



## From the President's laptop

I am so thrilled and proud to share with you all that in this year of 2015 we have created a record - a record of 10 years of consistent service of SAMVAD HIV helpline, our flagship project- one of the largest and most reputed telephonic helpline in India . We started in 2005 and in these ten years Helpline has touched 250000 lives of HIV infected and affected persons directly and lakhs more indirectly. And it's still counting. There is 50% drop in newly HIV infections and HIV related deaths in India over last decade. And we are waiting for a day where there would be no need for Samvad HIV helpline at all.

While we were satisfied that we have contributed to the field of HIV and mentally prepared to get out of it for good at an appropriate moment, a new issue has started staring at us- the issue of addiction. We in India are facing an epidemic of drug addiction of a magnitude never imagined of. New dangerous drugs, new profiles of people consuming these cocktails of drugs, new frightening numbers of our children who is consuming these drugs at younger and younger age. We just cannot afford to be a passive witness to raging fire, doing nothing to try douse this fire. So here we are- with our new project started in May 2015- multi pronged strategy to prevent and manage addiction.

Training medical and paramedical workers in the field of Addiction medicine, prevention of drugs amongst school going adolescents, community based programs to create awareness about drugs and its available treatment, telephonic helpline for drugs prevention and support, developing IEC material in regional languages - we have many strategies in mind and we plan to implement these all step by step. Of all these, we have already started with training of doctors in addiction medicine and trained 400 doctors in 4 batches in Mumbai and Pune. We plan to train 1500 doctors in 2016-17.

Children and their future means a lot to all of us. We have started a new project- SHAALA-BEYOND BOOKS in year 2015-16 . We believe children can be taught about many important lessons of life during their period of schooling beyond the regular subjects. To facilitate this learning in various life skills, MCF has begun with this initiative- Shaala Beyond Books. In this project, we focus on analytical critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, interpersonal relationship management, etc are the key areas that once channelized will help these people deal with any situation of high risk behaviour. The modules are based on UNICEF & WHO modules on Life skills Education. We focus on children age 13-16yrs in various schools under project 'SHAALA- BEYOND BOOKS'. We have covered complete 4 hrs of discussions through 2-3 sessions with around 500 teenagers of various schools of Pune city and peripheral areas this year. We aspire to reach at least 5000 children in the 2016-17.

We pledge to devote coming next decade of our lives for the cause of drug addiction prevention and treatment!!!!!! And make our children better citizens. We are sure, like last 10 years, you will be with us for next 10 years!!!!!!

Yours addictively,

Dr. Madhu Nimesh Thakkar

## A Journey

It is said that, A journey of thousand miles starts with a small milestone . And our milestone was laid somewhere in March 2005, when we were hit by an idea to start a free, anonymous, one-to-one telephonic counseling, information and referral centre for HIV- an issue burdened with fear , misconceptions and stigma. And we wanted to make this project a volunteer based project- one that would be started and owned and funded by people like you and me who wanted get involved in the cause of HIV. We appealed for volunteers and support in all possible forums. Generous hearts from different walks of life- software engineers, homemakers, doctors, businessmen- so many awakened souls came forward to make our dream- their dream- to start first of its kind, dedicated helpline for HIV. Together we toiled day and night for 6 months to make this dream a reality. Everything that we needed to build this helpline- place, furniture, computers, customised software, IEC material etc, came from known and unknown sources, almost free of cost. We mustered a voluntary help worth lakhs of man- hours and rupees.

And at the dawn of On 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 2005, we inaugurated Muktaa HIV Helpline ( now called Samvad) the only helpline for HIV in the entire country.

At our helpline, we have only one tool at our disposal our voice, our faceless voice. And with this only tool, we are changing lives, we are saving lives. Because our voice is different from the voice of the rest of the society. Our voice is warm, accepting, unbiased, that does not judge or blame or criticize, that says to no one that you have been wrong or right. Our voice gives accurate scientific updated information. Our voice suggests a place to go where one can get medical, occupational, financial help. Our voice is a life-line for the one who is panicked, confused, alone, discriminated, stigmatised, no one to talk to- no one to share with. Our voice is our helpline - SAMVAD HIV Helpline.

All the counselors manning the helpline have to undergo rigorous training in HIV/AIDS and counseling skills for over 200 hours and be under constant monitoring for quality maintenance.

From day one we had held some principals of helpline very close to our heart: a compassionate, non- judgmental attitude, accuracy of information and highest ethical standards with respect to privacy and confidentiality. Even after 10 years we still stand firmly by these principals.

