Completion Report

OF

Project - HIV/AIDS Prevention Education and Awareness Program among School Adolescents in Bihar (India)

Project period: 12 Months



Supported by

The Mercury Phoenix Trust, UK

Implemented by

Bureau of Obligate and Accompanier for Rural Development (BOARD)

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Completion Report

Brief outline of the Project:

Project title	HIV/AIDS Prevention Education and Awareness Program Among School Adolescents in Bihar (India)
Location	Daniawan Block in Patna district, Bihar (India)
Funded by	The Mercury Phoenix Trust, UK
Project No.	None (sanctioned as on 10 th February'2020)
Reporting period	Feb.'20 to March'20 = 2 months
	July'20 to March'21 = 9 months = 11 months
Target Population	 School Students (age 12-19 years), Village Youth and Young Women.
	 Secondary School Teachers and Health Service Providers (HSPs)
Highlights	Knowledge and awareness on HIV/AIDS have been generated through pre & post-assessment, training & workshops, rally, peer education, and printed materials, etc. This is the key strategy utilized during the project intervention. The project paid attention to increasing knowledge and awareness, and change of attitude on HIV/AIDS among school students, teachers, health service providers, village youths, and rural young women in the project area. The observations of the program & feedback will serve as a basis for further tailored approaches to strategic programs to control HIV/AIDS in Bihar.
Goal	To assessing and increasing HIV/AIDS Knowledge, Awareness, and Attitudes among School Adolescents and Youth (12-19 age groups) in Bihar, India
Activities	 Sensitization meetings with teachers, students and stockholders. Organize pre & post test session among school adolescent & youth. Training of Peer Educators. HIV/AIDS awareness workshop. Refresher training for peer educators, teachers, and HSPs. Counseling and Group educational sessions. World AIDS Day celebration. Debates & quiz competitions.
Outcomes	 Improved knowledge and attitudes of HIV/AIDS to school adolescents & youth in rural areas. Enhanced knowledge of HIV/AIDS among school adolescents (12-19 years) and youth (15-24 years) of age groups with comprehensive and correct information; Increased use of condoms especially among high-risk sex; and Reduced needle-sharing among injection users.
Date submitted	30 th August'2021





Background of the Project area

According to the Bihar State AIDS Control Society, persons living with HIV/AIDS in Bihar State are estimated to be more than 1.30 lakh as of 31st December 2020. Dr. Syed Hubey Ali, health specialist, UNICEF (Bihar) said 22 out of every 10000 people in India were infected with HIV while in Bihar it was 18 per 10000 people. This is an alarming situation for all of us.

Patna, the capital of Bihar is the district headquarters. It is the most populous district of Bihar and the fifteenth-most populous district in India. Patna district is well known for its historical places, temples, and these tourist attractions, and age-old traditional practices. The modern city of Patna is mainly on the southern bank of the river Gangas.

The youth of the project area frequently go to nearby towns and big cities in search of work and return to their native villages after the completion of their work. During their stay in towns/cities, they are often exposed to unprotected sex with strangers. These are youths, especially adolescents and young women who never get an opportunity to either discuss/learn issues related to STDs in their communities because it is considered taboo. Our intervention with these youths and young women reveals that many are infected with HIV/AIDS and there is a great need to provide awareness and education to adolescents, youth, in and out of school on HIV/AIDS to prevent it.

Executive Summary

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) has emerged as the single most formidable challenge to public health, human rights, and development worldwide. Inadequate knowledge and risky practices are major hindrances in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. The project evaluation studies have shown that the younger age group (12-19 years) are more prone to unsafe sex practices and have poor access to contraceptives as well.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in India, BOARD has successfully implemented the project for promoted HIV/AIDS education and awareness among school and non-school-going rural adolescents and youth, age between 12-19 years, and students of Standard IX to XII. This helped in increasing knowledge on the prevention, use of the condom, safe sexual methods, and reproductive health. Target groups are also enabled to access the correct information and services for the prevention and spreading of HIV/AIDS.

