

Project Activity Report

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A BILS PROJECT ON

Awareness Raising for Prevention of HIV/AIDS among the Public Sector and Minor Road Transport Workers

Duration: **December 2005 to December 2006**



Development Partner:
The Royal Danish Embassy

Submitted by:



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Background and Justification

About BILS

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) props up the endeavors of the labour movement to act with the labour rights issues and social actions. BILS facilitates to strengthen links and networks between trade unions and other civil society organizations with similar interests, particularly in the justification of democratic and human rights and social justice in all its aspects.

BILS- DANIDA/ Danish Embassy Cooperation

The Danish International Development Association (DANIDA) is a valuable development partner of BILS. It assists BILS in many ways mainly through the LO-FTF Council of Denmark. The LO-FTF Council and the BILS have been enduring the partnership since 1997. There also has been a close working relationship with the Danish Embassy in Dhaka and BILS for a long time. BILS values the relations with all sincerity and due importance.

HIV/AIDS a top priority

HIV/AIDS is a top priority to the world communities as it is a disease that kills hundreds of thousands of people every year. In Bangladesh the number of HIV affected people is still a few but it is in danger zone as the country is bordered with two highly affected countries named India and Myanmar. Considering the future threat a lot of programmes have been taken by the government of Bangladesh and several organisations.

HIV/AIDS as a workplace issue

We have regrettably found very few steps have been taken for the workers in this regard though they are among the most vulnerable groups in the country. The migrant workers are in high threat and 97% of total affected are either migrant workers or their family members. Among others transport workers (rickshaw pullers, road and water transport, minor road vehicles) are mostly vulnerable.

Why BILS?

BILS works for the protection of workers' human rights. In the consideration of HIV/AIDS as a workplace issue BILS concentrates few of its activities on sensitizing the trade union activists to work for awareness raising among the general workers. Since inception BILS has been working for ensuring workplace safety through its Occupational Health and Safety (OHSE) component.

BILS included the issue of HIV/AIDS vulnerability among the workers in its activities in 2003 in collaboration with South Asian Regional Development Initiatives (SARDI) under its UNDP Reach Project. It was a one year pilot basis intervention and BILS conducted a ground research on the vulnerability of HIV/AIDS among the workers of transport, garments, jute and construction. Selecting the transport and construction workers under high threat awareness raising campaign had been continued through the trade unions in both the sectors.

Cooperation from Danish Embassy in Dhaka

When the project period was over BILS found that the activities could cover only a fragment of the total workers in the sectors and identified that more initiatives were needed. At this point the Danish Embassy in Dhaka forwarded its hands of collaboration towards BILS.

Initially BILS started the activities of awareness raising among the minor road workers in four coastal districts named Patuakhali, Barguna, Noakhali and Lakshmipur. Later the project was extended for one year and BILS concentrated its activities of awareness raising campaign among the public sector transport workers through the CBAs and unions of BILS associated trade union federations in Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC).

This is the yearly report of the project titled 'Awareness Raising on Prevention of HIV/AIDS among the Public Sector and Minor Road Transport Workers Project' representing the period December 2005 to June 2006. The project officially began on December 5, 2005 and is due to end on December 31, 2006.

Project Objectives

Development Objectives

To minimize the vulnerability of HIV/AIDS among the working people with a goal to ensure a healthy life for workers for increasing productivity.

Immediate Objectives

- To sensitize and build the capacity of trade unions activists within public sector and minor road transport workers on HIV/AIDS issue.
- To patronise workplace initiatives on prevention of HIV infection.
- To establish the HIV/AIDS as a workplace issue.

Strategy

The corresponding working Strategies broadly constituted training, workshop, advocacy campaign and networking.

Target groups

Target groups of the project were Public sector and Minor Rod Transport workers & trade unions leaders.



Initiation of collaboration

The project agreement was signed on 5th December 2005. Honourable Ambassador of Royal Danish Embassy HE Niels Severin Munk and Md. Zafrul Hasan, Acting Secretary General of BILS exchanges the contract papers.

