

Bangladesh Road Project Combats Potential for HIV/AIDS and Human Trafficking

Building public awareness on HIV/AIDS and trafficking of women and children is an important element of an ADB-supported road network project in Bangladesh.

The project, approved in 2003 and funded through a concessional ADB loan of \$126 million, seeks to provide rural farmers with better access to markets and promote cross-border traffic. The [Road Network Improvement and Maintenance Project II](#) will also secure government resources for road maintenance, promote private sector participation in road maintenance, and improve road safety.

In addition, multifaceted programs are being carried out targeting high-risk groups such as construction workers, truck drivers, and vulnerable women and children to combat HIV/AIDS and trafficking in the project areas. The models developed for anti-trafficking operations and public awareness campaigns in the cross-border areas of Bangladesh with India and Myanmar can be integrated into other transport operations.

Part of the work is focusing on building awareness of government, NGOs, and media on HIV/AIDS and trafficking issues. A center for legal literacy/awareness on HIV/AIDS and women and children trafficking is being set up in two districts in the northern border of Bangladesh and India (Panchagarh and Dinajpur), and one district of Cox's Bazaar, Chittagong. These activities will complement ongoing and planned activities of other key stakeholders.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) of the Government of Bangladesh is the executing agency for the component. The Ministry has identified three experienced NGOs to implement the component, conducting the following work:

- Information dissemination through 15 Resource Centers in 15 subdistricts of the border and tourist districts of Bangladesh
- Awareness raising sessions at the district, subdistrict and union levels among law and order officials, judiciary, local elites including religious leaders, NGOs, and government functionaries;
- Courtyard meetings with grassroots level poor female, male, adolescent boys and girls;
- Special orientation sessions for truck drivers, bus drivers and construction workers on HIV/AIDS and trafficking.

Media used in the awareness raising include posters, illustrations and folk/street drama. Following successful completion, the program will be expanded into additional sub-districts with emphasis on more effective orientation and follow-up activities.

This article was written by Ms. Shaheen Akter Dolly, Executive Director, *Nari Maitree*, and Ms. Rokeya Khatun, Gender and Development Consultant, Bangladesh Resident Mission, Asian Development Bank in May 2008. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the ADB or its Board of Governors or the governments they represent.