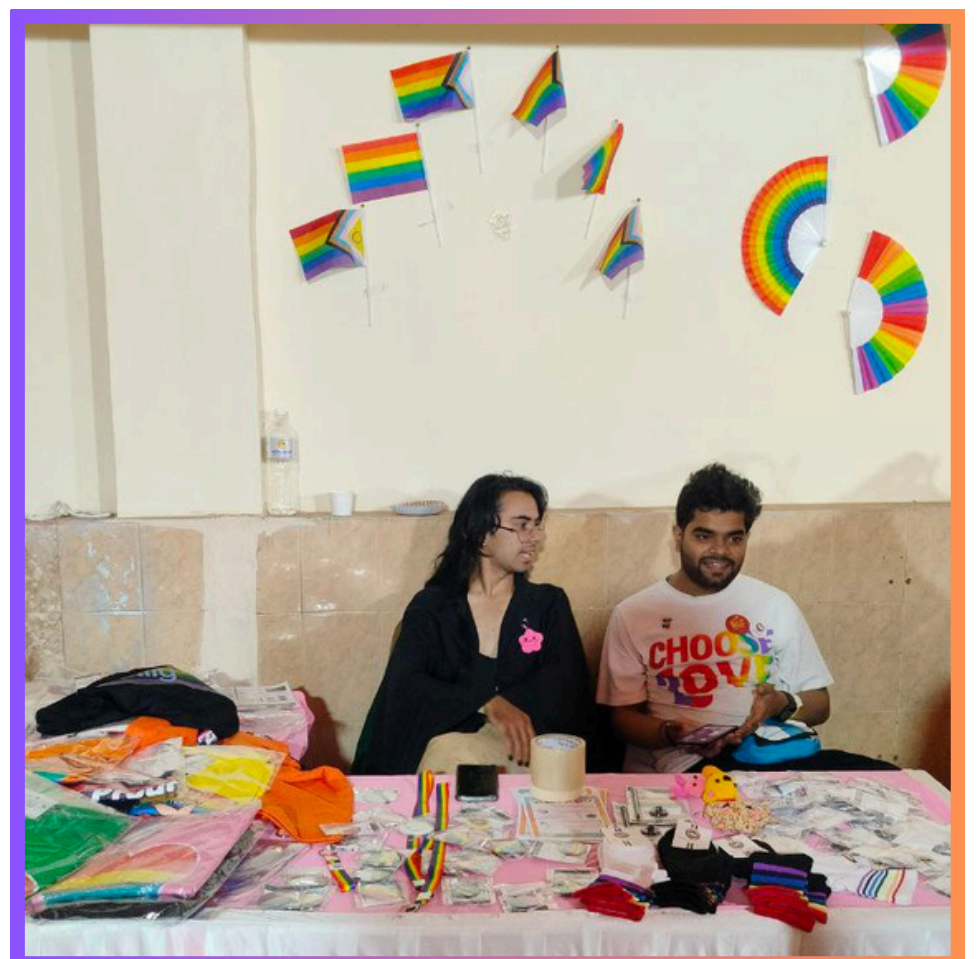
A landmark moment! Mist Foundation representatives were honored to attend the inauguration of Sasoon Hospital's Transgender Ward, a crucial step towards equitable healthcare access.

We commend their commitment to inclusivity and celebrate this milestone for the community.

## Gulabi Mela 2024

QueerBazaar made a vibrant presence at the Gulabi Mela in Mumbai on January 28th, engaging with the local community and receiving enthusiastic feedback on our stall's offerings.

Our participation fostered meaningful connections and furthered our mission of inclusivity and support within the vibrant LGBTQ+ community of Mumbai.





# HIGHLIGHT OF THE YEAR

January 2024 – December 2024

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## Breaking Barriers: **Mr. Gay World India 2024** Promotes Inclusivity and Advocacy

The Mr. Gay World India 2024 event was held from April 10-13, 2024, at The LaLit Ashok, Bangalore, organized by the Mist LGBTQ Foundation. The pageant aimed to empower and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community, promoting inclusivity and advocacy. Nine finalists from eight states competed, showcasing their inner strength and commitment to driving positive change. The event featured a diverse panel of judges and chief guests, including fashion choreographer Karun Raman and LGBTQ+ rights activist Vishal Pinjani. The pageant's mission is to break down barriers and promote a more inclusive world.



