

Handout-2

Bangladesh Manobadhikar Sangbadik Forum-BMSF

Program: Media Advocacy on HIV/AIDS & Human Rights

HIV/AIDS related Vulnerable Groups in Bangladesh

Sex Workers

The response to prostitution by many countries is often similar to that of drug use. The state may seek to **wipe out or punish** the business through the arm of the law. Yet no society has ever been able to wipe out the “**oldest profession in the world**”.

Sex workers like Drug users are at the receiving end of the law. When clubs or bars are raided, the **sex workers are the ones who pay the highest cost of all involved in the business.**

Usually it is the “sex workers” who get picked up rather than the **bar owners, pimps and clients.**

It often makes no difference whether the **women were victims of exploitation, abuse, or coercion.**

Discrimination can get around this by **protecting the women** but **upholding the pimps and profiteers.**

The women can be offered options to train for other opportunities rather than face a jail term.

Some Sex workers have drug problems or were victims of rape or incest and may **need psychological support.**

***Note:** There are approximately 170,000 sex workers in Bangladesh, in addition to some 13,000 child sex workers (male and female). On average, female sex workers serve three clients per day and they are often pressurized into unprotected sex and are frequent targets for rape and sexual violence.(Source: Shonghoti)*

Not to Discrimination as Bangladesh Constitution

- Article 26: Laws contrarily to Fundamental Rights are Void
- Article 27 : Equality of all citizens;
- Article 28: State cannot discriminate;
- Article 29 : Equality in public jobs;
- Article 31 : Protection of law for all, including body, reputation and property.

Confidentiality - Constitution of Bangladesh:

- Article 31- Right to protection of law
- Article 32- the right to life and liberty
- Article- 43 protection of home and correspondence against search and seizure

Injecting Drug users

Drug injection is a global phenomenon that cuts across cultures. It has been closely tied to the spread of the epidemic, particularly in the Region. The sharing of contaminated needles is a highly efficient means of spreading HIV. There have been explosive epidemics among injecting drug users in many countries. Currently believed to be low, but is a growing problem in Bangladesh.

Vulnerability Factors of the Drug Users

- Injection Drug User Vulnerable to HIV,
- Stigmatized by Society,
- Drug Use criminalized by law
- Otherwise IDUs very poor
- No access to resources – economic-legal-information

Harm Reduction strategies include giving IDUs

- Information on how they can prevent HIV infection
- Outreach services in their own communities;
- Access to sterile injecting equipment,
- Drug detoxification and treatment programs

Street children

An estimated 300,000 children either earn their living on the streets, or actually 'live' on the street. Some 13,000 of those are believed to earn their living through prostitution.

Fundamental Rights as Constitution of Bangladesh

- Article 23 guarantees the right against exploitation- prohibition of trafficking in human beings and forced labour.
- Article 24 prohibits employment of children in any factory, mine or in any other hazardous employment.

'Hijra' (hermaphrodites)

The 'hijra' comprise a particular subculture within Bangladesh. They define themselves as neither men nor women. Social 'separation' means they are less likely to be reached by awareness campaigns.

Professional blood donors

There are an estimated 35,000 Professional Blood Donors in Bangladesh. Many are also laborers, rickshaw pullers or are homeless. A high percentage are known to engage in pre, or extra-marital sex and many are suspected of being drug users. More than 100,000 people are known to be infected yearly with hepatitis B and syphilis, as a result of blood transfusions.

Migrant Workers

Most of those officially recorded, as being HIV positive are Migrant Workers. 3 million migrants workers working out of Bangladesh. Approximately 125,000 migrant workers leave Bangladesh each year for destinations such as Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea. (Source: Shisuk)

Long Distance Truck Drivers

The study notes the "risky sexual behavior" of truck drivers and their role in spreading the virus in other countries, although it warns against stigmatizing this group in any programs.

Men who have Sex with men (MSM)

In all societies around the world, MSM are believed to comprise about 5% to 10% of all sexually active males.

- ☀ However, MSM do not fit a regular profile and represent a diverse group. They may be married, “bisexual”. Some may engage in sex with other men frequently, others only occasionally.
- ☀ In all male institutions, such as the military and prisons, male to male sex can be common.
- ☀ MSM represent a group vulnerable to HIV infection.
- ☀ Unprotected anal sex comes a high risk of HIV infection for the receptive partner.
- ☀ In many developed countries, sex between men accounts for the bulk of HIV infections.
- ☀ MSM are not a well-defined group in most countries in the region.
- ☀ There is often little knowledge about the structure and patterns of MSM groups.
- ☀ Very often, Governments and societies deny that MSM exist in their countries and thus refuse to support appropriate prevention work.

Why is MSM Vulnerable to HIV/AIDS

- Stigmatized Group
- Engaging in risk behavior.
- Multiple Partners.
- Denial of Healthcare and safer sex education benefits due to existing laws and society's attitude to
- Homosexuality

Laws that Create impediments to intervention & Outreach amongst MSM

As a Bangladesh Penal Code:

- Section 377 (Carnal Intercourse)
- Section 268 (Public Nuisance)
- Section 292 (Obscenity)
- Section 107 (Abetment)

People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA)

- PLWA can live vigorous and productive lives for several years after infection if given appropriate information, treatment and support.
- There is still much misunderstanding about how the virus is transmitted, which affects how PLWA are treated. HIV is not a strong virus.
- It only survives for short time outside the body and only human blood, sexual fluids and breast milk.
- It cannot be transmitted through tears, urine, nasal secretions, sweat or saliva.

Types of HIV/AIDS related Discrimination in delivery of Healthcare setting

- Refusal to Treatment

- Inappropriate Treatment
- Physical isolation in wards
- Early Discharge
- Delays in Treatment
- Conditional Treatment
- Prejudicial Comments and Behavior

Duty to Treatment

Under Article 31 & 32 of the Bangladesh Constitution the Rights to Life and liberty includes the right to health.

- By law, state healthcare institutions/providers are obliged to provide medical treatment to all persons in emergency and non-emergency situation without discrimination.
- In Bangladesh the fundamental rights guaranteed by 27,31 and 32 may have to be interpreted in the light of fundamental principals of state policy in articles 15 and 18 to seek court intervention in cases of discrimination against persons suffering from HIV/AIDS.

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