

PROMOTING RIGHTS OF THE EXTREME SOCIALLY EXCLUDED PEOPLE FOR EFFECTIVE HIV/AIDS INTERVENTION

Syed Mizanur Rahman¹

¹Department of Journalism, Daffodil International University

Abstract: *This is an exploratory study on the project titled Promoting Right of the Extreme Socially Excluded People (PRESEP), aimed to work with the most potential risk population of the target area like female commercial sex workers (FCSW) in brothel, street and hotel settings, transgender, intravenous drug users (IDU), male having sex with male (MSM) and persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA). They are stigmatized and discriminated for their (often perceived) psychosexual behavior and activities, which has got social disapproval. However stigma, discrimination and violation of human rights restrict them to access to general social services like health and education. Therefore, they suffer from the common diseases (due to lack of information and services) including sexually transmitted infections (STI), HIV/AIDS, and they pass the risks of those to their spouses and their surrounding population. But the purpose of the PRESEP has given clear direction that 'selected marginalized communities capable in demanding their rights related to accessing information, civil amenities, health and education and the society is compassionate and understanding to respect their human dignity and support in realization of human rights for the marginalized community. The study shows that by developing self-esteem at individual level and capacity building for organizational development can improve overall situation including HIV/AIDS positively.*

Introduction

“It’s a classical truth that the society we are living historically does not allow some of the people to live with dignity and social justice. Very distinctly isolate and segregate some people from mainstream to a socially prescribed marginalized section and undermine their rights. Very unfortunately marginalized people are often stigmatized and discriminated for their (often perceived) psychosexual behavior and activities, which has got social disapproval”¹. Other way of marginalization through disease and disaster that always linked with poor and socially disapproved population. Specially when it is HIV and AIDS that blames to them very smoothly and people who are infected they are also treated as excluded and disapproved by the society finally. “Female Commercial Sex Workers are marginalized and stigmatized because of their lifestyle, status of work, sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status and their perceived involvement with drugs and STI including HIV/AIDS”². “MSM have highest social disapproval and punishable offence for their sexual behavior and also the fact that of the associated link with HIV/AIDS epidemic, as the very first detected case related to homosexuality”⁶. Transgender/Hijras are also marginalized and stigmatized because of their lifestyle, behavior and socio-economic status.

IDUs get marginalized because of their behavior and involvement with drugs and HIV. “PLHA is stigmatized because of their disease status and potential risk of infecting others with the fatal disease. Because of stigma and discrimination they are often invisible. Their access to basic rights, like health, education, information, employment, housing, legal, family and community support are denied or barred. Therefore they are unable to protect themselves, their spouses, children and other family members. Stigma, discrimination and human rights violation not only affect those marginalized communities, but also society in general, remain vulnerable as their risky behavior continue hidden and puts everyone in the society as risk”². “Though Bangladesh still a low HIV prevalent country, but evidence of concentrated epidemic has been found among IDU to account majority in Myanmar, Vietnam, China, Malaysia. IDUs are involved with buying and selling sex, selling blood and have their usual family life. Spreading, HIV from IDU, as evidenced in other countries, is a matter of time”⁴.

Therefore, mainstreaming of marginalized population through realizing their rights, not only a necessity to support themselves but also will benefit society in general by contributing better human rights realization situation and protecting from diseases like STI including HIV/AIDS. This project aims in contributing to the realization of human rights and dignity of life for selected marginalized communities like FCSW in brothel, street and hotel settings, transgender, IDU, MSM and PLWA. “The selected marginalized communities are not only diverse, but also include women, who face double discrimination”⁵. Moreover, number of HIV/AIDS prevention program also focusing them as target population, key population, high risk population, and community population etc that may cause of creating uncomfortable environment for people includes women. The project worked in developing self-help groups of the target communities. AAS, BODER, SHOW, SKS, SBKS, MSM and BHS are the partners the project that also includes partnership with local NGOs at some level. “HASAB, as the umbrella organization working for HIV/AIDS, had the experience of organizational capacity building, creating enabling environment and awareness creation”³. The project is funded by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

Materials and Methods

The choice of methodology for the study was data analysis from secondary sources, focus group discussion (FGD), Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA).