## Inner Strength, Outer Beauty: **Firdaus** **Crowned Mr. Gay World India 2024**

Firdaus was crowned Mr. Gay World India 2024, with Dr. Nishant Ranjan and Bhavin Gala as first and second runners-up, respectively. Firdaus emphasized the importance of his journey in advocating for the LGBTQ+ community, particularly mental health awareness. Sriram Sridhar, Director Asia of Mr. Gay World, stated, "Beauty pageants are not just about external beauty, but also inner beauty and promoting social change."

He envisioned a future where such events contribute to building a safe and inclusive society. The winners will go on to represent India at the Mr. Gay World pageant in Great Britain from August 21-27, 2024.



## UNDP India Launches Initiative to Empower LGBTQIA+ Community

In a significant step towards promoting inclusivity and social justice, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in India has launched a comprehensive initiative to support the LGBTQIA+ community.

The program aims to promote awareness, empowerment, and improved health services for LGBTQIA+ individuals, while also strengthening laws and policies to address inequalities and promote human rights.

According to David Bridger, Country Director, "Protecting the rights of all individuals is crucial to ensuring overall health and well-being."

The initiative is aligned with the UN's 2030 Agenda, which emphasizes leaving no one behind.



This year, Mist LGBTQ Foundation through the UNDP funded Scale Initiative project organized four events in India, where the Mist team actively participated in discussions and programs, furthering the cause.

The collaborative efforts aim to create a more inclusive society, where LGBTQIA+ individuals can thrive without fear of discrimination. By working together, UNDP and organizations like Mist LGBTQ Foundation are paving the way for a brighter, more accepting future for the LGBTQIA+ community in India.





## Spreading Love and Acceptance on IDAHOBIT

On May 17th, 2024, the Mist LGBTQ Foundation and Qutcast Pune joined forces to celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) in a unique and touching way. IDAHOBIT, observed annually on May 17th, aims to raise awareness about the discrimination and violence faced by the LGBTQIA+ community and promote acceptance and inclusivity.



In Pune's FC Road, the team distributed free hugs and asked for hugs using playful cards, breaking down barriers and fostering connections.

This heartfelt initiative encouraged people to embrace diversity and show affection, helping to create a more inclusive environment. By sharing hugs, they shared love, acceptance, and support, making a powerful statement against discrimination.

## Mist LGBTQ Foundation and Qutcast Pune's Heartwarming Initiative

The event was a testament to the power of community and the importance of human connection in promoting equality and acceptance. Mist LGBTQ Foundation and Qutcast Pune's efforts on IDAHOBIT inspired a sense of belonging and celebrated the beauty of diversity.



## Out & Loud PIQFF 2024: A Resounding Celebration of LGBTQ+ Cinema and Community

The 8th edition of the Out & Loud Pune International Queer Film Festival (PIQFF) concluded on a high note, showcasing 43 exceptional films from around the world and fostering a sense of community and inclusivity.

The festival, organized by Mist LGBTQ Foundation, honored outstanding individuals and organizations for their contributions to the LGBTQ+ community, including Maya Awasthy, Sumeksha Bhat, Ali Khan, Amrita Prasad, and IBM India Pvt Ltd.

The festival's film competitions saw "Hues & Blues" win Best Indian Documentary, while "Beyond Norms" and "Everything of Value" clinched top spots in the international documentary and feature film categories, respectively. Indian films "Love +" and "Valentine @ 3" also emerged victorious in the short film and feature film categories.

Out & Loud PIQFF 2024 was more than just a film festival – it was a celebration of diversity, acceptance, and resilience. With its impactful discussions, inspiring award winners, and showcase of exceptional cinema, the festival solidified its position as a beacon of hope and inclusivity for the LGBTQ+ community.