Indicators of Achievement:

- ⇒ Enthusiastic approach of the trade union activists of BRTC and BIWTC sectors towards advocacy campaign on prevention of HIV/AIDS among the general workers of the sectors.
- ⇒ Top level officials of both the public sector corporation were helpful with the initiatives of the unions
- ⇒ General workers has taken the initiative positively and participated in the programmes with all enthusiasm.
- ⇒ BILS was invited to take part in the national rally and fair organised on the occasion of World's AIDS Day 2006.
- ⇒ BILS activities were covered by the electronic and print media.

Out Puts

Human Resources (Direct)

Transport Workers

Following human resources have been produced through training programs directly by the project in transport sectors (BRTC & BIWTC).

SL NO	Types	Output			Remarks
		Total	Male	Female	
1	Trainer	40	40	00	100% Male
2	Campaigner	1170	1150	20	
	Total	1210	1190	20	

Human Resources (Direct):

Minor Road Workers

Following human resources have been produced through Workshops programmes directly by the project for minor roads workers.

SL NO	Types	Output			Remarks
		Total	Male	Female	
1	Campaigner	300	--	300	100% Female
	Total	300	--	300	

Materials:

Following materials have been produced directly by the project:

SI No	Type/Title	Contents	Quantity	Language
1	Brochure	Unions Fighting AIDS	12,600	Bangla
2	Leaflet	General information on HIV/AIDS	10,000	Bangla
3	Campaign T-Shirt	With slogan for awareness raising on the observance of HIV/AIDS Day 2006	1,300	Bangla
4	Campaign Cap	With slogan for awareness raising on the observance of HIV/AIDS Day 2006	1,300	Bangla

Major Activities



1. Project Set-up & Orientation of the project officials
2. Planning meeting with trade union leaders
3. Sharing the idea with BRTC and BIWTC chairmen

(Caption: BRTC Chairman Adv. Taimur Alam Khandakar, BILS Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan, Vice Chairman Md. Mojibur Rahman Bhuiyan are seen among the participants from BRTC unions)

Discussion Meeting with BRTC and BIWTC chairmen

A BILS team visited the offices of the chairmen of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) & Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) and hold meetings with them to discuss about the initiative and seek their cooperation in the implementation of the project. Both of them assured BILS to extend their hand of cooperation.

Short Action Survey

Initially BILS conducted a short action survey on its own initiative, to gather information as much as available about the HIV/AIDS situation in selected sectors and area for better preparation for good project implementation.

The survey was attempted to measure the knowledge level and attitudes of the target groups towards HIV/AIDS. Through the process their general knowledge on basic facts of transmission and prevention and attitudes towards the Persons Living With AIDS (PLWA) among workers in BIWTC, BRTC and Minor Road Workers. The geographical areas were DANIDA supported project areas in Lashkimpur, Patuakhali and Borguna.

The survey report was used as a base line of the project activities.

The major findings are:

- ✓ Overall knowledge of HIV/AIDS among the surveyed respondents was very low. For the respondents who had no schooling, the level of knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS was non-existent.
- ✓ It is revealed that low levels of knowledge about HIV/AIDS among the respondents made them have a very strongly negative attitude towards PLWA.
- ✓ Most of those who had no schooling were neutral in their attitude towards PWLA apparently because their illiteracy prevented them from acquiring knowledge about basic facts of HIV/AIDS.
- ✓ Even among the respondents with more education attitudes towards PLWA was negative.
- ✓ There may be scope to bring about changes in the attitudes of the target groups that would lead to a modification of high-risk behavior thereby leading to a reduction in vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection.
- ✓ Also attitude changes would result in more humane treatment of PLWAs who are members of family and society.
- ✓ BILS has the opportunity to conduct awareness raising programs, which could bring about the above changes in attitude by imparting accurate knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the associated risks thereof.

- ✓ The methods and manner of conducting any awareness building should be carefully designed and structured to take into account, the sentiments and sensitivities of the target groups concerned. Message, mode of delivery, training materials should all be prepared to ensure effective learning and internalization of knowledge about HIV/AIDS.

Implementation Stage

Series Workshops on Prevent the HIV/AIDS with the minor roads sector transport workers:

12 workshops held in Lashkimpur, Barguna and Patuakhali districts with the participation of total of 300 female workers who were basically involved in road construction, plantation tree, building culverts within the age group of 14 to 50.

