

ANNUAL REPORT -2006 -07

The following is the annual report for the year 2006 -07

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:

The key goals of EMPOWER's program is the empowerment of women. EMPOWER has initiated a number of SHG for the development of women especially poor and marginalized women. 12 monthly monitoring meetings were conducted and 86 federation meetings were conducted in each conglomeration of SHGs spread over Tuticorin municipality, Tuticorin rural, Srivaikundam and Ottapidarm Blocks.

The savings of all SHGs put together is Rs. 23, 44,350/-. The Loan from nationalized banks such as Rs. 36, 74,000/- 9 SHG s rated and applied for revolving fund of Rs. 45,000 with Rs. 30,000 as subsidy and Rs. 15,000 as bank loan.

The following is the details of SHG s in different Blocks in Tuticorin District.

S.NO:	PLACE	SHG	TOTAL
1.	Tuticorin Municipality	Women SHG- 61 Men SHG-11	72
2.	Tuticorin Block	Women SHG- 27 Men SHG-1	28
3.	Tuticorin Rural	Women SHG- 2 Men SHG- 2	4
4.	Srivaikundam Block	Women SHG-7 Men SHG-2	9
5.	Ottapidaram Block	Women SHG- 1 Men SHG- 2	3
	TOTAL	Women SHG - 98 Men SHG - 18	116

The following is details of Socio- Economic activity by the SHG:

S.NO:	ACTIVITY	LOAN AMOUNT	NUMBER OF PERSONS BENEFITED	NAME OF THE AREA/VILLAGES
1.	Seaweed cultivation	Rs. 3,59,100	24	Mullakadu
2.	Country Boat	Rs. 7,18,200	24	Pullavalli
3.	Country Boat	Rs. 11,37,150	38	Vellapatti
4.	Crab net	Rs. 56,000	14	Threspuram

5.	Salt pan	Rs.1,00,000	2	Threspuram
6.	Minidor van	Rs.70,000	1	Threspuram
7.	Fishing Accessories shop	Rs.50,000	1	Threspuram
8.	Sea-shell handicrafts	Rs20,000	1	Threspuram
9.	Tailoring centre	Rs.1,00,000	1	Kokoor
10.	Digital Banner shop	Rs. 50,000	1	Kokoor
11.	Groceries Shop	Rs.10,00,000	2	Tuticorin Municipality
12.	Petty shops	Rs. 27,000	27	Tuticorin Municipality
13.	Mich Cattle	Rs20,000	1	Kokoor

World Women's Day:

This year women's Day was observed along with world consumer day on 14th March 2007 with a rally and meeting in a Kalyanamandapam. About 1000 women participated in the rally carrying placards on Women's Rights, violence against women, eradication of poverty, promotion of health, promotion of education, against alcohol and drugs. The Deputy Superintendent of Police Mr. Natarajamurthy flagged off the rally at about 4.45.p.m. Mrs.Meera Shankar , Program Director EMPOWER lead the rally.

At about 5.45 p.m. meeting started with TamilThai valthu . The District Collector Dr.R.Palaniyandi, inaugurated meeting and spoke about the relevance observing both the days. He appreciated the efforts of EMPOWER in organizing the women for the meeting. He elaborated how women as consumers can play a constructive role in the community by being aware of their rights. Mr. Madasamy , Project Officer was quite eloquent in his speech about the need for consumer awareness for women . The District Revenue Officer Mr. Anbarasu presented the keynote address and explained the initiatives of administration.

Mrs. Meera Shankar in her speech spoke about the relevance of observing women's day – historical reasons, status of , increasing violence against women and the need of observing women' day along with world consumer day. The District Collector distributed prizes and certificates to the students who won in the elocution competition.

Earlier Mr. Sudarshan, District Supply Officer welcomed the gathering and Mr. Sankar Executive Director EMPOWER proposed the vote of thanks.

The print and electronic media gave adequate coverage to the program.

SHORT STAY HOME FOR WOMEN IN DISTRESS:

The incidences of abuse, violence desertion and destitution of girls and young women have increased many fold recent times. In order to provide their basic needs of shelter, food and clothing and offer psycho- social support and long term rehabilitation the Short Stay Home was initiated with the grant assistance from Ministry of Women and Child Welfare through the Central Social Welfare Board. The home was started on 15th March 2004 with about 15 inmates to begin with. So far, about 275 women and girls and 105 children had benefited from the Short Stay Home.

Objectives:

The objectives of the Short-Stay Home are:

1. To provide temporary shelter for women and adolescent girls who are subjected to battering, torture and other forms of atrocities irrespective of their marital status.
2. To offer counseling (psychological & legal) and training in LIFE SKILLS and vocational skills and basic literacy as a measure of rehabilitation.
3. To offer solace for women who are sexually abused and exploited such as rape victims, young women forced into prostitution and rehabilitate them back into the main stream of the society.
4. To offer temporary shelter for run away girls and young women due to maladjustment and emotional disturbances in the family.
5. To provide phone-line counseling for women in distress and especially for those prone to suicide.

Salient Features:

The following would be the main features of the Short-Stay Home:

- Close collaboration with the District Administration and Police Department of Tuticorin.
- Networking with the other voluntary organizations, SHG, women groups in the district.
- EMPOWER is already working in the Urban Slum areas and Rural Panchayat areas in the issues relating to the empowerment of women. Hence, the direct contact with the grass root under privileged and marginalized women would enable the organization identify needy women.

Beneficiaries:

In total 160 women, adolescent girls and children benefited in the year. The following are the details.

 Married Women ~ 46

 Unmarried girls -22

 Unwed mother - 4

 Children - 35

The following is the details of the inmates of the SSH:

MONTHS	SSH - INMATES			TOTAL
	UNMARRIED GIRLS	MARRIED WOMEN	CHILDREN	
April 06	9	15	22	46
May 06	11	12	20	43
Jun 06	8	15	16	39
Jul 06	9	12	15	36
Aug 06	7	14	17	38
Sep 06	6	12	20	38
Oct 06	5	14	16	35
Nov 06	5	13	13	31
Dec 06	6	13	13	32
Jan 07	11	12	17	40
Feb 07	9	14	10	33
Mar 07	12	12	10	34

HIV/AIDS INTERVENTION AMONG SLUM POPULATION OF TUTICORIN :

EMPOWER is working in Tuticorin among the Urban Backward Settlements (Slum Populations) to carry out STD/HIV/AIDS prevention among 90,000 population covering 101 slums for the past 7 and half years through the support of the AIDS Prevention and Control Project – VHS, Chennai.