We started with one counselor handling 8 to 10 calls a day, today we have a team of 8 counselors answering 80 to 100 calls a day. Over years, helpline matured from being an information giving and referral service to being a life skill counseling telephonic service.

Started just for Pune city, today SAMVAD HIV Helpline has pan India reach with 2 call centers, one in Pune, Maharashtra and other in Patna, Bihar.

Started with landline service, with changing times we have adapted to include mobile based services. These include call free service, missed call service and SMS reminder service for treatment adherence and call back service for getting defaulting patients back to treatment centers.

Our each and every call is recorded for quality and evaluation

purpose and documented in our customised software for data analysis and evaluation.

Over years, we have added allied areas like STDs, sexuality, tuberculosis and Hepatitis to our helpline service.

Running a helpline for 10 complete years without any government or international funding or significant CSR support is a herculean task. And that too a helpline for HIV- a taboo subject about which people don't want to talk or listen, forget supporting it. But we have done it!!!! And we have done it because of our thousands of individual donors/ well wishers, who believed in us and the crucial work and kept financially supporting us year after year for ten long years. We have done it because of the thousands of dedicated volunteers who gave their ideas, time, heart, brains, wishes, blessings, motivation- all the ingredients one would need to run any project voluntarily, tirelessly for almost a decade.

In 2005, nearly 57 lakh people with living with HIV infection, which has dropped to 21 lakh in 2015. There is 50% drop in newly HIV infections and HIV related deaths in India over last decade. We are very confident that Samvad HIV Helpline must have played one of the crucial role to achieve this downward trend- by spreading prevention messages to almost 1.2 lakh people, referring 70 thousand people for HIV testing and referring 40 thousand to treatment centres for HIV care .

And we are waiting for a day where there would be no need for SAMVAD HIV helpline at all, when there will be no new HIV infections in India . We hope the day comes sooner than later. Till then we are committed to continue to run this lifeline, in spite of all the challenge of depleting funds and fading support in general for the cause of HIV.

#### SAMVAD HIV Helpline at A Glance

Calls accepted 9:30 am to 6:30 pm Monday to Saturday, except public holidays in Maharashtra and Bihar

8 phone lines on hunting with 8 full time, 2 part time counselors

Service in Marathi, Hindi, English

Total number of people calling the helpline from October 2005 March 2011: 2,60,000

Total number of people referred for HIV testing from over the phone risk assessment; 24365 (35%)

Total number of repeat calls: 11.14%

#### **Call trends:**

Marked increase ( 15%) in number of calls from highly vulnerable population like truckers, laborers, migrant class, etc			
Increase in referral rate for testing (21%)			
Increase in rate of mouth to mouth publicity in last quarter.			
Repeat callers has gone down since we have discontinued the AASHA service, where HIV positive people used to call repeatedly for counseling.			
Now we are reaching more and more new first time callers			
Call back service, a free service where a caller just gives missed call and counselor calls them back has started and developed in this quarter			
Calls from Positive people and females have gone down since we have stopped our AASHA Service and shifted our promotion focus to risk prone and vulnerable population.			
Getting women from the community to call for the service is still a challenge			

#### **Call analysis :**

Gender difference reflected in our call analysis

Of the total 1.8 lakh calls analysed, just 9 % women callers. And the profile of these women callers is not surprisingly very different for men callers.

62% of the women callers are HIV positive, as against just 10% male callers. And shockingly, 28% of them are widows. That

means, female callers call the helpline only when they get an opportunity to call due to our AASHA service at HIV treatment centers. On their own, the risk perception to call in women is low.

46% of male callers are unmarried as against 11% female callers. Its not that female are not at risk, but the risk perception might be low and overall excess to mobile to females is lower as compared to men.

Men callers are of young age group with maximum of them falling in 15 to 15 years bracket. As against this, women who are calling the helpline are mostly above 25 years of age and almost 10% are above 40 years of age.

Most female callers are illiterate or have completed not more than SSC. As against this, male callers are minimum HSC passed or above.

#### **Top 10 questions asked:**

- How do people become infected with HIV?
- How long is the window period?
- Can I get HIV from oral sex?
- Do condoms work?
- What are first symptoms?
- Can I get HIV from anal sex?
- What care to be taken by infected person?
- Can I get HIV from open mouth kissing?
- What is ART?
- Is there a cure?

#### **ADDICTION MEDICINE LECTURES FOR DOCTORS**

There is no denying the fact that addiction in our society is a huge problem and each and every strata of the society is engulfed in it - rich and poor, young and old, rural and urban- no one is spared. And the menace is increasing with no signs of regression. In India we are facing an epidemic of drug addiction of a magnitude never imagined before. New dangerous drugs are being created, new profiles of people are consuming various cocktails of drugs and new frightening numbers of children are consuming these drugs at younger and younger age.