Desk work: Literature/documents review including proposal, baseline survey, reports (Random sampling), mid term evaluation report, audio-visual, IEC/BCC materials, training modules, case study, electronic and print media coverage, and so on.

Field work: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with PRESEP partners, community people, and HASAB staff. Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) techniques including the key informant interviews will also be applied for Local stockholders. At the field level participatory analysis were carried out keeping in mind social-cultural and religious aspects when the project is dealing with Marginalized community (i.e. not being limited to FGD) including a participatory video documentation of community understanding

about self-help. The study also offered them to space for role play (maximum for 30 min for each group) to explore their idea and understanding of self help, human rights and solidarity. Meeting with potential local donor and resource organizations including government and non-governmental to identify financial and non financial aspects of support.

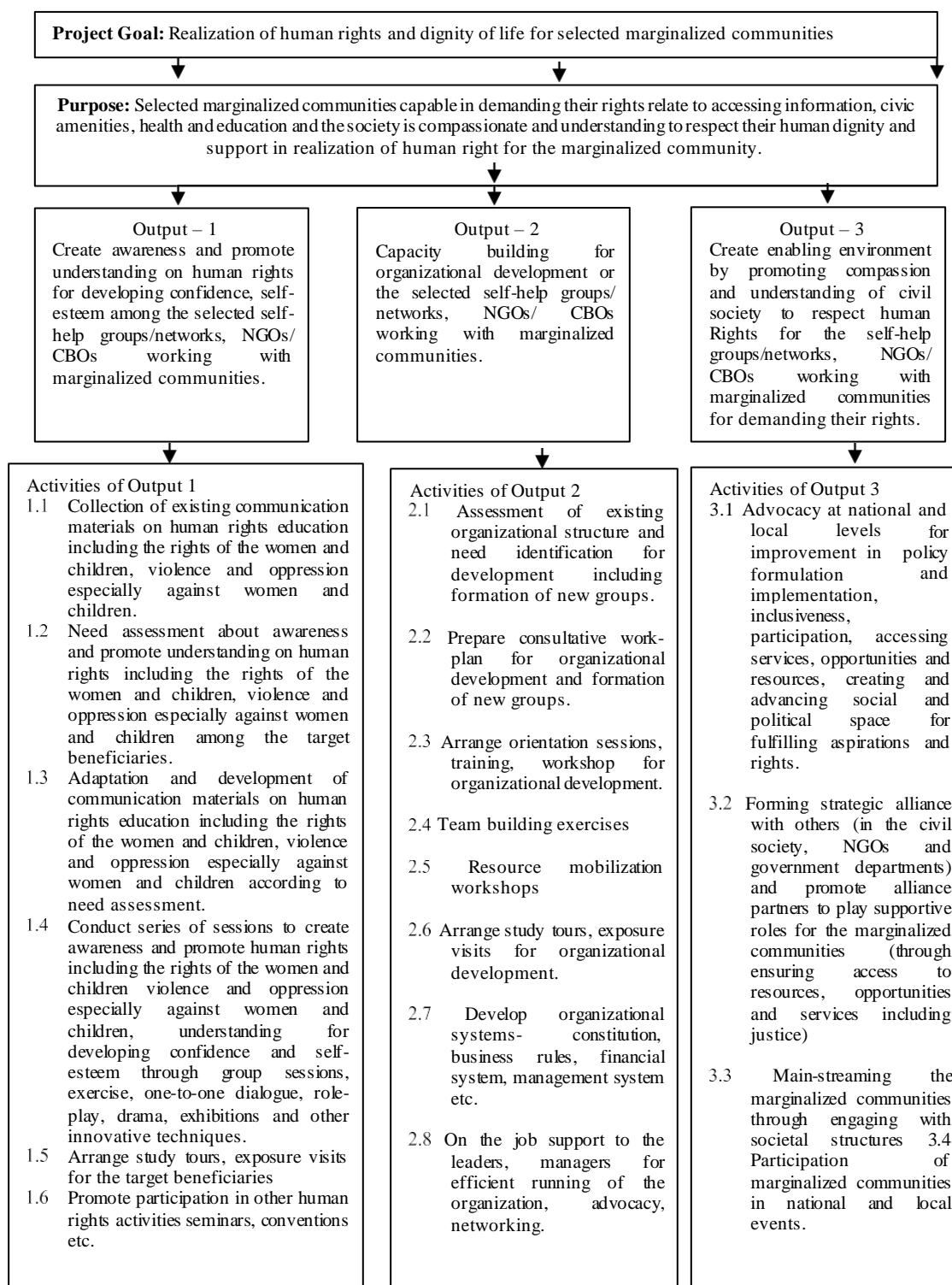
Project with Target Beneficiaries

Organization	Area	Implementing PNGO/Self-help Group	Intervention
Badhan Hijra Sangha (BHS)	Dhaka	BHS	Hijra/Transgender
Bangladesh Organization Drug Addict Rehabilitation (BODAR)	Dhaka	BODAR	Ex. Drug users
Self-help Organization of Women (SHOW)	Manikgonj	Life Development Association (LDA)	Street Based Sex Workers
Shuktara Kallyan Sangstha (SKS)	Mymensing	SKS	Brothel Bases Sex with male
Setu Bandhan Kallyan Sangha	Mymensing	ODPUP	Male having Sex with male
Meghla Nari Sangha	Faridpur	Shapla Mahila Sangtha	Hotel Based Sex Workers
Ashar Alo Society (AAS)	Dhaka	AAS	People Living With HIV/AIDS

As shown in table, BHS, BODAR, SKS and AAS are directly responsible for implementation of the project as self-help groups. LDA, ODPUP and SMS are working as PNGO to deal with the self-help group for project implementation.

Project at a Glance: Following are the goal, objectives and activities that want to achieve by the project in context to the problem:

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Information is gathered and analyzed by discussing with PNGO, its members, SHG's Executive Committee (EC) members and General members through FGD. For further clarification one-to-one in-depth discussion was also introduced as per need.

Badhan Hijra Sangha: In Focus Group Discussion (FGD), 26 members were present. They were Executive committee members, general members. All of them were attended in discussion enthusiastically. Badhan Hijra Sangha was formed in 2000 and was registered (No. Dha 07462) with the Directorate of Social Welfare in 2003. Initially it was with 20 members; now the number is 180. badhan is working to ensure human rights for the hijras that this society was formed. The