We observed that many adolescents have been involved in sexual relationships before marriage due to ignorance and this assists the spread of HIV/AIDS. A significant proportion of youth gets involved in sexual activity by the age of 15 years. Thus, adolescents are at a higher risk of contracting HIV through sexual transmission.

Adolescents (11-19 years age group) in Daniawan block represents, 22.03% of the total population as of December 2020. Here is a conservative Hindu society. It is still taboo to talk openly about sex-related topics. Hence, it becomes even more important to understand the knowledge and attitude of the youths towards HIV/ AIDS. Furthermore, this data could serve as a basis for a tailored approach for HIV/AIDS control programs in the future also.

During this implementation phase, the target groups, as well as the project team of BOARD were oriented about the goal & objectives of the project and preventive measures regarding HIV/AIDS. The project also encourages awareness of the COVID-19 pandemic essential to be undertaken during the project period.



Activities Implemented Under the Project:

ACTIVITY	Sensitization/initial meetings with teachers, school staffs, students and stakeholders
OBJECTIVE	To sensitize stakeholders and school students on HIV/AIDS and project objectives.
	To motivate them for their true and sincere participation in the project.

PROGRESS:

According to the schedule, BOARD organized a one-day sensitization meeting for the target groups and community members. Due to restrictions because of COVID-19, we have conducted 11 meetings with school students and 13 meetings with teachers and other stakeholders out of 32 meetings each at the BOARD meeting hall and community spaces in the project villages.

Total **368** school students and **314** stakeholders (193 rural women & 121 men), from different villages of Daniawan block in Patna district, participated. The meeting was started with an overview of the program and its objectives. After, various issues of HIV/AIDS were highlighted like its causes, spread, prevention, etc. to motivate for their true and sincere participation in the project.





The session was conducted by Rishi Prakash Gautam and Baby Tabassum with the support of Nirmala Kumari and Ms. Lalun Kumari with the following important aspects-

(a) Are You AWARE of HIV?

HIV is a disease that does not discriminate. Anyone can contract this disease. Students need to be AWARE for protection and prevention from HIV for themselves & their community and prevent the transmission of HIV. BOARD staff played a key role in organizing the sessions.

(b) HIV/AIDS: The Basics

As explained by the BOARD team; HIV can weak your immune system by destroying important cells that fight disease and infection. Over time, HIV can destroy your T-cells that your body can't fight infections and disease. When this happens, HIV infection can lead to AIDS.

AIDS is a complex illness with a wide range of complications and symptoms. AIDS is the final stage of HIV. In this stage, people are at high risk and last stage of life by various organ failures.

(c) HIV Transmission:

HIV is found in specific human body fluids. You can be infected with HIV if any of the fluids like Blood, Semen, Breast milk, vaginal fluids, rectal (anal), etc. enter your body.

(d) Signs and Symptoms:

Many people who are HIV positive do not have symptoms of HIV infection. The virus can sometimes cause people to feel sick, but most of the severe symptoms and illnesses of HIV are similar to common





illnesses, such as the flu or respiratory infections. Signs and symptoms commonly seen in the early stages of HIV included Fever, Chills, Muscle aches, Sore throat, Fatigue, etc. Infected individuals can have the virus for up to 10 years.

- (e) HIV/AIDS Prevention: we provide knowledge to reduce your risk by;
 - **Practicing safer sex:** Safer sex is most important for sexual health and healthy relationships. To reduce your risk of contracting HIV, you should use male/female condom every time. Anal, oral, or vaginal sex, which is the main ways that HIV is transmitted, you can prevent it by abstinence. Condoms are very effective against HIV.
 - **Getting test**: You should know about your health as well as your partner health. It is also imperative that you know your partner's status prior to engaging in sexual activity.
 - **Being monogamous:** Monogamy means being in a sexual relationship with only one person and you both are having sex only with each other. Having one sexual partner greatly reduces your risk of contracting HIV, assuming neither of you are already infected with HIV.

An interaction session was also organized to clear several misconceptions like 'mosquito bite cannot spread HIV', 'close kiss cannot spread HIV, and sharing clothes cannot spread HIV' etc.