We just cannot afford to be a passive witness to this raging fire, doing nothing to try douse this fire! So we started our new project in May 2015- with multi pronged strategy to prevent and manage addictions!

Training medical and paramedical workers in the field of Addiction medicine

Prevention of use of psycho- active drugs amongst school going adolescents

Developing IEC material in regional languages

Community based programs to create awareness about psycho-active drugs and its available treatment

Telephonic helpline for psycho-active drug use prevention and support.

We have already started work of training of doctors in addiction medicine and till date we have trained 400 doctors in 4 batches in Mumbai and Pune. We conducted over seven lectures of 2 hours each per week, and discussed in details from diagnosis to management all the commonly abused drugs like tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, opium, mephedrone, club drugs, designer drugs. Top notch doctors working in addiction medicine in Mumbai and Pune guided the participants. There was sharing by ex- addicts about their personal experience of how they got addicted and how they got out of it. Two movies were shown to the participants pertaining to this issue. There was a session on legal aspect, there

was active participation by NGOs, and information was given about Alcoholic Anonymous and de-addiction centers, so on and so forth.

After the entire series there was a written evaluation of all the doctors and the workshop ended with an oral quiz named Addiquiz- an info-entertainment program. Those who satisfactorily attended the workshop were given certificates.

Giving authenticity and credibility to the program was the fact that the department of Psychiatry and De-addiction centre of excellence KEM hosp, willingly and happily consented to be the official academic partner of the program! Rotary club of Mumbai Ghatkopar, Rotary club of Mumbai West, Rusan Pharma and Ariina Pharma financially supported this activity.

We plan to continue this activity to teach as many family physicians as possible about addiction medicine in the near future in and around Mumbai and Pune.

#### **SHAALA : BEYOND BOOKS**

Helping the adolescent in their healthy psychological development through various Life skills education is the best thing we can do for them in their formative years. Analytical Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Decision making, Inter-personal relationship management etc are the key areas that once channelized will help these children deal with any situation of High Risk Behavior. With this background, MCF has prepared a module to conduct Life skill education sessions with children age 13-16yrs in various schools under project 'SHAALA- BEYOND BOOKS'.

#### **Aims & Objectives:**

SHAALA-BEYOND BOOKS believes children learn many important lessons of life during their period of schooling beyond the regular subjects like History and Geography. MCF has begun with this initiative to facilitate learning of various Life skills.

#### **Beneficiaries:**

We have covered around 500 adolescent children of 13-16 yrs age in schools in and around Pune City. And we aspire to reach **5000** children in academic year 2016-2017.

#### **Method:**

MCF prepared a tailor made module by reading through various UNICEF & WHO modules on Life skills Education. Analytical Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Decision making, Inter-personal relationship management are the main focus areas our modules. The aim is equip these at risk children to stay away from addictions and high risk sexual behavior.

We trained volunteers from general population, right from house wives to retired psychology teachers to conduct sessions.

Children were told call our helpline to deal with unanswered queries and also for individual counseling with help of expert counselors.

We have also designed and distributed a simple personal diary, for introspection by the children.

#### **Main themes of the Module:**

- Self Awareness & Self Confidence
- Swachhta (Cleanliness)
- Inter personal relationship (Family; Friends; Love relationships)
- Communication skills
- Addictions and abuse- Identify the Risky Behaviour
- Changes on the Horizon of Adolescence
- Stress Management
- Negotiation skills
- Sexually transmitted Diseases & their Preventio

#### Work list for SHALA volunteers:

- Developing themselves into trained resource persons by weekly group meetings, discussions and buddy trainings
- Conducting sessions with the help of subject experts and volunteers. The methodology included discussions, stories, role plays and a few other activities.
- Worksheets for children's own introspection
- In process of making a small reference book for school library.

#### Schools Covered In 2015-2016:

In this academic year, we covered following schools in Saswad and Pune with 2 sessions of 1.5-2 hrs in each school. The response of students, teachers and the principals of the schools was extremely positive. We were flooded with their innocent but important questions that were following us till we got seated in our cars.

The school authority were uniformly commenting that they had never received such detailed knowledge about this important and most crucial subject for their students ever before.

