



Risks | Responsibilities

Male Sexual Health and HIV in Asia
and the Pacific-International Consultation

New Delhi, India, 23-26 September 2006

COUNTRY : Bangladesh

Date : July 19, 2006

MSM are formally organised

- Social groups : NGOs support them, but yet MSM are not socially organized.
- Organisations : There is no official organization of MSM
- NGOs : Four NGOs are working on MSWs
- CBOs : No CBO currently exists who work with MSM/MSWs
- Networks : MSWs & MSM have their own personal communication & network

MSM are in-formally organised : With the support of NGOs, MSM/MSWs are informally organized as they know each other. They have access to STIs services and condoms/lubricants in the field and at DICs operated by NGOs

MSM specifically captured in the **National HIV Surveillance System** : YES:

National HIV prevalence among MSM : less than 1% in all rounds of surveillance

This includes **behaviour surveillance** : Yes,

BSS covers MSM and MSWs

Covering [year] : 1998 to on-going .

‘MSM and HIV’ - related research available, ongoing or planned :

Quite a good number of research already completed, but published documents are yet lacking.

Research published in peer reviewed journals:

Khan, S.I., Hudson-Rodd, N., Saggars, S. and Bhuiya, A. (2005). Men who have sex with men’s sexual relations with women in Bangladesh. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 7(2):159-169.

Khan, S.I., Bhuiya, A. and Uddin, A.S.M. (2004). Application of the Capture-Recapture Method for Estimating the Number of Mobile Male Sex Workers (MSWs) in the Port City of Bangladesh. *The Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition*, 22(1):19-26.

Few other reports:

Khan, S., Khan, S.I., & Hollerbach, P. E. (2004). *In their own words: the Formulation of Sexual and Reproductive Health Behaviour Among Young Men in Bangladesh*. A collaborative study between the CATALYST Consortium, Naz Foundation International, and Bandhu Social Welfare Society. USA

Aditya B. S.Khan, Ahmed Shale (2004) The impact of legal, socia-cultural, legislative and socioeconomic impediments to effective HIV/AIDS intervention with MSM in Bangladesh.

KEY INFORMATION GAPS that hinder establishing and/or scaling up ‘MSM and HIV’ - specific programmes and interventions :

1. Situation assessment of MSM activities and male sex trade in some major cities of Bangladesh
2. Sexual and social networks among MSM and MSWs
3. Intervention design for reaching female partners of MSM/MSWs
4. Reasons for low use of condoms among MSM/MSWs
5. Reasons for less effective peer-education programs
6. Strategies and operational plan for advocacy

Demographic data available on males who have sex with males :

Some information are collected in BSS and in other behavioral studies. The major issue is that MSM are not a singular variety of men or they can be categorized in any specific socio-demographic or socio-occupational groups. They are just men with diverse demographic background.

MSM - specific budget [lines] in the National HIV Plan : Yes. There is specific budget line for MSM in National HIV plan (year 2003-10) with an amount of Taka 31.5 million (US\$ 5 million)

GFATM : Y/N Funds specifically earmarked for ‘MSM and HIV’ :

In the current programme 2nd round –No funds are earmarked, however, in the proposed 6th round GFATM proposal, funds are earmarked for MSM interventions.

Other international donor and/or multilateral institutions funds specifically earmarked for 'MSM and HIV' :

Only a few international donors (for example, USAID/FHI) have earmarked funds for MSWs. Most of the donors probably have no earmarked funds, although many of them provided funds for research and intervention.

Donor coordination in supporting 'MSM and HIV' – specific programmes and interventions (donors themselves and donors with government).

Donors have no formal coordination mechanism on the issue but communicate and discuss if perceived necessary.

There is an **operational National Strategic Plan on HIV** : Yes

There are '**MSM and HIV**' - **specific interventions** in the National HIV Plan : Yes

These programmes reach **sub-populations of MSM** (trans gendered, etc) : Yes

Male-to-male sex is not legal in Bangladesh

MSM – specific HIV programmes face **problems with law enforcement** : Yes

Obstacles [not related to information gaps] that hinder establishing and/or scaling up of ‘MSM and HIV’ – specific programmes and interventions : Yes

Obstacles:

1. Penal code 377: criminalizes male to male sex
2. Sexual harassment, abuse and discrimination based on sexual practices
3. No legal protection to preserve the human rights of MSM

Solution:

1. Establishing sexual rights of MSM/MSWs as human rights. The research and interventions on MSM/MSWs must be operated within the human rights approaches
2. Challenging the existing ambiguities of rules and regulations against male to male sex. The civil society, policy planners, development workers and researchers can play a vital role.
3. Advocacy component must be in-built in every research and interventions

‘MSM and HIV’ - specific interventions in the National HIV Plan :

YES. There is plan for specific intervention for MSM/MSWs in the National HIV operation plan for 2003-10 with specific allocated resources.

All following components are included in the National plan:

- HIV transmission prevention
- Information & communication
- Peer outreach
- Targeted condom distribution

‘MSM and HIV’ - specific interventions in the National HIV Plan :

YES. There is plan for specific intervention for MSM/MSWs in the National HIV operation plan for 2003-10 with specific allocated resources.

All following components are included in the National plan :

- Access to treatment
- STI Services
- Enabling environment
- Community engagement and empowerment

‘MSM and HIV’ - specific interventions in the National HIV Plan :

YES. There is plan for specific intervention for MSM/MSWs in the National HIV operation plan for 2003-10 with specific allocated resources.

‘MSM and HIV’ - specific interventions in the National HIV Plan : Nothing is mentioned in this way, however, interventions are on going on MSM / MSWs

- CBO : No
- NGO : Yes (Condom and lubricant promotion, STI services, DIC services)
- INGO : Work through local NGOs
- Local government : Not directly involved, but attend advocacy meetings and support the NGOs
- National government : Through NGOs, government supports interventions on MSM/MSWs
- Other : International research organizations are conducting research on MSM/MSWs

‘MSM and HIV’ are part of the country’s scaling up towards universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support initiative : YES

Additional Information and/or Comments :

- Interventions on MSM/MSWs are operating for 10 years in Bangladesh. Now it is urgently required to demonstrate the best practice model for scaling up interventions both at national and regional levels.
- Due to legal and social ambiguities towards male to male sex, work on MSM and HIV is at a low profile; a situation that needs to change as a matter of urgency. Dissemination of findings to the policy makers and civil society is urgently required.
- Fund mobilization has to respond to the needs of the country. The donors have to coordinate among themselves to ensure continuation of the effective interventions.
- NGOs need to be innovative for making their programs sustainable.
- NGOs need to evaluate why condom use rate is low and STI transmission is not satisfactorily controlled.
- The effectiveness of the peer education program needs investigations.
- Capacity building of the NGO-staff is an urgent need.