

Involvement of ex-drug users' self-help groups in peer based-harm reduction program: an experience from Bangladesh

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Issues

Ex-Drug Users (Ex-DUs) can play a vital role to implement effective Harm Reduction (HR) program for Injecting Drug Users (IDU) and as well as for their empowerment by mobilizing self-help groups (SHG).



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Description

A collaborative project between Government of Bangladesh and Save the Children-USA funded by GFATM (3 grants-Round-2, Round-6 and Rolling Continuation Cannel) is implementing HIV prevention program focusing Young People and Most at Risk Population. Save the children implementing HR program since Feb '08 to provide essential services among 14000 IDUs following peer based strategy in 29 districts across the country through two consortium partners. Each consortium comprises with International/National/Local NGOs and CBOs/Self-help groups.

Description (Cont.....)

- Two ex-drug users' self-help groups are (APOSH and ARK) functionally involved as implementing partners to provide essential harm reduction services to the injecting drug users.
- They are providing essential services (e.g. peer education, NEP, abscess & STI management, pre-post detox counseling, long term treatment, community based detoxification, follow up, vocational training, rehabilitation services etc.) among 1000 IDUs through establishing 2 DICs and 2 treatment centers.
- Apart from the implementation of HR program, a total of 1422 IDUs received community based detoxification and long term treatment services and out of which 167 gone through skill building training.

Lessons learned

- Formal partnership with self-help groups builds their ownership and accountability towards program.
- Integration of ex-DUs in HR program explored more opportunities to identify the current users to develop easy & communicable accesses for providing services broaden the intervention.
- Self-help groups have been playing a vital role in advocating law in forcing agencies and other local elites in favor of Harm Reduction program.

Next steps

Ensure active involvement of more ex-drug users' self-help groups in Harm Reduction program implementation and social integration through formal partnership to carry out HIV prevention program effectively.