#### Names of the schools we covered:

- S N Agarwal School Dattawadi Pune (60 children)
- Japtap Municipality School Dattawadi (35 children)
- Shivaji English Medium school Saswad (65 children)
- Gurukul Vidyalaya Saswad (80 children)
- Kanya Prashala Saswad (54 Girls)
- Kanishtha Vidyalaya Purandare Taluka (100 children)
- Madhyamik Vidyalaya (Village-Hirvi) Saswad (55 children)
- Madhyamik Shala Bhivari- Saswad (60 children)
- Shala Chikhali Saswad (65 children)

#### Requirements for the development of the SHALA project:

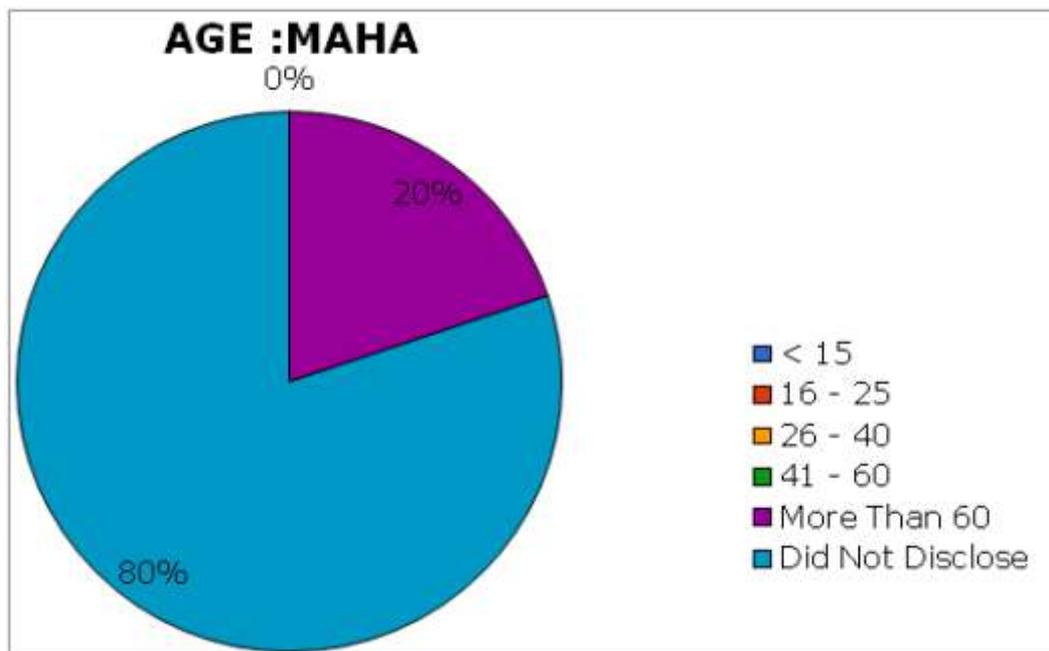
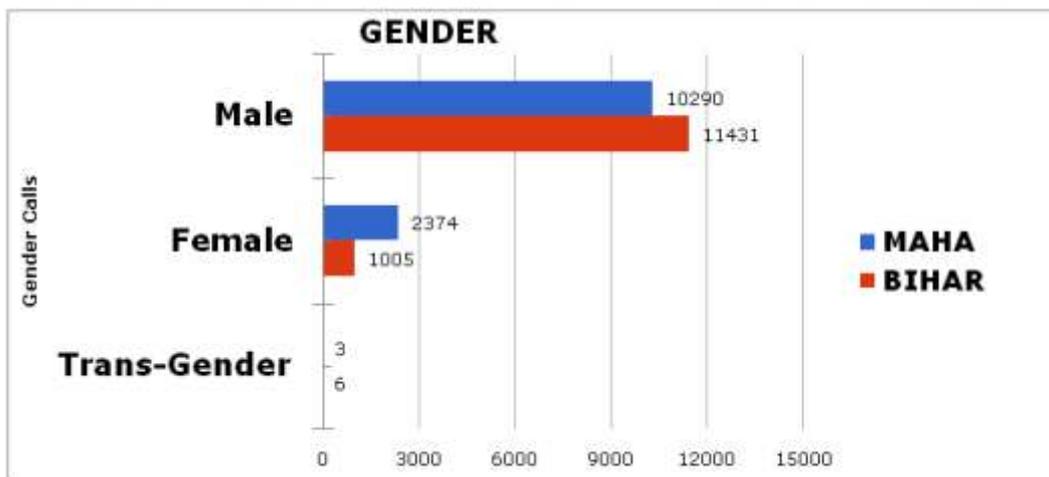
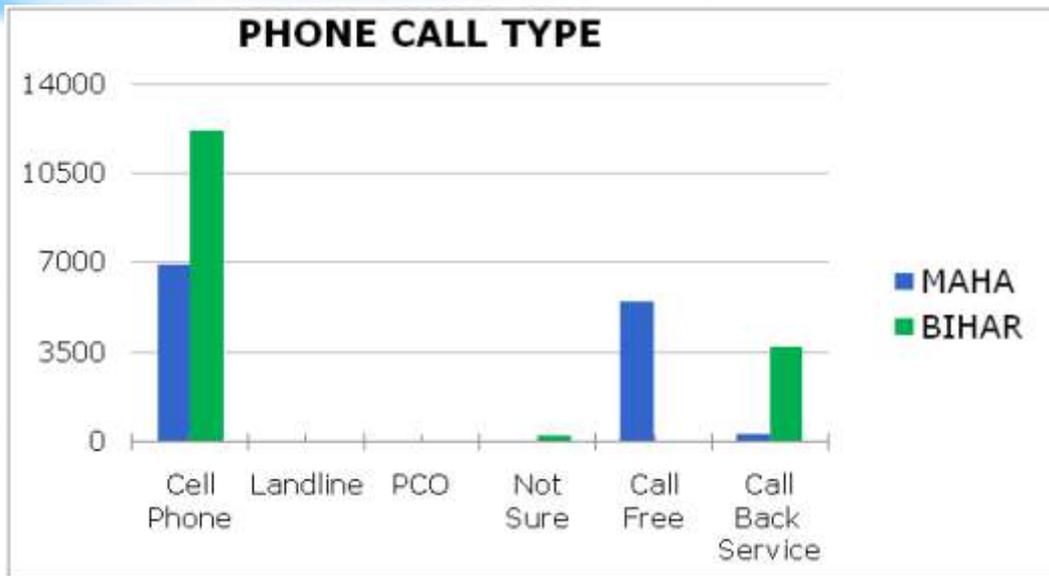
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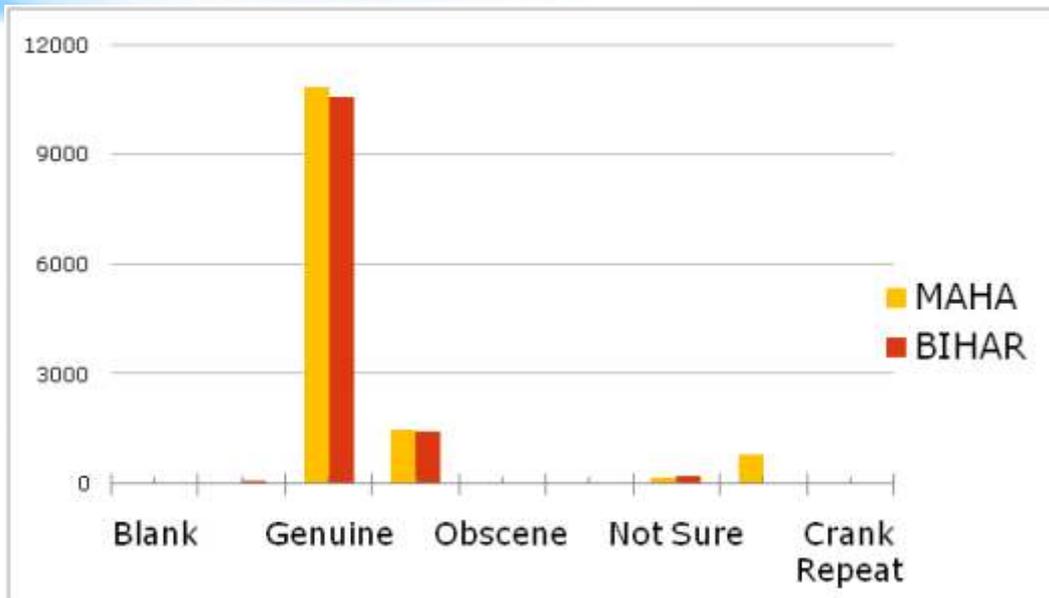
LCD projector. This is required to create better impact during sessions through display of pictures and short educative movie films