The basic thrust of this project is

- Quality care for STD
- Behaviour Change Communication
- Peer Education
- ABC Promotion
- Care and Support of HIV/AIDS.
- Advocacy.

Tuticorin is port city

The following of the main outputs of the year 2005-06:

✧ No: attended in one-one interaction:

☞ Married Men	:	2,136
☞ Married Women	:	5,240
☞ 17+ Male	:	1,934
☞ 17+ Female	:	590
☞ 13-17 Male	:	570
☞ 13-17 Female	:	456
Total	:	10,926

✧ Participants in Group Meeting:

* Married Men	:	579
* Married Women	:	1,276
* 17+ Male	:	637
* 17+ Female	:	300
* 13-17 Male	:	338
* 13-17 Female	:	257
Total	:	3,387

✧ No: of Peer Educators Trained:

☞ Male	:	261
☞ Female	:	403

✧ No: of Counseling:

☞ Married Men	:	278
☞ Married Women	:	523
☞ 17+ Male	:	171
☞ 17+ Female	:	79
☞ 13-17 Male	:	8
☞ 13-17 Female	:	26
Total	:	1,085

- ✧ No: of STD patients identified & referred: 1,824
- ✧ No: of STD treated : 1,301
- ✧ No: of free condoms distributed : 26,942
- ✧ No: of condoms sold in the outlet : 4, 43,26

From Unsafe sex to Abstinence

My name is Raji. I am 19 years old. I work in a Prawns processing company. About four years ago I had affair with one Mr. Robinston. Aged 25. He said that he is in love with me I too believed in and started "loving" him. We used to meet everyday exchange letters and talk for a long time. Also he used give me gifts and money to buy dresses. He said that he wanted to marry me and we both planned to elope. But that didn't happen.

He took me to different places such as beach, park and cinema. I also permitted him touch me. We had sexual intercourse many times thinking that we will get married. I became pregnant. My family came to know about this. This created a lot of problem. I was aborted and I was depressed when EMPOWER Outreach worker Mrs. Jeyanthi met me.

She was talking to adolescent girls like me in a group meeting. She spoke out our health in general an specifically on health and genital and menstrual hygiene, reproductive functions, STI/HIV/AIDS. I felt this was very useful for me. She selected me us a potential peer educator and invited me for the P.E. Training.

Further in the training I came to know more information about the body, contraception, and also discussed about the potential risk situation for unsafe sex. We also practiced role plays on how to say no sex before marriage and avoid such risky situations. We also learnt the difference between friendships, infatuation, love, marriage, sex, family etc-relationships in life.

I also came to know the right age of marriage and the age of conception. At this moment I felt cheated by Mr. Robinston. If I had known few years ago, I would have not been prey to his desires and would have protected myself. Having released at least now I am talking to my friends and educating them so that they don't have to put themselves in risk situations like me. At least I am happy that the girls in my neighborhood have become aware and are protecting themselves from unhealthy relationships and disease.

✘ No: of Traditional Outlet	:102
✘ No: of Non Traditional Outlet	:313
✘ No: of PLHA in contact:	
λ Male	:31
λ Female	:35

Peer Educators Convention:

On the 7th, 8th & 10th September 2006 the Peer Educators Convention was organized to appreciate and honour the work of Peer Educators and their contribution to the prevention of STI/HIV. About 230 participants in the category of married men and married women, 13-17 males & above 17 unmarried male youth and 13-17 females and above 17 unmarried female youths participated on each day allocated to them.



Honorable Minister Mrs. Geetha Jeevan releases the Souvenir on the occasion.

About 30 best performing P.E. were felicitated for contributing to the project by various VIPs. The highlight of the convention was participation of the Honorable Minister Mrs. Geetha Jeevan. Besides, Honorable Union Minister of Health Mr. Anubumani Ramadas had sent his felicitations for the success of

The P.Es had opportunity to exhibit their talents through the competition conducted. The successful ones were awarded prizes.

Formation of the District Peer Educator's Association:

The members of the P.E association were unanimously elected and the community advisors nominated.

President -Sudharsan - Nandhgopalpuram

Vice President -Rani - Sahayapuram.

Secretary - Ravi- Threspuram

Joint Secretary - Korian -Fathima Nagar

Treasurer - Vennila _Madhvanair Colony

Members:

1. Velmurugan-T.M.C. Colony



The S.P. Mr. John Nickelson giving away mementoes to the best P.E.



2. Thomas – Annai Theresa Colony.
3. Raja – Loorthammalpuram .
4. Anothoyraj- Muthukrishnapuram.
5. Jeya – Nandhagpoalpuram.
6. Jenivi- Krishnarajapuram.
7. Muthumari – Thalamuthunagar.



Recommendations of the Conventions:

- ✓ Better accessibility to STI and VCTC services.
- ✓ More active participation with EMPOWER's HIV prevention activities.
- ✓ Identity cards to all P.E. in the program.
- ✓ P.E. association to focus on STI/HIV/AIDS prevention.
- ✓ To take this message to other P.E and enroll them as members.

Training programs organized for Health Care Providers:

S. NO.	HCP/SERVICE PROVIDERS	DATE OF TRAINING	RESOURCE PERSONS	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS
1.	Training for Indigenous Medical Practitioners (IMP)	15.7.06	TNVHA	15
2.	Alumni Meeting for IMP	11.03.07	TNVHA	15
3.	Training for Allopathic Private Practitioners	06.01.07 & 07.01.07.	MMHRC	32

Training conducted by EMPOWER for Non-traditional Condom Outlets:

S.NO:	SOCIAL MARKETING TRAINING	DATE	NO: PARTICIPATED
1.	Fresh training	16.11.06	13
		27.12.06	9
		20.1.07	11

Woman Headed Condom Outlet

I am Fatima Beevi. I run a petty shop call Subbana Store at Madavanair Colony, Therespuram. My husband and sons are fisher men. They help to run the shop when are in shore. I sell a lot of things needed for the families in that area. One day Mrs. Jeyanthy asked me to sell condoms which I immediately refused along with my family members saying that it is against our religious belief and my community members would ridicule me and my family.