Participatory and experiential methodologies were used, such as small group discussions, brainstorming, case study, lecture & questions and answers.

Teaching aids such as flip charts, posterpapers and training materials, handouts, poster were distributed among the participants as effective learning tools.



(Caption: *Participants of a workshop held in Patuakhali*)

Conduct Training Program with the Minor Roads Workers on Prevention of HIV/AIDS:

The objective of the training was to raise awareness of the minor roads transport workers on prevention of HIV/AIDS.

Key discussion points of the Trainings:

At the outset of the training courses, participant's knowledge and understanding about HIV/AIDS were assessed through their open discussion. Training results show that:

- ⇒ Minor roads women workers was discussing on their problems at work.
- ⇒ They were focusing on their vulnerability of infection of HIV/AIDS.
- ⇒ Many of them were not aware of the fatal disease at all.
- ⇒ Some knew a little, some said that they heard about the disease but have no idea about their vulnerability of getting infected.
- ⇒ The discussion was going on at the seminar hall of FPAB local office in Patuakhali, a coastal district where thousands of women workers work in the construction activities of minor roads.

Pre- and post-test status:

Excepting only a couple of workers, the rest of the participants were not at all familiar about the issue of HIV/AIDS, its implications and how to protect their rights during the process. This figure increased to 90% after the training course.

Post training results show that:

- The participants gathered idea and knowledge about HIV/AIDS issue;
- The participants came to know about the method prevention of HIV/AIDS;
- The participants' awarded about how to deal with the infected persons;
- The participants showed interests for campaigning on awareness rising for prevention of HIV/AIDS among the general workers



(Participants of a workshop held in Barguna)

Views of the participants:

The participants revealed the following regarding how they will use their achieved knowledge in life:

After completion of the training courses most of the workers enthusiastically noted that the training was very useful for them as they have acquired knowledge on the issues & areas that they did not know before.



(Participants of a workshop held in Laksmipur)

They were confident that now they are more aware and would like to share the issue with their family members and friends. Some workers stressed that they would now take initiatives to aware some of the workers on the issue.

At the end of the discussion they were all convinced that though they are not infected but they must have the idea about the disease and how it spread to keep them ever free from the fatal disease.

Local Involvement and Assistance:

- Received full support from the LGED Personnel and Local Staff
- Cooperation from Local Union Leaders
- Workers willingness

Major Activities

HIV/AIDS Training for Union leaders

According to project objective, 2 nos. of sensitization training workshop were implemented in Dhaka among the trade union leaders of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWC) and Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Corporation (BRTC). A group of 20 union leaders from each sectors attended the said workshops held at BILS seminar hall, Dhaka.



(Participants of a trainers' training held at BILS seminar hall)

Objectives of the workshops were:

- To develop development knowledge of the participants on basic prevention actions of HIV/AIDS
- Develop skill on utilization awareness raising materials at workplaces.
- Develop plan of action to prevent HIV/AIDS infection among water and road transport workers.

As part of the TOT training, each participant develop individual action plan as part of follow-up activities at workplaces.

Experience sharing meeting

An experience sharing meeting was organized at BILS seminar hall on 31 July with the participation of 10 core trade union leaders from BIWTC and BRTC. To share experience of HIV/AIDS situation at workplaces and develop cooperation and awareness in BIWTC and BRTC was the main objective.

Project Review

TU Union leaders reviewed the project activities:

A special review meeting was organised at BILS Seminar Hall on 11 November to discuss about the strategy of integrating HIV/AIDS issues by unions in BIWTC and BRTC at workplaces. 13 Key union leaders (President, General Secretary, Trainers and team members of the BILS HIV/AIDS project) attended the programme. Following are the recommendations came out of the discussions:



- Encourage the BRTC and BIWTC management to take initiative of HIV medical testing facilities for workers and employees.
- Encourage the management to develop and promote campaign messages on HIV/AIDS at workplaces (i.e. message in official letter pad, union pad, tickets etc.).
- To ensure that every workers obtained awareness leaflet and brochure as developed by project.
- Trained-up 200 new workplace trainers at BRTC and BIWTC as part of human resource development.
- Organize advance trainers courses for the senior trainers of the project