Financial help - for a part time paid counselor, who will help in speedy development of this project, Program material and logistic costs etc.

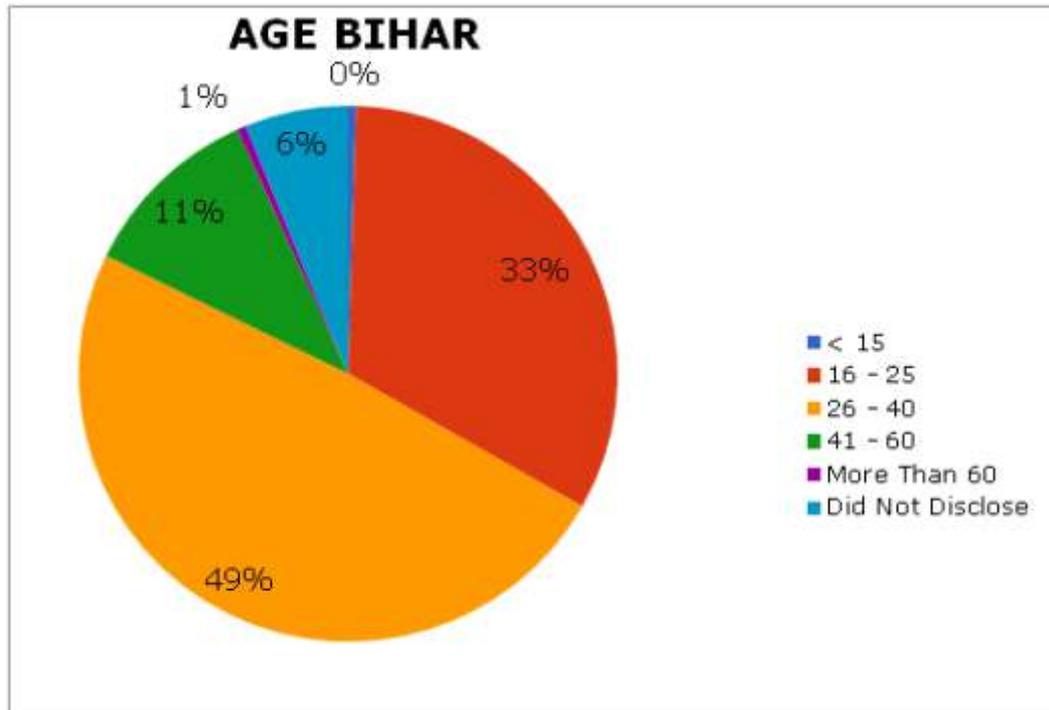
A video and voice recorder for recording the sessions. The recorded sessions can be taken to places we cannot physically reach and used for teaching children.