Then after that she invited me for a training programme exclusively for woman retail shop owners. Mrs. Meera Shankar Programme coordinator from EMPOWER conducted the training and spoke about the spread of HIV and need for condom availability with in the target area for easy accessibility for those in need. She also clarified all the doubts, hesitations and questions from the participants. Her talk was thought provoking and I realized that just by selling condoms we can contribute to prevent HIV/AIDS. So, I was convinced of my role to market condoms to prevent HIV and save many lives in my neighborhood.

I convinced my family that our petty shop would sell condoms. Whatever information I learnt in the training I transferred to him. Then we discussed that there is nothing against our religious faith in marketing condoms. We are only saving lives which are a virtue.

Firstly I tried selling the deluxe nirodh condoms by displaying prominently in dangler pouches in front of my shop. To my surprise many woman come and bought condoms boldly. My husband and son have also changed their attitude. Now we sell around 200 to 250 pieces per month. We are happy to contribute our part for HIV prevention.

2.	Refresher Training	12.02.07	12
		18.02.07	10
		15.03.07	16
		24.03.07	11
	Total		57

Training program underwent by the Project Staff:

S.NO.	TRAINING PROGRAM	NO.OF PARTICIPANTS
1.	SIAAP Counseling	2
2.	P.E. Training T.O.T.	5
3.	Street Play Training T.O.T.	1
4.	Social Marketing of Condoms	4
5.	Experiential learning program	6

OBSERVATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING:

International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking was observed by EMPOWER in collaboration with the Narcotics Intelligence Bureau Tuticorin on 26.06.2006 by conducting a rally on Drug Abuse with participation of school students and organizing a public meeting in the premises of South Police Station. The meeting was inaugurated by the Assistant Superintendent of Police Mr.Kapil Sartkar IAS.

Mrs. Meera Shankar, Program Director EMPOWER had participated in the program and delivered a talk on the prevalence of drug abuse and the information about the injecting drug users and their risk for HIV infection.

RAPID ASSESSMENT STUDY AMONG THE INJECTION DRUG USERS IN TUTICORIN : May –July 2007

Injecting drug users have become a significant risk group for the human immune deficiency virus (HIV) and now play a major role in HIV transmission in many parts of the world. Injecting drug abuse is escalating in India and injecting drug users are found in all major metropolitan cities of the country. In order, to study the nature, dimension and magnitude of the problem, EMPOWER has conducted *A Rapid Assessment Study among 150 IDUs* with predominant heroin use among youth in Tuticorin Town and semi-urban area.

The following factors make Tuticorin vulnerable:

- Tuticorin is the important Port Town of Southern India.
- Industrialized town.
- Concentration of migrant labour.

- Coastal area- there are a considerable number of fishing communities living in the slums.
- Tuticorin is in transit town for drug trafficking to Sri Lanka.
- Impending ferry services to Sri Lanka would increase free access and free flow of drugs.
- The proposed Sethu Canal will be functional in the year 2008 opening Tuticorin port for larger and heavier international traffic.

Rapid Assessment Study was done in May – July 2006

Methodology

Interviews - IDU-150 samples in Tuticorin District -

Non-Participant Observation - Shooting Areas

Geographical areas covered for RSA :Tuticorin Municipality and Tuticorin Block, Thappathi Refugees Camp, Kayalpatinam and Kulshekarapatnam.

Key findings of the RSA

1. Median Age	-	35 Yrs
2. Secondary Schooling	-	45%
3. Married	-	70%
4. Employed	-	96%
5. Injected	-	100%
6. Mean age at initiation of Drug use	-	18 Yrs
7. Mean age at initiation of Injection Drug use	-	27 Yrs
8. Mean age drug use	-	7 Yrs
9. Frequency needle use	-	3 times per week
10. Sharing last Six months	-	86%
11. Sharing last week	-	77%
12. Mean number of persons shared with last week	-	2
13. Mean number of persons shared	-	2
14. Borrowing injection equipment	-	69%
15. Borrowing injection equipment last time	-	60%
16. Lending injection equipment	-	78%
17. Lending injection equipment last time	-	77%
18. Mean age of first sex.	-	16 Yrs
19. First sex with sex worker	-	33%
20. Mean number of sex partners	-	2
21. Ever used condoms	-	5%
22. Sex with sex worker	-	33%
23. Condom use with sex worker	-	4%
24. Sex with same sex	-	1%
25. Extramarital sex	-	50%
26. Condom use always	-	1%
27. Drug use with opposite sex	-	3%

28. Tattooing	-	24%
29. History of cough more than 3 weeks	-	3%
30. Lost weight	-	59%
31. Abscess now	-	8%
32. Been in jail	-	52%
33. Been in jail last year	-	12%
34. Injected in jail	-	24%
35. In touch with services relating drug rehab /counseling	-	1%
36. Knowledge about HIV	-	70%
37. HIV test done	-	2%
38. HIV status known	-	2%
39. Risk Perception	-	1%
40. Partner tested	-	0

Treatment Facilities in Tuticorin District

- 45 IDU are admitted in Tuticorin Medical College Hospital from 2000-05. No person has come for follow up treatment.
- The other de-addiction centre New life Centre has admitted 2 IDU for treatment in the last 8 years.
- Other leading Psychiatrists opine that they have seen less than 7 IDU users (in last 20 years) visiting them for treatment but with inadequate motivation.
- The treatment Centers perceive IDU as problematic and rarely admit them for treatment.
- Popular opinion (psychiatrists and police) about IDU is they spoil youth from upper class families. They think only rich can afford drugs and sustain such behaviour.
- Treatment seeking behavior of IDU very poor.
- Service in place is grossly inadequate.

RAPID ASSESSMENT STUDY AMONG THE INJECTION DRUG USERS IN TIRUNELVELI : Jul –Sep 2007

In order, to study the nature, dimension and magnitude of the problem, EMPOWER has conducted *A Rapid Assessment Study among 100 IDUs* with predominant opioid based pharmaceutical drug use among youth in Tirunelveli corporation and semi-urban area.

Vulnerability of the Tirunelveli City

Transit route for pharmaceutical drug trafficking such fortwin , tidygesic etc. from Trivandrum to Tuticorin , Madurai and Ramanathapuram .