To understand the above topics of the sensitization phase for school students, teachers, stakeholders & community, it has seemed important to explain that it is the inception stage of future training. The first contact with the group by the BOARD team is feeling the goals to be attained with the structure of the course and time distribution.

OUTPUT: The participants were happy with the knowledge shared by the BOARD. They said that rural youth, women & girls are not able to look after their sexual and reproductive health and are not able to reduce their risk of HIV infection because of the lack of knowledge and confidence. The participants especially village health service providers and rural women were encouraged by the BOARD to sensitize people at large.

ACTIVITY	Pre & Post assessment of the knowledge, improved attitude, and perceptions on HIV/AIDS among school adolescents & youth in Daniawan block.
OBJECTIVE	To improve knowledge, attitude, and perceptions regarding HIV/AIDS among school adolescents & youth in the rural areas of Patna district.

PROGRESS:



A pre & post-study was conducted among school students in 11 villages of Daniawan block in Patna district in Bihar. 30 questions were asked that were divided into two categories: Questions concerning the routes of transmission and general know-how about HIV/AIDS (including preventative measures and attitudes of infected). Thus, 30 questionnaires were composed in Hindi (local language) & English with a tick-box response that can be easily understandable and quick to complete (set of questions has been send to the MPT with six-monthly report).

After the initial draft, the content was validated by the expert

reviewers, and consistency was statically tested by the BOARD which proved that questionnaire is feasible to obtain accurate responses.







A total of **584 (306 girls and 278 boys)** non-going & going school students (Age Group 12-19 years) were surveyed.

This study was considered as the first study to judge the awareness of the school students and rural youth in the Daniawan block of Patna district, Bihar. Regardless of sexual orientation, each individual has the right to protect himself or herself from HIV/AIDS. Focusing on school students does not mean ignoring young women & youth. Prevention programs for adolescents and youth need to continue and expand but without

a parallel program for young women and men, there will be little impact.

<u>Methodology:</u> A cross-sectional survey was conducted among school adolescents & youth in Daniawan block. They were interviewed through questionnaires to judge their knowledge, attitude, and perceptions of HIV/AIDS. The study was conducted anonymously for class IX to XII students, and the students were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The purpose of the study was explained and informed consent was obtained verbally from the participating students and their parents.

<u>Result / Outcome</u>: A total of **584** students, both **278** boys (47.60%) and **306** girls (52.40%), from 4 schools of Shahjahanpur, Singriawan, Daniawan, and Kharbhai Panchayats of Daniawan block were involved in this study. 32.9% of the participants were in IX grade, 43.8% were in the X grade, and 23.3% were in the XI & XII grade. Of these, 21.2% of the participants were from rural youth (non-going school students).

Routes of transmission of HIV: Concerning the knowledge of students about modes of transmission of HIV, the majority (72.3%) [Boys (N=159) and girls (N=263)] respondents did not consider that shaking hands, touching or hugging someone with an affected individual could transmit the disease, whereas 24.1% [boys (N=108) and girls (N=33)] thought that it could while 3.6% did not give their opinion.

More than (34.8%) of the students believed that kissing could transmit the disease; 65.2% assumed that it was not transmitted by kissing. There was a significant difference between boys and girls groups concerning transmission by kissing. 19.9% (N=116) of boys considered this a route of transmission, while the corresponding figure was only 14.9% (N=87) among girls.

Only **56.1%** of boys (N=156) and 67% of girls (N=205) respondents considered that sexual contact is a route of transmission of HIV. Regarding transmission by oral sex, **54.3%** (N=151) of the boy's group considered it a route of transmission, whereas this figure was **42.5%** (N=130) among the girls' group. Additionally, **73.7%** (N=430) of the respondents felt that sharing barber tools (use of common razors) might transmit the disease; **22.8%** (N=133) assumed that it would be not transmitted by such a practice and **3.5%** did not give their opinion. Thus, no significant differences were observed between boys & girls. The majority of the students **85.3%** (N=498) knew that sharing a needle/syringe sharing is a mode of transmission. Students were also questioned about the course of the disease. About **51.4%** knew that an HIV-infected person can remain symptomatic for many years.