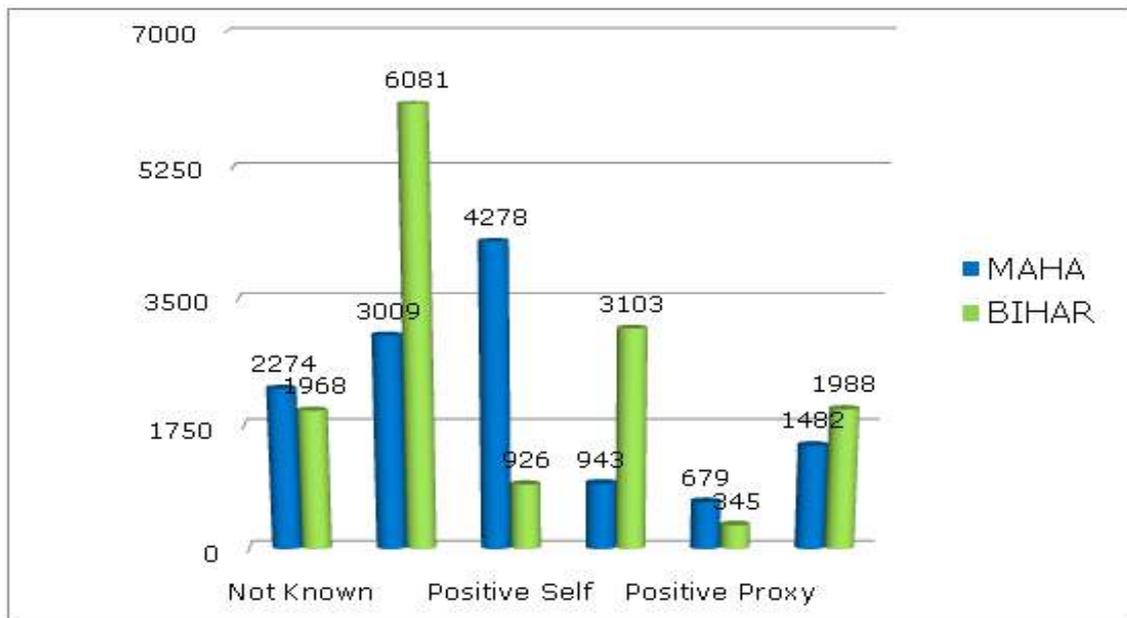
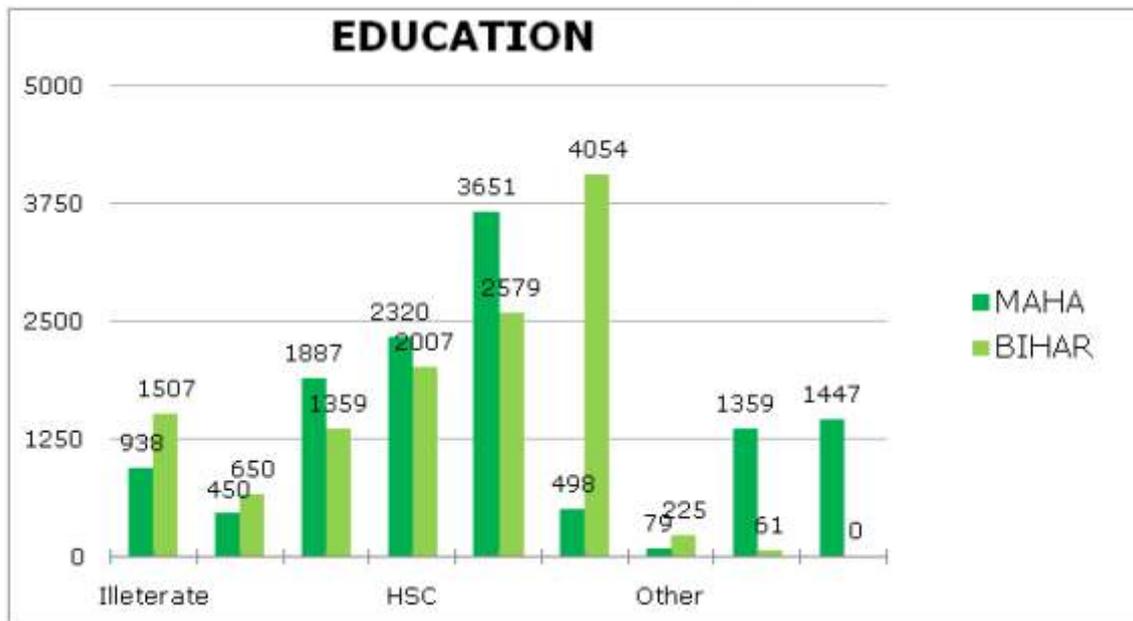
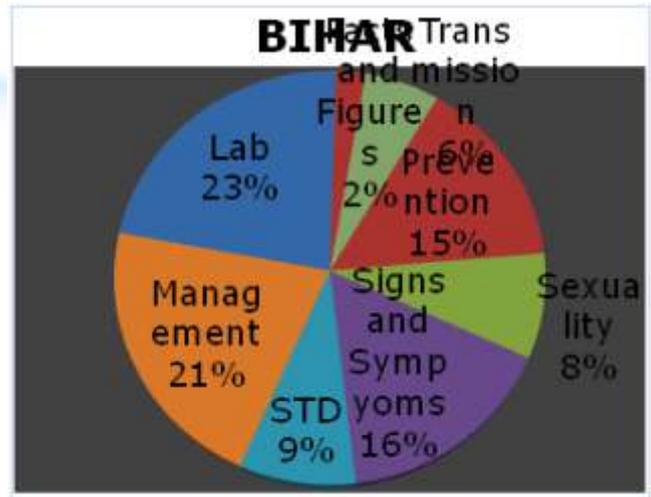
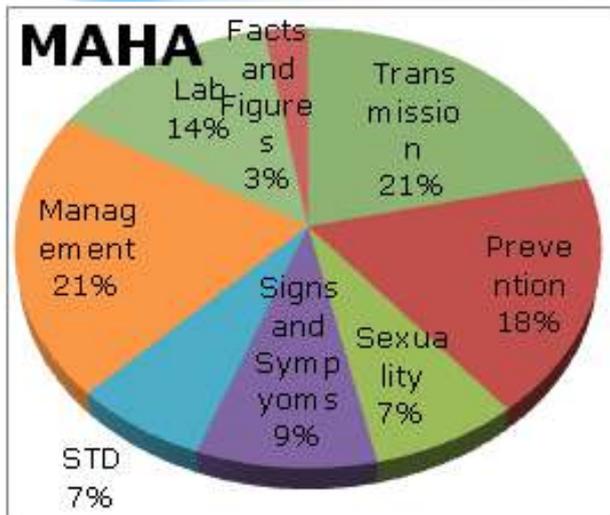