Summary of KII:

1. Tirunelveli Medical College Hospital has no record of any IDU taking treatment in the last 5 years. .
2. The other de-addiction centre Dhanvanthri Hospital has admitted 97 IDU for treatment in the last 2 years. Their de-addiction success rate among IDU is poor according to them.
3. Other leading Psychiatrists opine that they have 10 to 20 IDU users visiting them for management of withdrawal symptoms and abscess management and other psychiatric illness such depression.
4. Popular opinion (psychiatrists and police) about IDU is they spoilt youth from upper class families. They think only rich can afford drugs and sustain such behaviour.
5. Treatment seeking behavior of IDU very poor.
6. Service in place is costly and unaffordable to a marginalized IDU.
7. Significant population of IDU in Tirunelveli District concentrated in Tirunelveli and as well as spread in certain rural pockets.
8. Besides, the National Center for Drug Abuse Prevention (NC-DAP) in association with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has mapped the Tirunelveli District as one of the seven high prevalence district in Tamilnadu for HIV and drug use.

Key observation during the RSA in Tirunelveli are:

- ✓ There is a small percentage of IDU who are homeless.
- ✓ A vast majority of IDUs have no access to health or prevention services.
- ✓ There is a high percent of IDU who borrow and share injection equipment.
- ✓ About significant report abscess at the time the study.
- ✓ The knowledge about HIV is only 70%.
- ✓ There is an urgent need for intervention with IDUs in Tirunelveli District.

COMMUNITY BASED HIV INTERVENTION FOR IDUs AND THEIR PARTNERS IN TUTICORIN DISTRICT. –Supported by Sharan through DFID Challenge fund -October 2006 to March 2007

Goal:

To contribute to the reduction of the incidence of HIV/AIDS among injecting drug users, their partners and families, leading in improved quality of life among them in Tuticorin District.

Objective: To increase the utilisation of risk reduction services by the 200 IDUs and 100 RSPs in Tuticorin District in 2 years.

- Target population- Injecting Drug Users and their partners and HIV/AIDS infected and affected.
- Size of the Target population 200 IDUs and 100 regular sex partners
- Geographical areas covered Tuticorin Municipality and Tuticorin Block
- Project Period October 06-March 07

Expected Outputs:

1. Injecting drug users who have not accessed formal and existing services thus far have been contacted and recruited.
2. Injecting drug users receive face-to-face communication about HIV transmission and prevention methods from the peers at community outreach locations.
3. Injecting drug users attend risk reduction services that target both HIV related injection and sex risk behaviours and have access to sterile injection equipment, condoms and other risk reduction materials.
4. Injecting drug users and their partners are assessed for sexually transmitted diseases and referred and provided syndromic case management.
5. Injecting drug users and their partners receive psychosocial services and family counseling services.
6. Injecting drug users are referred for voluntary testing and counseling and HIV positive persons are referred for care and treatment.
7. Formation of support groups for IDUs and families.
8. Partnership with law enforcement agencies established.

The following are main outputs for the project:

Services available at the drop – in – centre & number of clients accessing the services within the project period.

Out reach - 129 IDUs and 61 heroin chasers .

Abscess / wound management - 30.

General health – 60

Counseling – individual & group - 85

TB - 7

STD - 4 persons **Referrals:**

VCTC - 3

Nutrition - 106

Skill training - 0

Group sessions - 26

Support groups - 3

Community meetings - 10

Drug treatment – 5 referred to the psychiatrist department for treatment.

ADVOCACY:

The Sensitization meeting was held at Hotel Bell on 28.2.2007 from 10.30 a.m. to 1.p.m. The main objective this meeting is to sensitize the key stakeholders and on the issue of IDUs and it's interface with HIV/AIDS and their role in support to the Project Network in Tuticorin.

Name : Mr. Jesuraja

I am 28 years old living in St. Peter's Church Road, Matakadai, Tuticorin. I am married , living with a wife and two children. I am a full time fisherman.

I hail from the fisher folk family. I studied up to 3rd standard. When I was just 12 years old I began to go to the sea with my father for fishing. Besides I also used to carry out knitting of the fishing nets in the shore during the rest of the time. Only persons older than me were working with me. They used to smoke. So, at the age of 15 I started smoking. Gradually I began to take alcohol and cannabis .Some of my friends introduced me to brown sugar.

Large quantities of brown sugar were available to fisherman in those days. The LTTE personnel use to smuggle via India to Sri Lanka. When they were cornered by the coast guard or the customs officials they drop the packets in the sea. The packets are recovered by the fishermen from the deep sea. Firstly, the fishermen did not know about brown sugar. But, later they had the knowledge and learnt 'to chase' the brown sugar. Hence, a packet used to last for many days. That time it was much cheaper.

Now, now even 50 grams costs Rs.200 . Hence, all my friends including myself were starting injecting. It is almost 3 to 5 years I am injecting. We buy brown sugar as team of five friends and share every day with a single injection and needle. We generally inject in the evening. The effect lasts for about 24 hours.

When I was eighteen my friends introduced me to few sex workers. I had my first sex with sex worker. I frequently began to have with them. Hence, whatever little I earned was not even enough for me. Since, my father earned I had a jolly life.

Later, four years ago I was married. I tried to avoid all drugs including alcohol during the first week of my marriage; but in vain. Then I realized how, I addicted I was. Then I went on a binge. I continued injecting. My family and my wife knew that I only smoke cigarettes and cannabis, drink alcohol but do not know that I inject. Because inject outside home with my friends.

Even on days I cannot afford, my friends are generous to give the drugs, since I had to inject daily. Because of drug habit, cannot give anything to my wife to run the family. On those days she used to quarrel. My parents used to interfere and settle the bickering. Also , on days I wanted to have sex , my would refuse and quarrel with me. Hence, I regularly had sex with sex workers who were at my beck and call.

I am not all healthy. For almost last two years I seemed to lose weight. My appetite has reduced. I really looked old for my age. Life went on till

One day someone was speaking to my friend Jerome at the Beach when I over heard their conversation. They were speaking about injecting and HIV. Immediately my friend introduced to one Mr. Meridas from EMPOWER. I already knew about EMPOWER as they carry out community programs and HIV prevention. But, Mr. Meridas spoke about sharing injecting drug use the risk for HIV, I was surprised.