members were interviewed both in group and as individuals. In the discussions, 07 of the Executive Committee (EC) and 17 of the general members were present. EC was interviewed too. Considering 26 as sample size, 90% of the general members said that they know about the activities the Sangha takes though all of them are not always involved in the process. After setting programs, they participate. The Committee people usually take the lead. 70% of the members said that decisions are taken after consulting with them.

90% of the participants said that the organization actively helps them if they are in trouble. On the other hand, 100% of the members said that being a member of the Sangha empowers them, because it gives them a confidence that the organization will come to their help when they are in trouble. This confidence, however, also leads some of the members to commit crimes, and some of such incidents were reported to happen. 100% of the participants believe that it is important to have assistance of other communities in establishing human rights. Accordingly, the organization has officially met and talked to people of other community groups including the community people, representatives of NGOs, teachers of schools and madrasas, etc. 90% of the participants felt that these meetings helped them achieve 70% of their objectives. 80% of the EC members are not much informed of financial transaction of the project as there are people appointed for it. However, PRESEP trainings have left them better skilled in finance management. 70% of the EC members said that these trainings made them understand the importance and process of budget, so they can now make a balance between budget and planning. The outcome of PRESEP project is less quantitative and more qualitative: this is what 90% of the Sangha members opined. Now they could present their argument in a more organized way. 80% said that their self-confidence is improved and they can voice their demands before people. Earlier they would fear bargaining at working place; now they are abler to attain what they deserve. 100% of the members think that the Sangha benefits them in numerous ways. Now they participate in different social or national programs which was unthinkable few years back. Now they can talk of themselves, of their development, of country and people. Now they attend different seminars and policy making meetings. Now they participate in and observe different national and international programs including World Human Rights Day, World AIDS Day, Women's Day etc. Before being members of the organization, they could not do these jobs. Now they are much independent and participatory. Because of dialogue with the civil society, the society in general is more cooperative and patient with them. This helps them get assistance from international organizations, government, private sectors, civil society and neighbors.