Follow-up Programs

Follow-up: Awareness raising and sensitization at workplaces

Under the project activities 38 follow-up discussion meetings were held in different part of Bangladesh by trained up trainers from TOT programs. 1170 workers were sensitized on HIV/AIDS issue through

programs. Trainers from BRTC and BIWTC conducted the follow-up activities at their respective workplaces and basic unions. (List enclosed)

Photographs of some follow-up activities:



Participants of a follow-up discussion in BRTC sector



Participants of a follow-up discussion held in BIWTC sector

World's AIDS Day 2006 Observed

With the commitment to protecting all workers from the vulnerabilities of HIV/AIDS Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) observed the World AIDS Day 2006 on December 01 through country wide awareness raising campaign programs.

Highlighting the slogan "AIDS is dangerous but easy to protect" series of rallies and discussion meetings held in different districts under BILS banner. Trade union activists of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) organized the programs.



Apart from joining the national rally and fair held at NAM Conference Center in Dhaka they organized rallies at Kallayanpur Bus Depot in the city, Chittagong, Bogra, Barisal, Narayanganj, Gazipur, Pabna, Paturia Ferry Ghat and Mawa Ferry Ghat areas. Thousand of workers joined the rallies and expressed their commitment to protect themselves and help others to be protected from the transmission of the killer virus.

Speakers in the rallies and discussions underscored on considering the

HIV/AIDS as an important issue of the workplaces and urged the trade unionist to play a desired role in this regard. A separate rally was held in Narayanganj on 2nd December 2006 (Saturday) morning under the same banner to be organized by BIWTC workers union.

Few of the programs and activities were covered by electronic and print media.

Publications

Brochure on "Unions Fighting AIDS"

A brochure on Unions Fighting AIDS has been published as a campaign material and distributed among the campaign activists as well as the general workers for raising awareness on HIV/AIDS and how to prevent it. Initially BILS published 2500 copies of the brochure and later on high demand from the unions 10000 copies of the brochure were reprinted with some modifications and new illustration and changing the cover page design.

The brochure highlighted- the slogan that HIV/AIDS is a killer and incurable disease, but it is easy to prevent it. Through the brochure BILS demanded for a safe working place and life and urged the trade unions to fight against the killer disease to protect the working people. Following are the issues highlighted in the brochure-



- What is HIV/AIDS
- Why it is so dangerous
- How the virus spreads
- What taboos should be ignored
- Why the working people are more vulnerable
- How the migrant workers are facing greater threat
- Why women should be more careful
- How to prevent the infection
- What is the impact of HIV/AIDS in the workplaces and What to do
- What is the impact of HIV/AIDS in workers' lives
- What is the role of trade unions in fighting AIDS

The brochure declares that the healthy and fitness of a worker can ensure the livelihood of him/her and the family.

Leaflet on HIV/AIDS

A leaflet on HIV/AIDS has been published for raising general awareness on the killer disease. The leaflet was distributed among the general people during the World AIDS Day Rallies.

Challenges faced

The HIV/AIDS is still a term that is considered as taboo in our society. In some cases the project officials and the trainers had to face problem to initiate the discussion. But with the help of the manuals, that developed in easy and acceptable language, for conducting such workshops and discussions the things were made easy and later the participants took it easily.



One part of project activity was concentrated in the coastal belt of the country which is in remote areas. So, for implementation of the project activities officials had to make a lot of difficult travels.

Further needs:

- a) Unions need to be more integrated
- b) A workplace policy needs to be taken

- c) A common TU policy to deal HIV/AIDS issue
- d) Each and every worker needs to be reached out
- e) Distribution of the brochure is not enough, workers should be introduced with the matter through discussion circle.
- f) Evaluation and review of the impact of the project activity

CONCLUSION

Overall activities of the project contributed to build initial capacity, tools and human resources in the BRTC and BIWTC at transport sector to fight against HIV/AIDS through workers actions. But it is the tip of the iceberg the BILS has so far confirmed. The continuation of the project is necessary to achieve long term goal of the project.