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Representatives the Narcotics Intelligence Bureau (NIB), Local Police Station, Psychiatric Department, Positive Network, VCTCs, Care Centres, Health Officials from Municipal urban Health post and the District Program Manager participated. The above participants introduced themselves and few aired the expectation too about the numbers in Tuticorin. A PowerPoint presentation on the Scenario of HIV, drug and IDU situation including the process and findings of the rapid assessment survey and also the salient features of the Project Network was and the future plans were disseminated during the occasion by Mrs.Meera Shankar, MIS Officer.

There were questions of the nature of drug use during the study. It was explained that brown sugar was the main drug of abuse in IDU. Now, (for last 8 month) the main drugs are pharmaceuticals such as fortwin, tidygesic, buprenorphine etc. There were questions of the prevalence of women IDU in Tuticorin. Mrs. Meera Shankar, answered that EMPOWER has carrying a study on female IDU and wives of IDU during when the organization found out that there few drug users in Tuticorin.

It was presented that the service in place grossly inadequate and virtually no treatment facility available in Tuticorin for drug users. Dr.Kandhakameswaran opined that the IDU is least motivated to leave the drug habit and also the psychiatrists are also

Earlier, when staff spoke I EMPOWER never bothered. When, Meridas spoke about drug use, I became concerned. Because, I already know he himself was brown sugar chaser once upon a time. He showed a flip-book and explained about the difficulties, problems and the risks of drug users. It seemed to apply to be me.

He spoke about the drop -in -centre and explained about the services offered and invited both of us. I had a mild abscess on my legs. Soon Jerome and I decided to go together. But, never went because we were occupied and also hesitant.

Sensing our hesitation, Meridas accompanied us to the DIC. Again another outreach worker Arunachalm also greeted us. There were other IDUs and chasers, I knew were playing carom Board. Hence, I was relieved.

Both of them took me to the community health nurse who cleaned my wound and dressed and gave some pills to fight the infection. She also politely enquired I had any other complaints while checking the B.P. and weight. I said that I do have any appetite. For that she also gave pill and advised me to eat my breakfast daily and reduced the intake of tea and coffee.

Then we were served a glass of multi-mix porridge and banana each. I relished it. My friend Jerome too liked the DIC. Hence, I began visiting when ever I had time. Every time I picked some new information. I learnt about condom use and got free condoms and few pamphlets. I use condoms with the sex worker regularly. I gradually reduced the frequency and partners.

I began talking about HIV to my drug using friends and gave them free condoms. Firstly my friends were reluctant to use separate injection and needles. But later they agreed. But even now at times we share because the pharmacists refuse to sell needles and injection.

Now, I realize that, I am risk of HIV. I wanted quit drugs. I need help. The outreach workers had spoken about the alternate oral drug to be kept under the tongue. If, I get that drug free of cost I can stop injections completely.

I am more concerned about my health. I also was referred for TB sputum test. I was happy to be negative. I come to the DIC at least three to four times a week. I attend counseling sessions by the counselor whenever I am upset. I feel happy that I can share my problems to some one who is trust worthy. I am happy to get useful suggestions from the counselor. I am not brave enough to undergo a HIV Test. Later, after few sessions, I will go to the VCTC. I am slowly bringing my life into control. One day I hope to bring all my friends to the DIC. I thank all those who are responsible for preventing HIV among the IDUs like us who are most marginalized and isolated in society.

helpless. Mr.Sankar commented that if an IDU is enrolled in the harm reduction program, the process would help him to gradually to quit drugs completely.

Then a video entitled “The Needle and the Damage done” produced by SHARAN was played which almost convinced the participants about the BST. Mr.Sankar explained how Mr.Somen Mitra I.P.S. has been in the lead in Kolkatta to support and implement the harm reduction program and hence exhorted all support from the police officials for the successful implementation of the project. Mr. Kamaraj exhorted all support from TNSACS and was ready to carry this message forward to the P.D.

All the participants felt there is a need to something about IDU problem and promised to refer IDU other drug user to EMPOWER DIC.

All the participants pledged support to the project. Some of them asked questions about the nature of support by the Project Network and got clarified. The meeting ended at 1.30 p.m. followed by lunch.

Key achievements of the Project:

1. Rapport with IDU s.
2. Mapping of the IDU and intervention sites.
3. Steady utilization of risk reduction services by the one fifth of the identified IDUs.
4. Advocacy with Police Officials especially with Narcotic Intelligence Bureau.

Lessons learned:

1. Employing for utilizing the knowledge and skills of drug users is useful to establish rapport of IDU but managing them is very difficult.
2. Rapport establishment through winning the trust of the community is very fundamental to the running of project.
3. Advocacy with Police Officials helps in IDU dropping in the DIC without fear and hesitation.
4. BST is the most important strategy to attract IDUs to DIC and motivating factor to stop injecting.

REDUCING SUBSTANCE USE RELATED HIV VULNERABILITY IN FEMALE DRUG USERS & FEMALE PARTNERS OF MALE DRUG USERS – UNODC ROSA

South Asia is experiencing an increasingly feminized and drug related epidemic of HIV/AIDS. In some areas, the human and financial costs are overwhelming. Injecting drug use is a common path for transmission of the virus and it is also spread by sexual transmission from IDU populations to non-drug using communities . Under this project, UNODC ROSA, in collaboration with the Government of India, will strengthen the technical capacities of NGOs working in drug demand reduction to reduce HIV-related vulnerabilities among women partners of male drug users. The project will reduce the vulnerability of female drug users and female partners of male drug users and in this way contribute to reversing the overall feminization of the HIV epidemic in India

Objectives:

1. To empower women to make informed choices and create a concerted and convergent national response through partnerships, networking and information sharing by using appropriate linkages to mitigate their burden caused by substance use and HIV.
2. Mainstreaming gender in HIV and substance abuse strategies to reduce the incidence of gender-based violence, marginalization and other vulnerabilities that place women and young girls at high risk of HIV/AIDS

The main strategies of the project are:

- Project Orientation workshop.
- Data collection for female partners of male drug users and female drug users.
- Service provision for the above, including the establishment of Self Help Groups (SHGs).