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8<sup>th</sup> PUNE  
INTERNATIONAL QUEER  
FILM FESTIVAL

Out & Loud



## Pune Pride Parade: A Vibrant Rally for LGBTQ+ Rights and Inclusivity

On June 9, 2024, the streets of Pune transformed into a kaleidoscope of colors as nearly 1,500 individuals from the LGBTQ+ community and their allies gathered for the Pune Pride March. Organized by Mist LGBTQ Foundation, Qutcast, and NHRD, the event aimed to promote inclusivity and highlight the ongoing fight for LGBTQ+ rights in India.

Participants waved banners, chanted slogans, and celebrated the community's achievements, creating a sea of rainbows and pride flags along JM Road.



The march emphasized key demands, including anti-discrimination laws, marriage equality, gender recognition, and a ban on conversion therapy. Organizers also called for inclusive healthcare, HIV/AIDS support, and anti-bullying policies.

The event was a testament to the community's resilience and determination to achieve equal rights and acceptance. As one participant noted, "These walks are important for visibility, as not everyone can live their truth." The Pune Pride Parade marked a significant step towards increased acceptance and inclusivity, paving the way for a more liberated future.



# Mist LGBTQI+ Foundation's Innovative Approach Recognized by **USAID Global Health**

The Mist LGBTQI+ Foundation's groundbreaking work in using technology and social media to reach and support LGBTQ+ individuals in India was recently recognized by USAID Global Health.

At the 25th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2024), Co-Founder and CEO Shyam Konnur shared how the organization leverages digital platforms to deliver HIV services tailored to the needs of the community.

USAID Global Health highlighted Mist LGBTQI+ Foundation's innovative approach, quoting Konnur's statement, "We use the power of technology to reach our people... We use social media to reach our people."



**USAID Global Health @USAIDGH · 2h**  
 In order to deliver HIV services built around people's needs, we must first understand how to reach the people who need the services most. Mist LGBTQ Foundation Co-Founder, Shyam Konnur, shares how @MistLGBT works to #PutPeopleFirst in India. #AIDS2024

"We use the power of technology to reach our people. We use social media to reach our people. We use our skills to create a platform which would not take much money, but we can reach people."

– Shyam Konnur, Co-Founder and CEO, MIST LGBTQ Foundation

#PutPEOPLEFirst

The organization's commitment to #PutPeopleFirst in the fight against HIV/AIDS was applauded, and their efforts to create a cost-effective platform to reach marginalized communities were acknowledged.