The overall knowledge about HIV among students was higher in girls than in boys. The participants were asked to suggest three methods that would give protection from HIV/AIDS. These suggestions were an indicator to judge their knowledge about the disease. The answers included the use of a condom, avoidance of the use of I.V drugs, not sharing barber tools, regular premarital testing, etc.





General knowledge of HIV/AIDS:

General knowledge of HIV/AIDS among the students was surveyed and data were analyzed. A large number of respondents (74.9%); (N=437 out of 584) answered that HIV is a viral infection.

Of the total, **42.3**% thought that there is a vaccine for HIV (**36.3**% **boys = 101, 47.7**% **= 146 girls**). Meanwhile, **68.1**% of the total survey responded that there is no definitive treatment for HIV/AIDS, without a significant difference between both groups.

This particular study also highlighted some misconceptions about HIV/AIDS diagnosis and prevention, which needed to be concerned about. The study will provide a benchmark for future interventions and a basis for discussions in public platforms on HIV/AIDS awareness and education in Bihar.

Conclusion:

This study is providing preliminary data from the project area where current information on the knowledge of youth about HIV and their attitude. This study also highlighted the lack of basic knowledge of HIV/AIDS among young students, modes of transmission, and its management. The basic approach for control of HIV/AIDS remains prevention since an effective cure or vaccine is not yet available.

General awareness of HIV/AIDS may be high but the specific knowledge of the disease among youth is still poor. Parents and teachers should play their roles to educate youth on the pandemic and helping to prevent and control HIV/AIDS. The students may have increased knowledge through HIV/AIDS literature available by BOARD. Peer health educators may also be trained and educate their peers on HIV/AIDS.

ACTIVITY	Peer Educators and Refresher training
OBJECTIVE	To up-skill peer educators as sources of information, carers, and a support system. Youth
	peer educators are key personnel in any effective strategy of the HIV/AIDS program of
	the organization.

PROGRESS:



Total 189 students peer educators attended a three-day peer educator training session. They were trained as per the designed curriculum for better delivery of their services. The training sessions covered the concept of peer education with methods of HIV transmission and its prevention, substance abuse, rape, and RH issues along with confidence building, improved communication skills, values promotion with enhanced self-awareness of the target groups. As a result of the training session, skill up-gradation of peer educators was promoted as sources of information, and competencies to support the system.





In addition, 46 teachers and 37 Rural Health Service Providers (HSPs) from 11 villages near schools in Daniawan block, Patna have also attended the training that helped to review peer education and observe their growth. A one-day refresher training for peer educators was also organized to upgrade their knowledge on adolescence and puberty, values, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS.

The aim of the teacher's and Health Service Providers refresher training is to help educators develop insight into issues of HIV/AIDS management in schools and assist in the creation of a good educational environment that is free from discrimination and stigma.

As a result, peer educators are now sincerely engaged in their work now and covering village youths and communities through poems and posters.

ACTIVITY	HIV/AIDS awareness workshop
OBJECTIVE	To provide correct information to stakeholders about HIV infection & AIDS.
	To raise awareness for the necessity and the ways of protection from HIV virus.

PROGRESS:

BOARD successfully conducted a one-day HIV/AIDS awareness workshop with the support of project staff and experienced health experts. Total 12 awareness workshops (04 workshops in 04 schools, 04 among stakeholders and o4 workshop among women SHGs) were organized that focused on HIV transmission and prevention aspects. Before undertaking this intervention, meetings with school administrators and the project staff were conducted for observing the needs and scope of the awareness programs.



Total **698 Students and more than 500 People** including stakeholders (63 village frontline health workers, 81 ASHA, 19 AWW & MAMTA, and 168 rural women and member of women SHGs) were participated and trained on the topics of HIV/AIDS infections, sex, & sexuality.