The following are main activities of the Project:

Data collection

-No. of one to one interviews conducted and with whom:

Female partners of Male Drug users – 43

Female Drug users – 17

(Female drug users with male partners as drug users – 13.

Female drug users living single- 4)

No. of life narratives completed: 2

S.NO:	ACTIVITIES	DETAILS	
1	Group meetings	No. of meetings conducted: 12.	
2	Topics for group meetings for regular partners of drug users and of participants in each session	Topics 1. Reproductive Health 2. RTI/STI and treatment. 3. HIV/AIDS and VCTC. 4. Condom use and Negotiation skills. 5. Drugs Use, vulnerability and coping with violence and stress and formation of self –support group. 6. Accessing services- STI treatment, VCTC, micro-credit and de-addiction services.	Number of attended – 40 women
3.	Topics for group meetings for female drug/injection users	Topics 1. Reproductive Health. 2. RTI/STI and treatment. 3. HIV/AIDS and VCTC. 4. Condom use and Negotiation skills. 5. Drugs Use, vulnerability and coping with violence and stress and formation of self –support group. 6. Accessing services- STI treatment, VCTC, micro-credit and de-addiction services. 7. Drug abuse, myths and misconception. Treatment and rehabilitation – detoxification, emotional and psycho – social management.	Number of attended – 12 women

4	<p>Referrals made: State the services for which referral was made and the number of women referred to receive each type of service</p>	<p>Regular partners of drug users (Service and nos.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - STI identification & referral – 5 - STI treatment – 4 - Inter-personal communication – 36 - Counseling- Psychosocial support and HIV pre-test – 25 - VCTC referral - 10 	<p>Female drug / injection users (service and nos.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> STI identification & referral – 2. - STI treatment – 2 - Counseling - Psychosocial support and HIV pre-test – 15 - VCTC referral – 2. -De-addiction services- 1
5	<p>Brief description of feedback received from group after the session</p>	<p>Regular partners of drug users Initially the women are hesitant .But; they open up and ventilate their emotions. They all require free de-addiction services for their men to quit drugs. They at least require an alternate drug treatment for the harm minimization. All of them are desperate for some sort of support – psycho-social, vocational training and livelihood opportunities.</p>	<p>Female drug users They are much marginalized group. They are very hesitant to accept any services offered. Most of them seemed not motivated to quit drugs.</p>

6	If any problems were faced, please describe	Initially there was resistance to give consent for interview. But, after much assurance they agree for interview. They were very worried about their husbands' violence if they speak to someone about his drug habit. Many IDUs men had threatened the interviewer as this interview would jeopardize the marital relationship. In most cases, the wives do not know that their husbands are injecting or chasing brown sugar as they haven't seen those activities. Many had adapted to accept the drug use and the violence inflicted on them by their spouses. Hence, they do not seek any help – personal or professional.	Most of them wanted money or alcohol before interaction which was politely denied by the interviewer. Besides, they were intoxicated many a times when approached for interview. Hence, repeated visits were made to ensure that she is sober.
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Formation of Self –Support Groups:

Two self- support groups have been initiated in Threspuram and Fathima Nagar. The identity of a wife of a drug user is itself stigmatizing. This would take some time for them to comfortably meet on regular basis and start savings and credit. One month project may be sufficient to complete the survey.

VOTERS AWARENESS CAMPAIGN:

In the month of April 2006, in connection with general elections for the Tamilnadu assembly, EMPOWER had launched a Voters Awareness Movement at Tuticorin District in the eve of Assembly Election in Tamilnadu. The main objectives of the Movement are::

1. To Campaign for Free and Fair Election
2. To motivate the general public to cast their vote without fail.
3. To facilitate a common platform for the candidates to express their promises and programs for their constituency.

Voting is both the right and duty of the people. Another objective of this movement is to make people aware of their constitutional right to cast their vote under

section 49 'O'. On an average, in every election, nearly 45 per cent of the eligible voters don't vote at all. Even if a winning candidate bags 30 per cent of the polled votes, it amounts to getting the support of only about 16 per cent of the electorate. If more and more non-voters begin to exercise their vote, the result of many elections would drastically change.

Section 49 'O' of the election rules 1961 has conferred the right to the voter to inform the booth officer, after the indelible ink mark has been marked, that the voter does not want to vote for any of the candidates. A lot of pamphlets were distributed and stickers were pasted to create awareness on 49'O'.

Besides, on 29.04.2006, "A FACE TO FACE MEETING" with all candidates was conducted at D.A. Kalyanamandabam where all the party candidates participated and spoke on their commitment to development of Tuticorin Constituency. They answered questions by the audience and promised to meet the electorate every 3 months in such forums. This program was well received by all the candidates, electorates and the media. There was a wide coverage in all electronic and print media in Tuticorin District.

CONSUMER EDUCATION AND RIGHTS:

This year a new unit of **Centre for Consumer Education, Research and Advocacy** was initiated by EMPOWER for channelizing the efforts.

National Consumer day:

The national consumer day was observed on 20.12.2006 at V.O.C. College by conducting the District Level elocution competition for college students on the topic Empowerment of consumer – Assert Rights and Pursue Remedies. About 20 participants from 10 colleges participated.

RTI CAMPAIGN:

The Right to Information (RTI) Act is gaining momentum, with around 300 non-governmental organizations, including consumer groups, and trade unions, joining hands for the state-wide RTI campaign. A very laudable initiative has been going on silently by EMPOWER, Tuticorin District Consumer Rights Association, Federation of Consumer Organizations Tamilnadu & Pondicherry (FEDCOT) with over 400 members, Tsunami Legal Action Committee (TLAC) and Citizens' Human Right Movement (CHRM), to