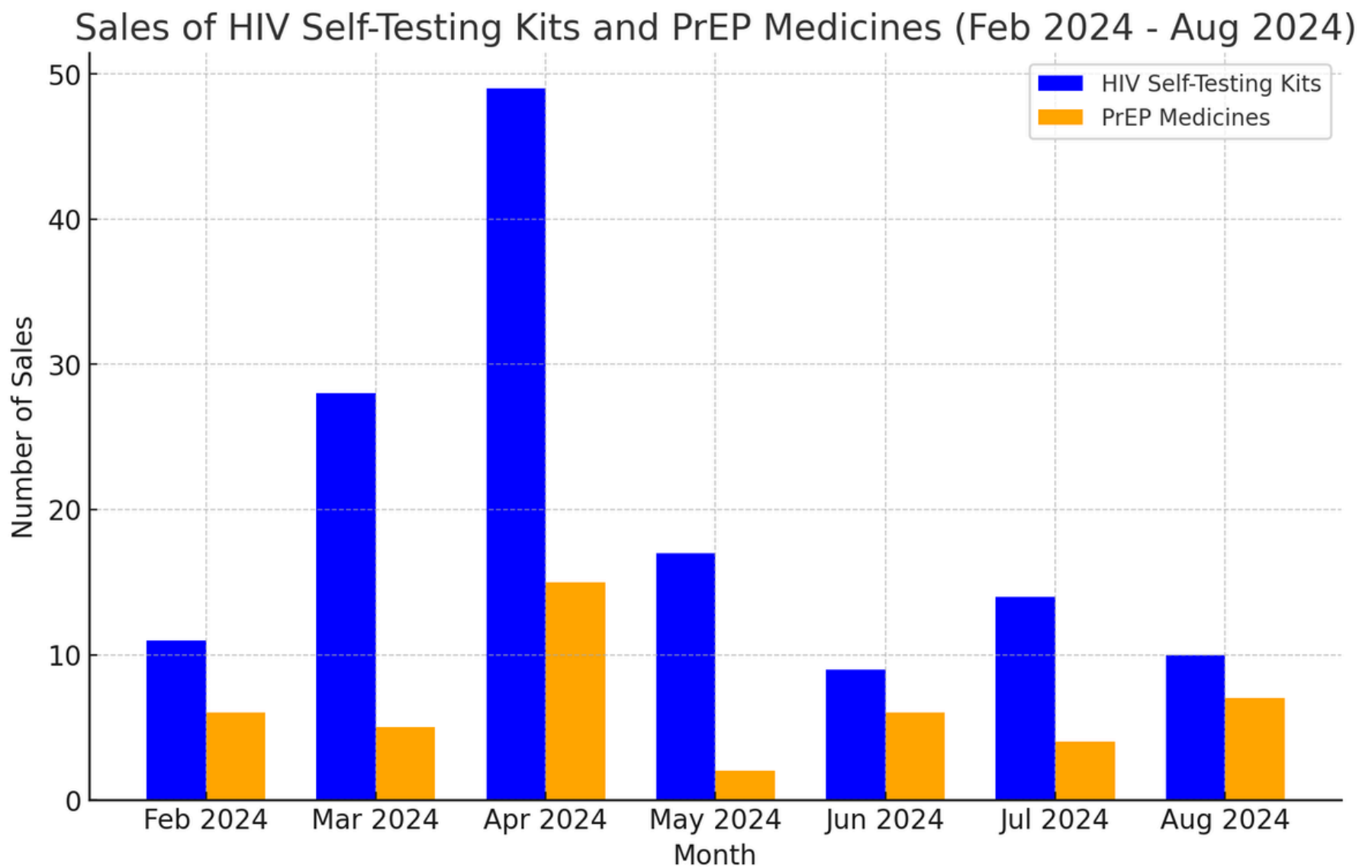
Konnur expressed his gratitude, saying, "I'm thrilled to share that our work... has been recognized by USAID Global Health!"

The recognition has inspired the organization to continue pushing boundaries and exploring new ways to support the LGBTQ+ community in India.





## Mist LGBTQ Foundation Sees Steady Uptake of HIV Prevention Measures



Mist LGBTQ Foundation's efforts to promote HIV awareness and prevention have yielded promising results. Between February and August 2024, the organization sold a total of 138 HIV self-testing kits and 45 PrEP medicines.

While sales fluctuated month-to-month, the overall trend indicates a growing interest in HIV prevention measures. The foundation's initiatives aim to reduce exposure to HIV/AIDS, and these numbers suggest a positive impact. By providing accessible resources and education, Mist LGBTQ Foundation is helping individuals take control of their health and make informed decisions about their well-being.





## US Consulate Engages with Mist LGBTQ Foundation to Support Community Efforts

Mist LGBTQ Foundation, represented by Suraj Raut, HR and Finance Manager, and Aakruti Patel, Outreach and Advocacy Manager, met with Priyanka Chaturvedi, Digital Strategy Director for the US Consulate, to discuss our operations, mission, and current challenges.

The foundation aims to bring queer and ally communities together through various events and initiatives, including HIV awareness, testing, and prevention. We also operate QueerBazaar, a merchandise and clothing store, and Stories Cafe, a safe space for the LGBTQ community.

During the meeting, Team Mist highlighted the challenges faced by the community, including inadequate medical facilities for trans individuals in government hospitals,



leading to exploitation by private hospitals. Other issues include limited employment opportunities, ragging, and accommodation and housing problems. Priyanka Chaturvedi engaged with the team to understand the foundation's efforts and the community's struggles, demonstrating the US Consulate's commitment to supporting LGBTQ initiatives. The meeting fostered a collaborative environment, paving the way for potential future partnerships and support.





## Historic LGBTQI+ Health Conference Advances Inclusive Healthcare in Asia-Pacific



The recent LGBTQI+ Health Conference, held at PGIMER in Chandigarh from September 26th to 28th, 2024, marked a significant milestone in promoting healthcare for LGBTQI+ individuals across the Asia-Pacific region. Organized by PGIMER in collaboration with Humsafar Trust, C-SHaRP, PEPFAR, USAID, UNAIDS, and UNDP, the conference brought together over 200 in-person attendees, including 50 from Asia-Pacific nations, and 500 virtual participants.