Shelf-Help Organization of Women (SHOW): Shwanirvar Mahila Sangstha (SHOW) is a self-developed organization of the sex workers of Manikganj district. It started its operation in May, 2005, with 30 members. Now the number is 32. In March, 2006, the organization was registered (Ma-0625) to the Directorate of Social Welfare. In SHOW focus group discussion was conducted with EC members and general members. Among 20 there were 6 from EC member and 14 were from general member of this organization. Considering 20 as sample size, 70% of the respondents feel that initially they had no idea what an organization should be and how it works. After coming in contact with different other organizations, they have become more experienced. 80% of the respondents opined that situation has improved than it was in the beginning at community level and organizational level. The organization started its journey with three objectives relating to the mobile sex workers: raising self-awareness, creating job-friendly environment, and developing organizational skills. 70% of its members are aware of these objectives. 30% opined that they have still not understood the concept of organization and other management process because of not being educated.

Regarding execution of organizational activities, 80% said that decisions are taken in consensus, especially in the case of Executive Committee. 90% opined that the major strength of their organization is unity and trust. 70% of the respondents said that their confidence level increased after the formation of the organization. The Evaluation Team found 40% people extraordinarily vocal and organized. The rest (60%) commented that they would also reach that level very soon. 80% of the participants felt that the members' participation in discussion sessions, workshops and training organized by the partners of PRESEP has left them better qualified and responsible. They observed how other organizations maintain their management and then they applied the same in their organization. 90% opined that this self-initiated organization has its own benefits. Years back they never thought of attending any national or international programs; now they are invited to join programs on national days or issues. 80% felt that they are now more exposed to talk about themselves. Earlier they could not talk to civil society people; now they sit with them in meetings. 70% felt that their organization should develop gradually. Since they have little exposure and are gaining experience, they do not intend to take any big step at this moment. Things that should be done first include: to change people's attitude, to stop administrative violence, and to stop violence made by police people and hooligans. 70% felt that changes have already been visible and it will take place gradually.

Bangladesh Drug Addict Rehabilitation (BODER): Bangladesh organization of Drug Addict Rehabilitation is an organization of former drug addicted people in Dhaka. It was founded in 2000 and registered (No. Dha 07022) with the Directorate of Social Welfare in 2002. Initially it had 67 members; now 80. In FGD session participants were very much cooperative and interactive. Among 18 participants, 12 were EC member and 6 were general member. Progression of various activities undertaken by PRESEP and HASAB during the project was reviewed and the members' views on the organization exchanged. Considering 18 as sample size, 90% of the participants said, the society, family and relatives rebuked and harassed them when they were addicted and even after they left drugs. They wanted to leave drugs but these social disregards led them to resume the practice. 80% viewed it as a mental social torture. It was under such circumstances

that they formed this group; later various development agencies helped them. 70% felt, they should solve their problem themselves. 80% of the participants said the group is a product of their own initiative. 70% of the participants said that every single work of the group is done after its constitution. 60% of the participants are well informed about the purpose and aim of the organization. More or less everyone knows that the objective of the organization is to ensure drug free society, to keep people away from addictions and last of all to assure that they should not resume drug taking after leaving it. 70% of the respondents informed that everyone's view is given importance in the matter of developing organization. In the matter of the assessment of Executive Committee (EC), selection process is given much importance because 90% of the members thought that it could be established through discussion. There are some internal conflicts and problems in the organization make things difficult sometime. 80% of the members joined it from heart, with a view to do some kind of social welfare. Moreover, 90% of them believe that by doing this they can develop their own condition. Almost 70% of the participants informed that now they could not only talk about human rights among themselves, but can also talk in the social arena. They have already had ample opportunities to counsel and attend relevant programs, such as AIDS day, Human Rights day, Anti-trafficking activities etc. 90% opined that PRESEP project strengthened their organization. 90% said it also developed human resource. For example, they are now more self-aware, can voice their protest against any mishaps, and can take collective steps. More than 80% of the participants said that the PRESEP project increased their working area. Their self-development has been strengthened. They pointed few remarkable successes in the last three years. Those are advocacy, seminar, observance of different national and international days, acceptance in society by counseling, follow up and seminar.