The program was started with a keynote address by Mr. Naresh Chandra Verma, Managing Director of BOARD giving an overview of HIV transmission & COVID-19. He threw light on the important roles of village frontline health workers (HSP, ANM, ASHA, AWW, and MAMTA) in reducing the risks and vulnerability of the people affected by HIV/AIDS. The following topics were addressed:

- HIV/AIDS Infection, Transmission, Signs and Symptoms.
- Importance of talking openly on sex, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and the use of condoms.
- How to prevent HIV/AIDS and create a positive environment for the Person Living with HIV/AIDS.
- Resources for prevention of HIV/AIDS within the schools and communities.





- How to protect their peers and families from HIV.
- Correct students' misconceptions regarding their peers' HIV/AIDS risk behaviors.
- Symptoms of COVID-19.
- Use of mask and hand washing for prevention from COVID-19.

Feedback of the participants:

The participants were happy with the knowledge shared. They said that they have gained a good knowledge of HIV/AIDS and fully understand that HIV and COVID are serious diseases and health problems caused by a virus. Having initially incorrect knowledge, they have now improved knowledge of HIV and reproductive health. A good environment has also been promoted among local communities as well as the families of children on the issue. They now know that anyone can contract this disease, so their children need to be aware of HIV/AIDS. They are now ready to hear different levels of information at different ages.

Result / Outcome:

- 70% of participants (school students, stakeholders, rural women, and women SHG groups, etc.) gained adequate knowledge of HIV/AIDS and its prevention.
- Participants also gained knowledge of HIV/AIDS and Covid-19 pandemic with facts and information to basic & communication skills for improved health practices. Now, they are prepared to be aware of masses of HIV and taking precautionary steps as well.
- Good communication skills for improved health practices generated. Now, they are prepared to be aware of masses of HIV and taking precautionary steps as well.
- Ensured safer sex by the use of a condom.
- Strengthening of health practices in the project area.

ACTIVITY	Counseling sessions and group educational activities on HIV/AIDS among rural
	adolescents, peer youth & stakeholders at village level and distribution of IEC materials.
OBJECTIVE	 Understanding the difference between HIV infection and AIDS. Identify the ways by which HIV infection spread.

PROGRESS:



407 village adolescents & youth as well as Peer educators and **29** stockholders, participated in **20** units of counseling sessions. Participants ask questions that when someone immune system becomes severely damaged and when one can experience serious illnesses which define AIDS, what precautions should be adopted etc.?





The counselors- Mr. Jitendra Prasad and Rishi Prakash Gautam, Ms. Baby Tabassum and Anju Kumari were sensitive to cater to different types of questions by the participants. In the beginning, he introduced topics and said that HIV/AIDS was first reported in India in 1981. Since then, we've all learned a lot about this strange and scary disease. These sessions were focused on providing basic information about HIV/AIDS, known routes of transmission, and describing the progression of HIV disease and infections to the onset of serious illness and possible death possibilities.

It's very important for people who think they may have been exposed to HIV/AIDS and should go to have an HIV test and if affected and should begin the treatment as soon as possible to prolong their lives.

The counselors also told participants about the ways of HIV prevention that may spread through infected semen or vaginal fluids. The following topics were covered:

- Vaginal sex HIV in vaginal fluids can penetrate the thin, delicate skin of the penis and urinary opening at the tip of the penis.
- Anal sex small cuts or tears may allow HIV in semen to pass directly into the bloodstream.
- **Oral sex** small cuts or sores in the mouth allow HIV in semen or vaginal fluid to pass directly into the bloodstream.
- The breast milk of an infected mother can also expose her infant to HIV.

Outputs:

- 70% of village adolescents & youth's knowledge increased on HIV/AIDS with reduced risk reduction.
- **74**% of participants have improved knowledge of sexual intercourse and the different factors associated with it.
- Preventive decisions for infants with/without HIV infection breastfeeding.

ACTIVITY	World AIDS Day – December 1, 2020	
OBJECTIVE	To create awareness on what is AIDS.	
	To raise awareness on HIV/AIDS among communities.	