Experts addressed critical health issues, including HIV prevention, mental health, and gender-affirmative care. Radhika Chakravarthy presented the Ayushman Bharat TG Plus card, providing yearly health coverage for transgender individuals. Other notable speakers included Dr. Niraj Kumar, Mr. Nicky Suwandini, and UNAIDS Director Eamonn Murphy.



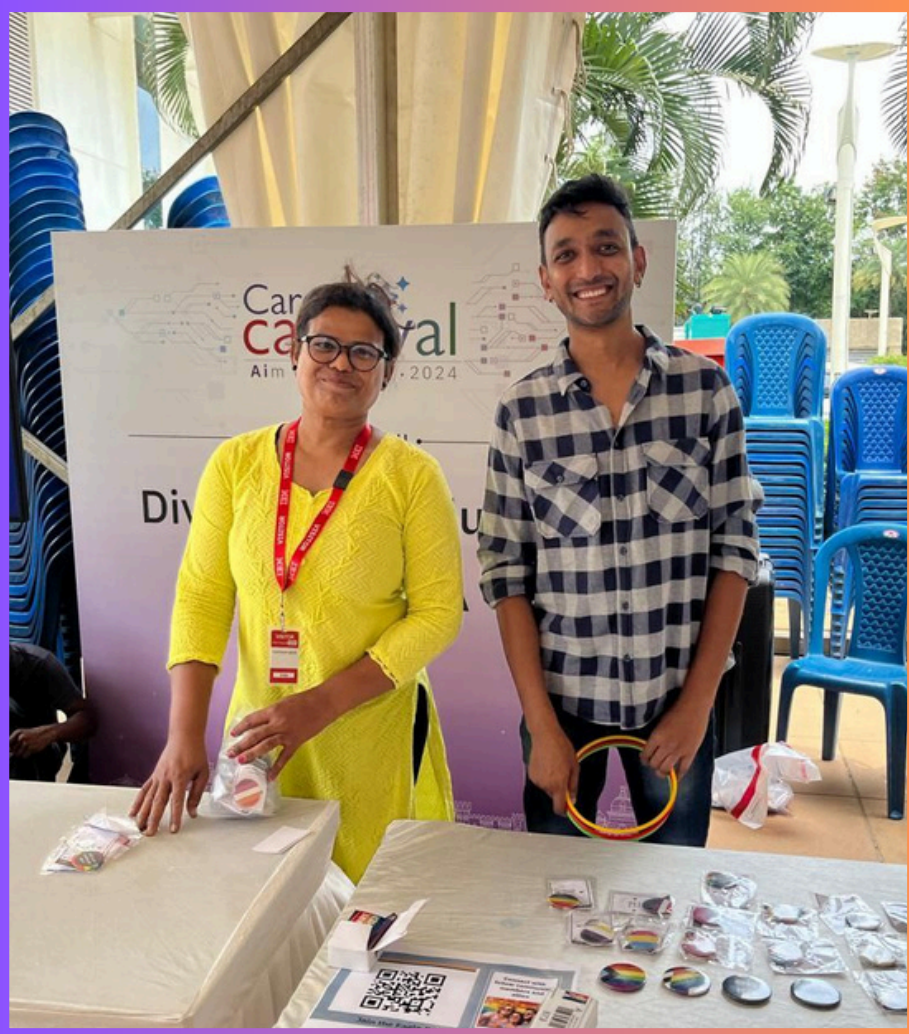


## Mist LGBTQ Foundation Extends Heartfelt Gratitude to IBM for Platform Support and Inclusivity Leadership

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to IBM for providing us with your platform. Preeti Jain and team, your support has been instrumental in facilitating our endeavours, and we are truly grateful for your contribution.

We are particularly impressed by IBM's commitment to inclusivity, exemplified by the thoughtful integration of LGBTQ+ inclusivity initiatives into your career fairs and workplace culture.

By making inclusion an integral part of everyday work, IBM sets a shining example for fostering diversity, equity, and belonging.