70% of the participants opined that though the progress is good, it will take more time for making it sustainable circle. Different development and aid agencies helped in direct and indirect ways while the representatives of civil society, neighbors and family members are relatively tolerant. But 80% of them complained that their families are not convinced. As per their understanding almost 100%'s main target is their family; they look for taking step for family mobilization. 90% opined that the practice of self-consciousness and confidence among themselves could play more helping role. The main problem they pointed out is resuming drug-taking. For this, it is necessary to get good treatment, continuous counseling and necessary prevention measures.

Shuktara Kallyan Sangsha (SKS): 8 Executive Committee (EC) members of SKS were present including 13 general member during FGD by the time of discussion. It was found that some of them are not well informed about the organization. Everyone agreed that, it was an earnest effort of the advisor of EC for forming the organization. Most of them were reluctant in joining the group; but after joining, their responsibilities developed and increased. This rate is 80%. Considering 21 as sample size, 70% of the EC members have clear idea about the organization and they know its future planning. 60-70% of women leaders have clear concept of their duty and are very skilled in organizational matter. A number of women (5/6) are found very skilled and vocal. They said that earlier many of them did not pay attention to the work properly but at present, they do not feel

good if they do not come to the office daily for once. 100% of the EC members can understand their rights, more or less. 80% of them said: “We did not understand Human Rights before. Now we can understand Human Rights issue much better.” 100% of the respondents opined that they are continuous victims of violation of Human Rights. While years back they could not be aware of ‘violation,’ now they can identify when it takes place. 90% of the respondents said that since they used to consider themselves as untouchable and alien, they would not protest against such violations. But the present project has left them aware. 80% of the respondents claimed that sex work is a profession and they want it approved. However, 20% of them are not prepared to present themselves as sex workers. Many familial and social obstacles restrain them from presenting themselves as sex workers. 40% of the respondents said that incidents of violation of human rights took place during the project. In every case (100%) the organization came to help and they succeeded in 60% cases. 90% of them complained that they face problem when they get their children admitted to school. However, 40% of these problems have been solved with the help of the organization. Most of the sex-workers believe that they cannot implement a project or plan well because they are illiterate, unskilled and inexperienced. The PRESEP project has helped them lead better social life. Sharing information has changed their view towards life.

Meghla Nari Shongha (MNS): Meghla Nari Shongha is a hotel-based sex workers’ organization. It began its journey in 2005 with 40 members; now it is 50. It was registered (Farid-285) to in the directorate of Women Welfare in 2005. The organization has constitution and an Executive committee. Though the organization is still growing, 70% of its members thought that the jobs done in the meantime—registering, making constitution, increasing members—are signs of success. 80% of the participants think that the objective of the organization is to attend problems they face in daily life, because they are now more visible and in a transition period. In FGD, participants number were 19, in where 10 is EC member and rest of them are general member. As this group is newly formed, and their members were very much new to organizational ideas, they felt shyness to discuss all their opinions. But some of them are more hopeful. Considering 19 as sample size, 60% of them are well informed about their aim and goal. The rest (40%) think that they are not well organized. However, they (90%) praise the leaders for their responsibilities. True an organization cannot distribute power equally. General members usually do their duty as associates. When they formed the group, their main objective was to minimize everyday problems. They had no idea what Human Rights means. Now, 60% participants are more or less informed of human rights issue. The rest (40%) cannot describe but can understand it. According to them (70%), the project was a stepping-stone towards their emancipation. They cited numerous examples of violation of human rights. It often happens with the marginalized community.

Setu Bandhan Kalyan Sangstha (SBKS): FGD was conducted with 22 partisans, 11 EC member and 11 were general member. Setu Bandhan Kalyan Sangstha is a self-initiated organization of the MSM of Mymensingh town. Though it was formed in 2001, it started its activities in the year 2004. It was in 2005 that the organization became partner of PRESEP/HASAB and ODPAP. Initially it had 150 members. Meanwhile a number of

members left the group and later joined. Presently the number of members is around 120. It was registered (Ma-0264) to the Directorate of social Welfare in 2006.

