

Saksham Regional Institute for Capacity Building and Evaluation

Six Monthly Progress Report – March to September 2025

Project Brief:

India remains committed to ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the National Strategic Plan (NSP) vision of achieving “Three Zeros” — zero new HIV infections, zero AIDS-related deaths, and zero discrimination.

The ***Saksham Pramaan*** project, implemented by the **Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)** under the Global Fund Grant (2021–2024, extended to 2025–2027), supported by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** and the **National AIDS Control Organization (NACO)** in strengthening India’s HIV/AIDS response. As the Principal Recipient, NACO partners with TISS as the Sub-Recipient to conduct external evaluations of Targeted Interventions (TI) and the Link Worker Scheme (LWS) under the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP). The project aims to evaluate and enhance the effectiveness of HIV prevention and control initiatives nationwide. TISS collaborates with six academic institutions as Sub-Sub Recipients (SSRs), each functioning as a Regional Institute of Capacity Building and Evaluation (RICE) to manage evaluations across six zones: Central, East, North, North-East, South, and West.

The College of Social Work (Autonomous), Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai, serves as the Regional Institute of Capacity Building and Evaluation (RICE) for the West Zone, leading evaluations across Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and the Mumbai District. The team focuses on conducting independent evaluations, building evaluator capacity, coordinating with SACS and NACO, and ensuring adherence to quality standards. ***Throughout the grant period (March 2025–March 2027), SSRs are also responsible for managing evaluator payments.*** Funds are routed through TISS (SR), and SSRs submit state- and region-specific evaluation plans and continue to strengthen evaluator capacities, enhance monitoring systems, and contribute toward achieving the NSP goals of reducing new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths.

Project Staff-

- **Principal Investigator** - Dr. Lidwin Dias.
- **Co-Principal Investigator**- Dr. Ronald Yesudas
- **Faculty In-Charge (Program)** – Mr. Anshit Baxi
- **Regional Coordinators**- 1) Ms. Kalpana Gaikwad, 2) Nischita Bhagtani,
- **Finance and Administration Officer** - Ms. Sushma Pagare (March 2025- July 2025), Supriya Ahire (September 2025 onwards)

The project collaborated closely with NACO, TISS, and SACS/DACS offices in various states for multiple activities. These included the empanelment and training of evaluators, scheduling of evaluations, and conducting briefing and debriefing meetings in coordination with SACS. Additionally, the project team undertook monitoring and supervision visits during the evaluation phases and made regular visits to all concerned stakeholders to ensure effective coordination and quality assurance.

The initiation of the project experienced a delay due to administrative decisions by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and NACO. Originally scheduled to begin in March 2024, the project commencement was postponed to February 2025 and officially launched in March 2025. During this period, all Targeted Intervention and Link Worker Scheme evaluations across the country remained pending.

- Upon commencement in March 2025, the project team actively participated in the National Level Training organized by NACO and TISS. During this training, NACO and TISS informed all RICE teams to finalize the pending evaluations by the end of July 2025, marking a clear directive to expedite the evaluation process and achieve set deliverables within the stipulated timeline.
- Following the National Level Training, the project team initiated the empanelment process by advertising and circulating the Expression of Interest (EOI) Google Form to previously engaged evaluators. The call received approximately 300 responses, of which around 200 were from old and experienced consultants and about 100 were from new consultants expressing their interest in participating in evaluation activities across the West Zone.
- A key task during this phase involved updating and verifying the list of empaneled evaluators in coordination with TISS. Each evaluator's profile was carefully cross-checked to ensure accuracy and completeness of information before finalizing the updated list for operational use.
- Simultaneously, the project team organized and conducted a series of introductory virtual and in-person meetings with SACS and DACS officers, with facilitation and support from TISS. These meetings aimed to strengthen coordination, clarify roles and responsibilities, and ensure effective implementation of evaluation activities at both state and district levels.
- The details of the meeting are as follows:

Date	State AIDS Control Society.	Mode of Meeting
11/04/2025	Goa State AIDS Control Society (GSACS)	Virtual Meeting
15/04/2025	Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society (KSAPS)	Virtual meeting
21/04/2025	Maharashtra State AIDS Control Society (MSACS)	In-Person Meeting (at MSACS Office, Wadala)
30/04/2025	Maharashtra State AIDS Control Society (MSACS)	In-person (at MSACS Office, Wadala)
8/ 05/2025	Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society (KSAPS)	Virtual meeting
20/08/2025	Mumbai District AIDS Control Society (MDACS)	In-person (at MDACS Office, Wadala)