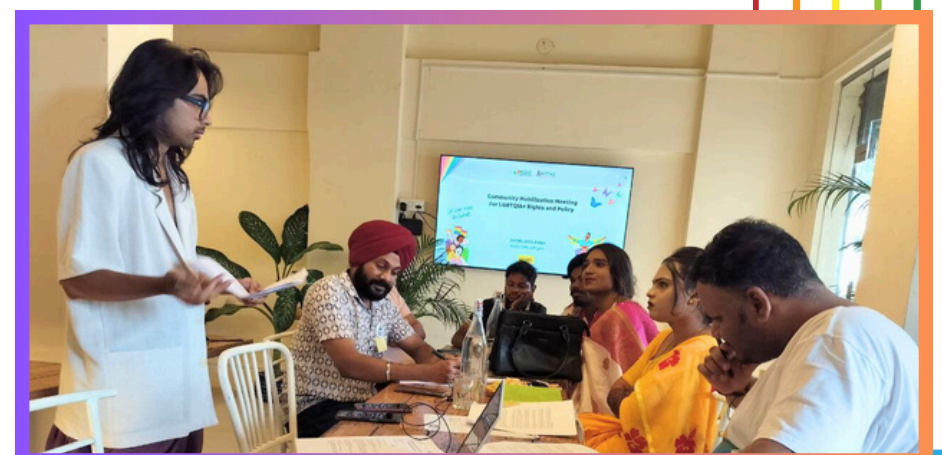
## City-Level Consultation on LGBTQIA+ Rights and Policy Held in Stories Cafe

On October 15, 2024, Mist LGBTQ Foundation hosted a city-level consultation on LGBTQIA+ rights and policy at Stories Café in Lohegaon, Pune. The event brought together individuals from the gender and sexually diverse community, advocates, and organizations to discuss current challenges, concerns, and suggestions for policy development.

Facilitated by Susmit Bansode and Tejas Kshatriya, the consultation highlighted key issues in healthcare, law enforcement, and government policies. Participants shared personal experiences of discrimination and proposed solutions, including awareness consultations, anti-discriminatory laws, and inclusive education.

Key takeaways from the discussion included:

- Hospital visitation rights for non-heteronormative partners and chosen family members
- Custody rights for queer individuals
- Sensitization of law enforcers, healthcare providers, and education providers
- Affordable healthcare and guidelines for gender-affirmative care







- Horizontal reservation in government and private workplaces
- Anti-discriminatory laws and enforcement

The consultation concluded with a call to action, urging participants to submit additional concerns and suggestions for policy reform.

Mist LGBTQ Foundation aims to compile these recommendations and submit them to the government, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable society.

This consultation marked a crucial step towards amplifying LGBTQIA+ voices and promoting policy change in Pune.





## Mist LGBTQ Foundation Spreads Diwali Cheer Among Transgender Community

This Diwali, Team Mist LGBTQ Foundation brought joy and warmth to the transgender community at Kinnar Ashmita Foundation's Transgender Garima Grah Kalyan Maharashtra. Alongside transwomen and transmen, they celebrated with gift-sharing, Diwali shagun, and heartfelt connections. The day was filled with laughter and togetherness through games like musical chairs and housie, and a creative diya-painting session. Dilbara Didi's delicious lunch added to the festive spirit.

For many transgender individuals, Diwali can be a difficult time, spent away from family and society. Seeing the happiness on everyone's faces made this Diwali unforgettable. Mist LGBTQ Foundation extends gratitude to ZS Associates for their financial support in making this corporate event possible. This initiative reaffirms Mist's commitment to inclusivity and community building.





## UNDP-Supported Policy Brief Launched by Mist LGBTQ Foundation to Advance LGBTQ+ Legal Equality

New Delhi, India – On November 27, 2024, Mist LGBTQ Foundation, in collaboration with the UNDP Scale Initiative and ZS Associates, launched a comprehensive policy brief titled "Uniting Diversity – Shaping the Future of Legal Equality for LGBTQ+ in India."

This landmark document is the culmination of an extensive eight-month research process, involving regional consultations with over 100 community leaders and a nationwide survey of more than 250 individuals.



