

Media advocacy : Media dialogue with the Journalists

Although Bangladesh is a low privileged country for HIV but it has posed a serious threat to the country. The geographic location of the country (common border with India and Myanmar), socio-cultural situation (gender inequity / power imbalance, poverty, lack of complete information) and presence of risk behavior of the Most at Risk Population (MARP) make us more vulnerable to the infection. The Government of Bangladesh, NGOs, and international development organizations have been persistently working to address the issue through preventive and curative programming. An important concern is that though HIV prevalence rate is still very low in Bangladesh in compare to other neighboring countries but the risk factors are also exists widely that can cause epidemic outbreak and HIV prevalence rate is increasing alarmingly among IDUs.

Globally media is playing a vital role in educating the mass population, raise awareness on particular health issue and influencing the thinking process about health problems, and what we do about them, through reports/news/features on television, radio or in the newspapers. Often, crucial issues of public health such as HIV and AIDS are made visible by the media and, so long globally media has played a central role in creating awareness on HIV and AIDS.

Media has created awareness and facilitated partnerships among different sectors, and exposing cultural influences and practices that are responsible for the spread of HIV. However, sometimes the media has failed to observe the sensitivity needed when dealing with a disease that creates stigma, denial, blame and feelings of guilt. Therefore, it is apparent that the media needs to apply a factual, non-judgmental reporting style that helps general people to maintain their health including most at risk population and also to support those infected and affected by HIV.

In Bangladesh media is already involve to some extent in creating awareness and educating people on HIV prevention. However further involvement of media with HIV prevention and care intervention will facilitate a better understanding of program, relevant issues and opportunities.

Rationale:

Bangladesh still considered as low prevalent country. However, it is at a critical moment in the course of it s AIDS epidemic. At the end of 2006, the government of Bangladesh estimated that 7,500 Bangladeshi adults and children could be living with HIV and AIDS. On the other hand , the reported HIV and AIDS cases (as of 2009) are respectively 1475 and 619 (Report on World AIDS Day, NASP, 2009) which means a considerable number of positive cases are still remain unreported. Stigma index report 2008 states , stigma, discrimination and human rights violation etc towards people living with HIV and AIDS (PLHA) and other MARPs are still high in Bangladesh which is a major reason to remain cases unreported.

In this regards media can play a crucial role in creating awareness, addressing stigma and discrimination through effective dissemination of HIV related message and

information, and focusing on HIV mainstreaming issues through multi-sectoral involvement. Hence media advocacy is an important approach to involve the media and utilize the power of media efficiently and effectively by: strengthening media reporting of critical issue like HIV and AIDS; creating linkage between media and HIV programs; and identifying ways for making difference for population who are most at risk.

Inception of media advocacy – “Media Dialogue ” :

To initiate media advocacy the media dialogue is an essential step towards ensuring an open and easy access two way communication channel between interventions in the field of HIV and AIDS in Bangladesh and the national and local level print and electronic Media. This initiative aspires to form advocacy forum /network within the media which could be the most effective way in using the power of media effectively for reducing risk and discrimination related to HIV and AIDS. It is expected that media, as a vital stakeholder would talk about HIV and AIDS in much better way that assist in creating awareness and understanding about HIV; and working to ensure that relevant policies and programs are put in place.

Objectives:

Purpose of **media dialogue** is to generate discussion on how to have a well-informed, well-capacitated, committed media sector in Bangladesh as a potential force for changing people's behavior and reinforcing a culture that prevents HIV; ensure importance of sensitivity toward population most at risk including people living with HIV and AIDS and media's role in shaping the tenor of that response to bring positive changes in their life.

The specific objectives of this media dialogue are to address -

- How media could be used best in creating awareness of critical issue like HIV and AIDS
- How media could make a difference for the population who are most at risk.

Mode of operation:

Bring the national level journalist of print and electronic media on board to form a media advocacy forum/network.

Equipped the journalist with appropriate information and technique so that they can play role in their social responsibility to report on matters relating to HIV/AIDS, and must observe ethical reporting while doing so Challenging dogmas in cultural myths and religion.

Media Dialogue meeting schedule (suggestive):

Time	Activity
10.00 -10:30	Registration and tea
10.30 -11.00	Opening Session :
	Welcome the participant by BCCP
	Modhumita project with the MARP and how sensitive media reporting can play positive role in preventing HIV among MARP
	Global experience on Media Advocacy
	National response on HIV and AIDS prevention -by NASP
11.00 -11. 15	Recess
11.15 -12.45	Open Discussion:
	Facilitate by one of the renown journalist
12.45 - 01.00	Wrap up with key recommendations and closing

Please note that this is just beginning of Media Advocacy activity – the program also design some follow up and capacity development activity plan as a continuation of this initiative to get some result.

Expected outcome:

A advocacy forum of journalist will be formed

The Media holds a pivotal role in enhancing awareness about prevention and treatment of HIV