empower the rural masses by creating awareness to the Right to Information Act 2005. On Saturday, the organizers conducted street corner meetings in about 10 places including Kovilpatti Town, Ettayapuram, Keelaeral, Kurukuchalai, Ottapidaram and Puthiyamputhur in Tuticorin District. "Apart from this, we also distribute pamphlets in schools and colleges and among the general public on how they can utilize the RTI Act to get information from the public authorities. The public response is more than what we had expected," said A. Sankar, Convener of this RTI campaign and Executive Director of EMPOWER. The mobile camp flagged off today (23.12.2006) by R. Mallika, Chair Person, Kovilpatti Municipality, in the presence of P. Pattamuthu, Tashildhar, Kovilpatti. The mobile camp would take RTI to the doorsteps of the rural poor in various villages in Tuticorin District, to bring awareness among the citizens. In Tuticorin a mobile campaign organized by the Federation of Consumer Organizations of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry (FEDCOT), Tuticorin District Consumer Rights Association and a few other non-Governmental organisations, to create awareness of 'Right to Information Act' to the public, was held here on Sunday. The campaign, which was flagged off by the Member of Parliament, Tenkasi, M. Appadurai, at Rajaji Park here, passed through SPIC Nagar and Pazhakayal, before culminating at Tiruchendur. Leaflets carrying information on application procedures that needed to be followed to seek data under the Right to Information Act and to whom it should be applied were distributed to the public. The leaflets also highlighted the objectives of the Act and how it would be useful to the common man. The organizers explained to the people that they could apply for information either in writing or through electronic means to the concerned Public Information Officer (PIO), specifying the particulars of the information they ask for. They were also told that certain organizations such as Intelligence Bureau, which were exempted from the purview of the Right to Information Act. The campaigners urged the State Government to ensure that all the public authorities accept cash payments from the applicants who file petitions under the Right to Information.

Seminar on Consumer awareness program for SHG :

On 24.02.2007 a consumer awareness program was organized at the "Centre for Consumer Education Research and Advocacy" Mr. Alfred, Deputy Director Agmark Tirunelveli spoke on food adulteration and demonstrated how adulteration can be detected in various food items. Mr. Shanmuganthan, Assistant Inspector of Labour spoke on weights

and measures act and demonstrated the how some traders are cheating consumers on fraudulent measures. Mr. Sankar spoke on Consumer Rights and Consumer Protection and the rederssal mechanisms available to the consumer. Meera Shankar spoke on Role of Women in asserting Consumer rights and to be aware of the consumerist culture promoted by the media. About 200 SHG women participated and benefited out of the seminar.

Activities of Consumer Clubs:

There was an orientation and review meeting for the consumer club coordinators and students on 2.03.2007. On 9. 03.2007 there was an elocution competition for school students on the topic '**Consumerist Culture**'. About 30 schools participated. The prizes were distributed on the World Consumer Day – 14.3.2007 by the District Collector Mr. R.Palniyandi.

Training for government Officials on Consumer rights and role of the Government:

On 22.3.2007 the programme started at 10.30 a.m. in the morning at the Collecterate campus. About 35 officials participated. The Tuticorin District Office had collaborated with EMPOWER to organize this one day training program.

Mr. N. Sudarshan , District Supply Officer, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, over the function welcomed the gathering. The District Collector Mr. Palyniyandi spoke about the main objectives of the training and exhorted the officials to participate with commitment and benefit.

Mr. P. Anbarasu D.R.O. in his key note address spoke about the government officials' role in consumer interest. He said that he was quite happy to participate in such a seminar organized on the occasion.

Mr. A. Sankar, President, Tuticorin and Tirunelveli District Consumer Right and Protection Association and Executive Director, EMPOWER spoke about the Consumer Protection Act 1986 and also the highlights of the recent amendment. Creation of benches of the National Commission and State Commissions and holding of circuit benches, Prescribing time-frame for admission of complaint, issues of notices and disposal of complaint, Recovery of compensation amount ordered by the redressal agency through certificate case in the same manner as arrears of land revenue, Provision for issue of interim orders by the redressal

agencies, Establishment of Consumer Protection Council at District level, Revision of pecuniary jurisdiction in respect of redressal agencies at different levels i.e.

Mr.K. Ramasamy , Registrar of Cooperatives Society spoke about the efficient consumer redressal mechanisms of his department.

Mr. Elias, Inspector of Labour, spoke about the weights and measures act and demonstrated the malpractices prevailing in the trade.

Mr. Alfred, Agricultural Officer spoke about the adulteration in food and demonstrated how to detect adulterants

Mr. U. Manirajan, Bharath Gas spoke about his Department's effort in promoting cylinder safety and role of consumer in being alert about the safety precautions. He also said that he is very keen to conduct demonstrations sessions on the safety of cylinders.

Mr. Mohan ,P.A. to the DSO proposed the vote of thanks.

There was a Special Exhibition on Consumer Issues and Rights put up by EMPOWER. About 35 officials from various departments participated in the training program.

OBSERVATION OF WORLD T.B. DAY:

On 24.03.2007 World T.B. Day was observed in EMPOWER Outreach Centre. 300 SHG women from Tuticorin , Srivaikundam and Ottapidaram Blocks participated. Dr. Gandhimathi, Medical Officer RNTCP Centre gave talk about basics of T.B. prevention, DOTS therapy and the role of SHG women as DOTS Providers. About 25 SHG women gave their name as DOTS provider and an exclusive training was planned for them.

COUNSELING SERVICES IN THE RURAL HOSPITALS IN TUTICORIN DISTRICT:

This project is being initiated from December 06 through support of Tamilnadu Health System Govt. of Tamilnadu for offering ANC and PNC counseling to mothers and their families with placement of 3 Female Counselors in each rural Government Hospitals of Kayalpattinam and Udangudi Blocks in Tuticorin District.

Objective of the Counseling Centre:

To increase access to health care services for the poor and disadvantaged: and enhance patient satisfaction.

Role of the Counselors: The counselor would be available in hospital round the clock for 24 hours in three shifts and make herself available at the out-patient block during O.P.hours and support to the poor and disadvantaged on the following aspects.

1. Facilities available in the hospitals.
2. Explaining the doctors' notes in the O.P. slip.
3. Guidance to make use of various facilities like investigation.
4. Advice on payment on fees etc.
5. Avoidance of exploitation.
6. Guide in-referrals and out-referrals and maintain records.
7. Any other services entrusted with them that are required for the welfare of patients in the hospitals.

Majority of the counseled were presented from O.P. who were ante-natal mothers, post-natal mothers and the females and males with diabetes, hypertension, cardio-vascular diseases, carcinoma lungs.

The following is details of patients counseled from January – March 2007.

Kayalpattinam - Male - 2258

Female- 2798

Udangudi - Male - 4826

- Female- 7572

Special Programs:

OBSERVATION OF WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK AND RELEASE OF I.E.C. MATERIALS IN TUTICORIN - Supported by UNICEF, Chennai.