The launch event, held at Opal Hall, The Connaught, New Delhi, was graced by the presence of Ms. Radhika Chakravarthy, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

The policy brief offers actionable recommendations to policymakers, legal professionals, and civil society organizations to create a more inclusive and equitable legal framework for the LGBTQ+ community. This significant milestone marks a major step forward in the ongoing struggle for LGBTQ+ rights in India.





## Pune Community Unites for **Transgender Day of Remembrance**



Pune, India – On November 22, 2024, Mist LGBTQ Foundation, in collaboration with community partners Qutcast, Shikhandi, Muktaa Foundation, CYDA, and Girl Up Jeevika, organized a candlelight vigil to commemorate Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) at Sambhaji Garden, Deccan, Pune.

The event honored the memory of transgender individuals who have lost their lives to anti-transgender violence.



Shyam Konnur, Founder and CEO of Mist LGBTQ Foundation, emphasized the importance of community solidarity and commitment to a future free from violence and discrimination.

The vigil saw attendees from all walks of life come together to light candles as a symbol of hope, resilience, and unity in the fight for equality and justice.

The event served as a poignant reminder of the ongoing struggles faced by the transgender community.



## World AIDS Day Marked with Drag Bollywood Night

Pune, India – On December 1, 2024, Mist LGBTQ Foundation organized a unique event, "Drag Bollywood Night," to commemorate World AIDS Day. The event, held at C-Dock Restaurant and Lounge, aimed to promote HIV awareness, testing, and prevention among the young LGBTQ+ community.

The event featured performances by renowned drag artists, including Legendary Karma, Morgana Silom, Lady Bai, and Beyonce The Drag Queen. The artists not only entertained the crowd but also emphasized the importance of HIV prevention, timely testing, and living positively. Their powerful messages resonated with the audience, creating a safe space for dialogue and education.

The event saw a significant turnout, with approximately 170 attendees. Thirteen individuals utilized the free HIV testing services provided at the venue, while 70 others availed of the service through the event's promotional efforts. Six attendees expressed interest in enrolling for PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis), highlighting the growing awareness and demand for HIV prevention strategies.

The event was sponsored by PEPFAR, USAID, and EpiC, with Grindr serving as the media partner and Project Accelerate as the testing partner.

[www.lgbtq.co.in](http://www.lgbtq.co.in)

The success of the event demonstrated the potential of creative outreach initiatives to drive public health outcomes. By combining entertainment with education, the event not only educated but also empowered key young populations to take charge of their health.

The event's impact was evident in the feedback received from attendees. Many expressed appreciation for the seamless integration of entertainment and health education, while others highlighted the empowering messages conveyed by the drag performers.

The event's success has set a benchmark for innovative HIV awareness campaigns in India.