The group's initial objective was to form a unity so as to ensure justice to its members when they are in trouble. They said: "We are social outcast. We have no place in family or in the state. Everyone makes fun of us; no one gives us job. We are discriminated at every sector of life. But this cannot go forever. It must be changed. As the problem is ours, so we have to come forward to solve it. For this reason we formed this group, because we feel that we need collective force to make change." Considering 22 as sample size, 95% of the participants were excited about PRESEP. They said: "This project makes us exposed. We learnt that we are human beings. We also learnt what we should do to get our rights." Most of the members (90%) have clear idea of human rights. According to them, human rights mean the rights to live with dignity from womb to tomb. However, the members are regular victims of violation of human rights. These include: being raped, being teased at streets, being deprived of family property, having no job, and being abused if they want to protest against abuse. They mentioned a number of incidents that took place last year. Only three of them were negotiated, by the help, not of the government or administration, but of the EC and other members of the organization.

Ashar Alo Society (AAS): Ashar Alo is a self-initiated organization of HIV Positives people. In FGD, 4 members were participated. It has 375 members now. What makes Ashar Alo different from other self-initiated projects is that it is almost self-sufficient. The members formed this organization out of their urge: "Our society has very little or wrong idea about HIV or AIDS related subject which helps the disease to spread. Moreover, without ample knowledge the people of the society do not behave properly to the HIV positive people. HIV causes death in the end. If people do not get necessary treatment from family and society, they (75% of the respondents) think themselves as cast-out and helpless, and almost (80%) everyone is victim of this situation. Ashar Alo Society was formed to solve this problem and find out how one can lead healthy life. Ashar Alo works with the PRESEP project to increase the capacity of the organization. Ashar Alo is not like other SHG project, so their general knowledge about the capacity Building is different. Probably for this reason, they (60%) informed that the help from PRESEP was below expectation. However, they (70%) describe that the aim and goal of the project can lead the organization to a productive result. It has enough potential to tap. The Human Rights of HIV positive people are violated in various fields of society-family-country. They (100%) narrated some incidents that occurred often. These include: they (50%) do not want to draw close to the members of family-society; they (75%) do not agree to share anything; if someone goes for medical treatment, she/he does not get the treatment as a general patient (60%), school administration non-cooperate during admission of children (40%) etc. They believe that ignorance and wrong idea of AIDS have caused these problems. At the same time, they (50%) added, even people who have proper knowledge of the issue often tend to avoid the addicts. So the condition is never supportive for the HIV Positives, leading them (70%) to feel cast away, and suffer from inferiority. They (75%) think that the PRESEP project created more possibilities in this field. In addition to increasing self-ability, PRESEP played a very important aiding role.

In addition, it has made the members understand Human Rights better. They (50%) also acknowledged discussion with other associations and the representatives of civil society about human rights which helped develop their concept of rights.

Stakeholder Analysis: Open discussion session was performed with stakeholders of all groups here. In this occasion respondent were spontaneous. Maximum of these people considered as excluded elements of the society. So these stakeholders always kept distance from all these kind of people. But after working in this project this wrong preservation of thought changed partially and an environment was created to empower or develop on the issues.

Media analysis: It's always important to analyze media coverage of any project and activities specially when it is about marginalized community. The evaluation team found that good number of media coverage including print media focused on various involvements from mainstream community as whole. It is mentionable that local print media covers success story and events very well but in relation to advocacy national print media covers less. To support the project to be implemented more meaningfully needs more attention on strategic media coverage that will foster opportunity to advocate the issue at national level. Film that produced from project needs to be broadcasted in different national and international channels to bring the issue at policy level and society as a whole. It's also time to include SGHs members in different events and discussions at media level to empowering them as frontline activist to change their situation.