PROGRESS:









<u>एच आई वी</u> की रोकथाम मेरे साथ ज्ञुरू करें:

एक साथ एच आई वी महामारी समाप्त करें



BOARD celebrated *WORLD AIDS DAY* on December 1, 2020, with a theme- "RIGHT TO HEALTH; STOP AIDS, KEEP THE PROMISE; HIV PREVENTION STARTS WITH ME" and a couple of interactive programs. A mass rally started from Village Shahjahanpur, Navichak, Kharbhai & Singriawan and traveled through target villages and important streets of the locality.

Dr. Shiv Kumar, rural practitioner, Mr. Naresh Chandra Verma,

Managing Director of BOARD, and Ms. Nirmala Kumari, Director of BOARD, flagged off the rallies at Shahjahanpur, Singriawan, and Navichak villages. 52 peer Educators, 06 volunteers, and 142 women & girls took part in the rally.

Peer Educators were given T-shirts with the MPT logo. All participants chanted slogans and holding placards. The youth volunteers addressed the street corner meetings and distributed IEC materials at the locations. The rally demonstrated that proper awareness of HIV/AIDS

can help in its eradication one day.

ACTIVITY	Debates & quiz competitions – 3 units
OBJECTIVE	To provide a unique platform to school students to put their knowledge and quizzing
	instincts to the test.

PROGRESS: Debates & quiz competitions were organized by the students.

(a) Written Knowledge Test



(b) Oral Knowledge Test







(c) Prize distribution/ Consolation Prizes



(d) Students were encouraged by SLOGAN



Conclusion: The program on Prevention Education among the School Adolescents & Youths on HIV/AIDS conducted in Govt. Schools and villages in Daniawan block of Patna district, India is reaching the information and preventive message in a successful manner. Project findings are based on a Qualitative Study that is comprised of Key Informant Interviews, Group Discussions, and Direct Observations conducted among different age groups of school students and people from both sex groups.

Thank You:

Thank you once again. We are very proud of our relationship with the Mercury Phoenix Trust and truly grateful for your support.





Media Coverage



एचआईवी की रोकथाम को प्रशिक्षण 09.10.2020



निज संवाददाता

दिनयावां। प्रखंड के शाहजहांपुर गांव में बोर्ड द्वारा आयोजित एचआईवी की रोकथाम हेतु एक दिवसीय जागरूकता सह प्रशिक्षण शिविर का आयोजन किया गया। जिसमें प्रखंड के ग्रामीण चिकित्सक, आंगनवाड़ी सेविका एवं आशा कार्यकर्ता शामिल हुए। शिविर को पटना से आए ऋषि प्रकाश गौतम एवं बोर्ड के स्वास्थ्य मंडली ने संबोधित किया। वक्ताओं ने एचआईवी के लक्षण एवं बचाव के उपायों पर प्रकाश डाला। श्री गौतम ने बताया कि असुरक्षित यौन संबंध से बचना चाहिए। संयमित जीवन जीने वालों को इन बीमारियों का डर नहीं रहता। इनके अतिरिक्त दूषित रक्त चढ़ाने,संक्रमित सिरिंज या नीडल के प्रयोगों से भी इन बीमारी का खतरा बना रहता है।धन्यवाद गौतम नरेश चन्द्र वर्मा ने किया।



दिनयावां में एड्स के प्रति जागरुकता रैली निकालते बच्चे। • जागरण

संसू, दिनयावां : प्रखंड के शाहजहांपुर पंचायत में बच्चों ने एड्स जागरुकता रैली निकाली। इस मौके पर बोर्ड की महिला कार्यकर्ताओं ने लोगों को एड्स से बचाव के बारे में घर-घर जाकर जानकारी दी। रैली में डॉ. शिवकमार सहित अन्य महिला कार्यकर्ता शामिल थीं।

Hindustan

एड्स जागरूकता रैली निकाली गई

दिनियावां। प्रखंड की शाहजहांपुर पंचायत में बच्चों ने कोरोना को ध्यान में रखते हुए मास्क लगाकर एड्स जागरूकता रैली निकाल लोगों को जागरूक किया। मौके पर महिला कार्यकर्ताओं ने लोगों को एड्स से बचाव के बारे में घर-घर जाकर बताया। रैली में डॉ. शिवकुमार सहित अन्य महिला कार्यकर्ता शामिल थीं।