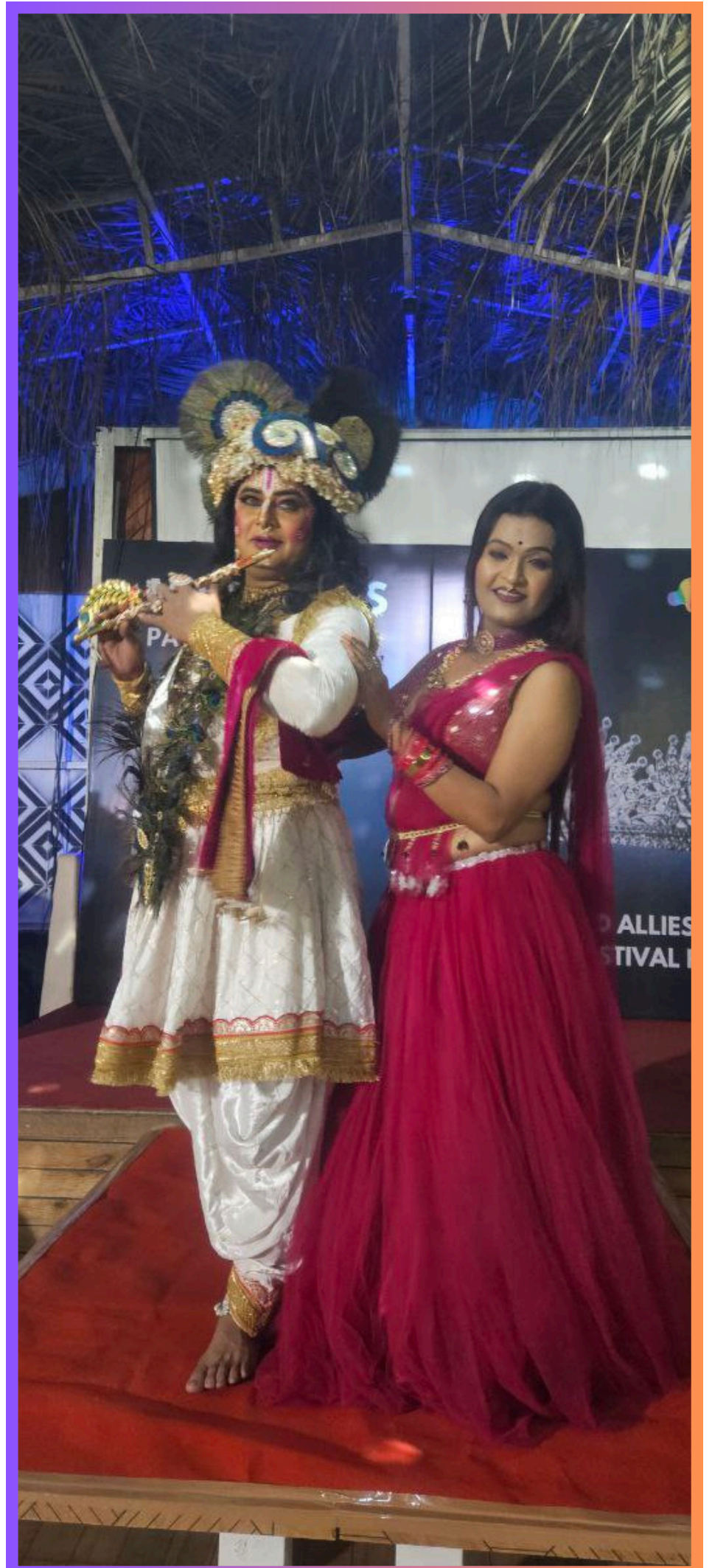




## Queer and Allies Art Festival Pune Celebrates Diversity and Inclusivity

Pune, India - On December 22, 2024, the Queer and Allies Art Festival Pune (QAAF Pune) brought together members of the LGBTQ community and their allies for a day of love, acceptance, and celebration. The event, organized by Mist LGBTQ Foundation, and supported by the transcend project of The Humsafar Trust, was held at Bottle Forest, Koregaon Park Annexe. The festival featured a flea market with LGBTQ entrepreneurs, film screenings, live performances, and a pageant.

The QAAF Pune was a resounding success, with attendees praising the organizers for creating a welcoming and celebratory atmosphere. The event provided a platform for the LGBTQ community to express themselves and connect with others. Mist LGBTQ Foundation's efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity in Pune were evident throughout the event.





## Mist Trans Pageant 2024 Celebrates Trans Representation and Inclusion



Pune, India – On December 22, 2024, Mist LGBTQ Foundation presented the Mist Trans Pageant 2024, a flagship event of the Queer and Allies Art Festival Pune. The pageant aimed to promote trans representation, inclusivity, and awareness, providing a safe and empowering platform for the trans community. The event featured multiple rounds, including a talent round, Q&A round, and different outfits rounds. The pageant showcased the diverse skills and talents of trans participants, challenging stereotypes and promoting inclusivity.



## Queerbazaar Shines at World AIDS Day Event

Queerbazaar, an initiative of Mist LGBTQ Foundation, showcased its vibrant pride merchandise at the World AIDS Day program in Indore, hosted by NACO. The event was attended by esteemed guests, including Ms. V Hekali Zhimomi, Additional Secretary & Director General of NACO, and Shri J.P. Nadda, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare.

Their encouraging words inspired Queerbazaar to continue making a difference in the HIV and health space. The event marked a significant milestone for Queerbazaar, and the organization expressed gratitude to PEPFAR, USAID, EpiC, and FHI360 for their support.