Recommendations: After careful analysis following recommendations may help in creating maximum impact of this project:

1. To reach its required aims and objectives, the duration of the project should be extended for next phase.
2. Proper engagement and cooperation among SHG, partner NGOs, stakeholders, local administration, social activists, so that a social movement can be started up. In this case the selection of the stakeholders and their involvement is one of the primary actions; need more critical performance to the impact of targeted results. It also needs to create more space for them in action related environment.
3. Proper circumstances of engagement or attachments of beneficiaries need to be created. So organizational development and its capacity building must be assured. It is recommended that desired individual improvement finally improve organizational performance in many ways.
4. Different workshops designing for individual and organizational improvement requires to combine and relate with their livelihood requirements. It is in need to be planned and conduct of training workshop by listening them.
5. To create strong movement and advocacy to multi-sectoral level needs to be high lighted different level. Such as for drug user intervention counseling must be started from family level to national level, Alternative life skill and opportunity needs to endorse by policy makers, job givers, and social leaders and so on.
6. Proper management system needs to be developed to strengthening and coordinating

among implementing agencies. So it needs desire friendly proper planning in management to work smoothly. Considering the fact that all partners needs to run in parallel.

7. Sustainable planning and management system should be ensured. Decision making process would be introduced to extreme socially excluded people.
8. The PRESEP team should count understanding of AIDS industry and condom pricing that is vitally important to ensure work safety that is safe sex among sex workers.
9. Ensuring clear understanding among all level staff of PRESEP about legalization and Decriminalization
10. Needs more training and capacity building on handling social and religious aspects among field level staff. It is also recommended that staff tanning for PRESEP from local and abroad is desirable i.e. India can be one of the best training spot for self help initiative learning.
11. Needs to be reduced anxiety of stopping project anytime and MJF should be part of developing institutional development of self-help group formation and cultivation of community driven development.
12. Creating synergy of theory and practices at all level of implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
13. Naming of project staff including project associate can be re-arranged. The necessity to name the post that reflects more independent and responsible is recommended.
14. Terminologies of IEC, BCC and advocacy need to be understood by community properly to perform actions in proper way.
15. At PRESEP Empowerment and Development can be treated as a product that produced by community needs to be sold in the development market. The team is confident it will help PRESEP to grow financially and organizationally.
16. PRESEP needs to discover proper technology to face out from the community that will make them smiling rather than feeling of helplessness and MJF needs to be supportive with that manner(What actually helps this time to evaluate the project in positive way)
17. It is recommended that some selected SHGs could be in a tri-party contract with HASAB and MJF and rest of the organization could be funded with significant strategic plan and objectives. Additionally, few more self help groups could be included for next phase.
18. Individual SHGs needs to identify their special strength for generating income and making important to the society in terms of skills and services such as singing, dancing, performing drama, cooking, educating, and counseling to name the some.
19. For a better achievement of targeted objective financial management needs to be logically tolerant with implementation or program management. Simplified financial management and synergy of finance and action is recommended.
20. Media can play a vital role in expressing the views, ideas, and aims of the SHG. So it is needed to involve media with all the activities of the project in a broader scale.

To support the project to be implemented more meaningfully needs more attention on strategic media plan and coverage that will foster opportunity to advocate the issue at national level and funding opportunity to run the project gloriously.

21. In some area needs to include treatment care and support for PLHA and their families. It is highly recommended to start work on home based care for PLHA keeping in mind our resource and limitations. So, capacity building on home based care also recommended to introduce at implementation level.

Abbreviations

AAS	Ashar Alo Society	MISO	Management Information
BHS	Bandhan Hijra Sangha	System Officer	
BODAR	Organization of	MSM	Male having Sex with Male
Bangladesh	Drug Addict	MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
Rehabilitation		MTE	Mid Term Evaluation
BLS	Base Line Survey	NGO	Non Government Organization
BWHC	Bangladesh Women	ODPUP	Organization for Development
Health Coalition			Program of the Underprivileged
CBOs	Community Based Organiz	PLWA	People Living With HIV/AIDS
	ations	PA	Project Associates
DFID	Department for	PC	Project Coordinator
International Development		PRESEP	Promoting Rights of the
EC	Executive Committee		Extreme Socially Excluded People
ED	Executive Director	PM	Project Manager
FCSW	Female Commercial Sex	PO	Project Officer
Worker		SHG	Self-help Group
FGD	Focus Group Discussion	SBKS	Setu Bandhan Kallyan
IDU	Intravenous Drug Users	Sangstha	
KII	Key Formant Interview	SKS	Shuktara Kallyan Sangha
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation	SHOW	Self-help Organization of
MIS	Management Information	Women	
System		HASAB	HIV/AIDS and STD Alliance
		Bangladesh	

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