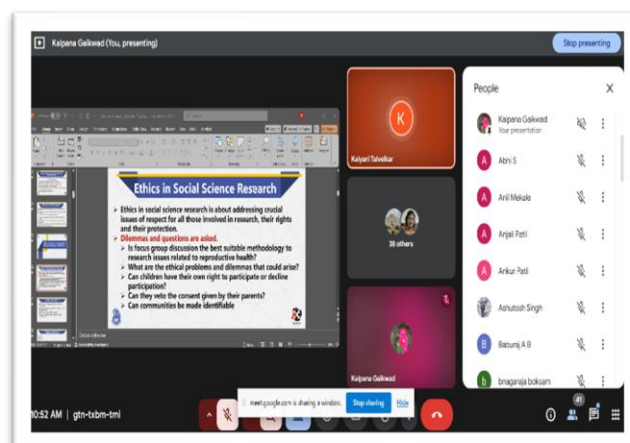
- After the series of planning meetings with all SACS, the project team received comprehensive strategic information from each SACS regarding the details of Targeted Interventions and Link Worker Schemes. Based on the information provided, the team prepared a detailed evaluation calendar, initiated contact with the identified evaluators, and shared the Terms of Reference (TOR) for empanelment. In alignment with the finalized plan, evaluations were scheduled for two states, Maharashtra and Karnataka, marking the beginning of the structured assessment process, with the evaluation expected to be completed by the end of July.
- Under the *Saksham Pramaan* Project for the 2025–2027 cycle, all project-related expenditures and payment transactions have been managed and disbursed through the Public Finance Management System (PFMS) under the Treasury Service Account. This system ensured transparency, accountability, and compliance with government financial protocols.
- At the commencement of the project, the team encountered several operational challenges. There were delays in salary disbursements, and due to logistical and budgetary constraints, most meetings and training sessions were conducted virtually. Despite these limitations, the team maintained project momentum and ensured the continuity of planned activities.
- Furthermore, even amidst financial challenges, the Regional Coordinators successfully conducted five monitoring visits in Maharashtra and seven in Karnataka during the evaluation period, demonstrating a strong commitment to project objectives and field-level implementation.
- During July and August 2025, the project team was primarily engaged in post-evaluation activities. These included conducting debriefing meetings for the completed evaluations, reviewing and quality-checking evaluation reports, and completing data entry for the evaluation tracker and indicator-wise data entries.
- Post evaluation, the team is primarily engaged in completing financial activities, following up with evaluators for the timely submission of reimbursement documents, and addressing financial queries from the funding agency. This includes discussing issues with evaluators and requesting them to submit appropriate bills and vouchers.
- NACO and the Public Health Foundation of India jointly organized a two-day orientation meeting on the PFMS (TSA Hybrid New Module) on 17th and 18th August in Udaipur. The team members attended the training program and gained comprehensive knowledge of the PFMS-TSA system.
- Simultaneously, the team coordinated with evaluators to ensure the timely submission of their reimbursement documents. The verification and scrutiny of each evaluator's vouchers and bills, along with organizing and submitting these documents to TISS, constituted a major administrative task during this period.

- The details of the program and activities are as follows:

Activities		Description	Number of Participants
Virtual Regional Training cum Briefing Meeting.	Maharashtra	10 th June 2025 (10.00 am to 6.00 pm	52
	Karnataka	30 th June- 9.30 am to 5.30 pm	55
Total of TI & LWS Evaluated- 119	Maharashtra	58 TI & LWS evaluation in 22 districts.	45 evaluators conducted the evaluation
	Karnataka	61 TI & LWS evaluation in 29 districts.	52 evaluators conducted the evaluation.
Debriefing Meeting	Maharashtra	24 th , 25 th & 30 th June 2025	MSACS, evaluators, TIs & RICE team
	Karnataka	14 th , 15 th 18 th & 19 th July 2025	KSAPS, evaluators, TIs & RICE team.
Total Expenditure (March – September 2025)	Salary & Administrative Costs, Administrative Costs, Institutional Costs, and Evaluator Payments		₹64,52,456



The team participated in the National Level Training of Trainers (TOT) program held in Delhi.



A Virtual Refresher Training was organized and conducted by the team before the evaluation.



Monitoring and Supervision visit to TI & LWS during the evaluation.



Monitoring and Supervision visit to TI & LWS during the evaluation.



Visit to the ART Center during evaluation



A virtual debriefing meeting with MSACS, evaluators, TI, and the RICE team after the evaluation.



A virtual debriefing meeting with KSAPS, evaluators, TI, and the RICE team after the evaluation



Participated in a two-day orientation meeting on PFMS, organized by NACO and the Public Health Foundation of India.