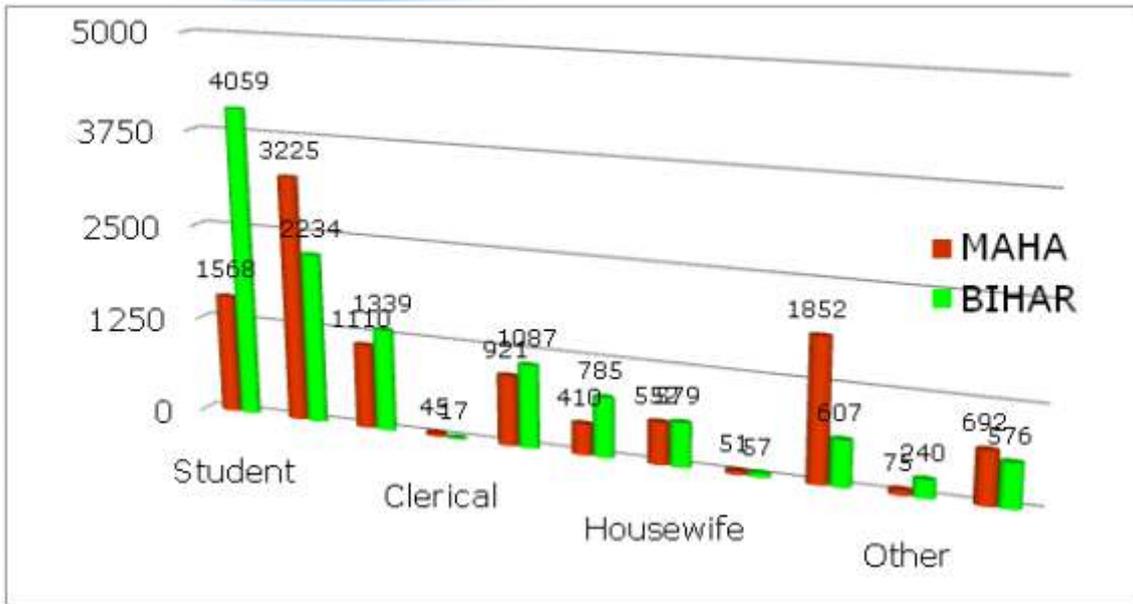


## CALL TYPE

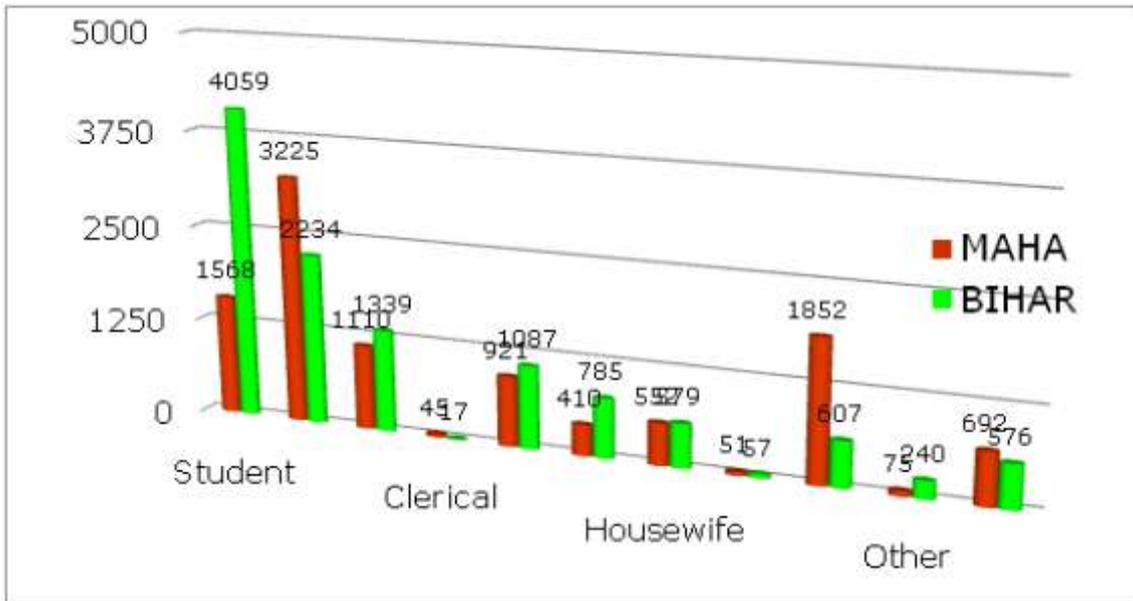




## HIV STATUS



## OCCUPATION



## MARITAL STATUS