EMPOWER had been working in the area of Reproductive and Child health for past three years. The organization had been actively promoting breast-feeding among the slum population in Tuticorin and Tirunelveli. EMPOWER with a small support from Breast feeding Promotion Network of India conducted campaigns in 2002-03 among child care workers and health care providers and published a poster and a booklet entitled 'Breastfeeding is Best' with theme of Strengthening breast feeding at grass root

level in Tuticorin. EMPOWER is also the life member of BPNI. Besides, World Breast-Feeding Days have been observed by EMPOWER in collaboration with health and child welfare dept. of the district from 2002 onwards.

Problem:

It is observed from our grass-root experience more and more young mothers are taking to bottle-feed without perceiving the need for exclusive breast-feeding until 6 months. The main reason being delaying as well restricting breastfeeding and giving other substitutes before six months owing to myths and cultural beliefs.

Besides, the need to work away from home to increase family combined with wide availability of infant milk substitutes resulting in them taking to formula feed. This is especially true of the scenario in urban slums in Tuticorin. Hence, a concerted need for education, campaign and advocacy to promote, protect and sustain breast-feeding practices. In most instances the Health Care Providers such as the Doctors, nurses, A.N.M. and community health workers approving infant food and undermining the breastfeed.

Objectives:

The following are the key objectives:

- a) To sensitize the salient features of I.M.S. Act to the Health Care and Child Care providers.
- d) To sensitize the Health care providers on their role as promoters and protectors of breast-feeding.

Activities:

The following are the key strategies:

- a) Preparation of I.E.C. Materials – Flex Banners and Posters.
- b) Public Meeting and Release of I.E.C. Materials.
- c) Distribution of I.E.C. Materials.
- d) Educational sessions in antenatal and postnatal clinics.

Preparation, Release of I.E.C. Materials and Distribution:

Already EMPOWER had produced two materials to promote breastfeeding practices - the Poster and the Booklet in Tamil, which would be, distributed to Health care providers and childcare providers. In addition, two flex banners were designed on this

occasion. One on the salient features of The Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Food (Regulation of Production Supply and Distribution) Act 1992 (IMS) with amendments in English for the Doctors and the other on in Tamil on the importance of Breastfeeding and negative implications of bottle-feeding.

The I.E.C. Materials were distributed and displayed in ICDS Centers, Primary Health Centers, Urban Health Centers, and Tuticorin Medical College Hospital, private maternity and paediatric Health Care Clinics.

Release of the IEC Materials:

On 30th August the World Breastfeeding month's valedictory was observed with release of newly designed materials at Municipality Meeting Hall. The program was organized in collaboration with Tuticorin Municipality. There was wider participation from the Doctors, community health workers, Sector health nurses from the Tuticorin Municipality and ICDS workers and SHG women and other NGO workers.

Mr. A.Sankar ,Executive Director of EMPOWER welcomed the gathering and spoke about the importance of observing this day and highlighted the activities undertaken by EMPOWER in the World Breastfeeding month.

Mr. K. Kanagaraj, Commissioner of Tuticorin Municipality in his presidential address spoke about misconceptions among women and spoke about the need to breastfeed and the role of Doctors, nurses, community health workers and childcare workers. Mr. Manoj Kumar, Chairman of Tuticorin expressed happiness about the initiative EMPOWER in conducting important meeting to remind the health care workers in their role as rein forcers of breastfeeding. Mr. Chelldurai ,Municipal Health Officer of Tuticorin Municipality exhorted the need to give the colostrums milk immediately after the childbirth which would protect the newborn against a variety of infection.

Mrs Meera Shankar, explained in detail the salient features of the IMS Act and the need for the health care professionals to be aware and adhere to it and outlined the essential features of exclusive breastfeeding.

Dr. Muthulakshmi, Dr. Jayaselvi Devakumari and Dr. Jayanthi Machodo , Medical officers of the Therspuram , Tharuvai and Fathima Nagar Health Posts described in detail the

all aspects of exclusive Breastfeeding and also negative impact of bottle-feeding. The Commissioner and the Chairman released the Banners on Breastfeeding. The medical officers received the materials for display in their Centers.

The Sector Health Nurse Mrs. Deivathai proposed the vote of thanks.

Educational Sessions in Antenatal and Postnatal Clinics:

The staff of EMPOWER visited the wards prenatal and antenatal mothers of Tuticorin Medical College Hospital and conducted the sessions for the mothers along with the participation of the family members from Aug 1st -8th. The main issues that were dealt during these sessions were to avoiding pre-lacteal feeds such as sugar water, advantages of colostrums, appropriate postures for comfortable breastfeeding, positive attitude, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, nutrition of the mother, spacing methods to postpone the next child and encouragement for breastfeeding.

Advocacy:

Dinamalar a vernacular press covered the program. Many local cable T.V. Sathya News, Muthu Seithigal, AMN, SDR besides the Jaya and Sun TV covered the program and also the IEC materials produced.

Sustainability:

As EMPOWER works in grass root with close collaboration with the Tuticorin Municipality and the ICDS, the Banners on Breastfeeding would be put up also in private hospitals and the education to the ANC and PNC mothers would be continued throughout the year.

CHILD RIGHTS AND PROTECTION AND HIV /AIDS TRAINING:

Supported By UNICEF:

Mrs. Meera Shankar is state trainer for UNICEF for Child Protection and HIV/AIDS. She participated as Resource Person to train Block Level Resource Teachers and Pre-service DIET students in Tsunami affected 13 districts of Tamilnadu on Human Rights, Child Rights, Child Protection and HIV/AIDS and Life skills education. .

PANIMAYAMATHA FESTIVAL:

Every year from 26 July to 10 August Festival of Lady of Snow, (Panimayamatha) would be celebrated in Tuticorin. The Festival acquires significance owing to the pulling of Car of Panimayamatha, which is an annual custom. Hence, every witness a huge stream of tourists even from neighboring Districts. Usually this part of the year, most persons in Tuticorin would visit the Church and the Exhibition, which is organized at the Xaveriana Grounds adjoining to the Panimayamatha Festival. Hence, we organized an AIDS education exhibition during this occasion.

Objectives

The following are the objectives of the campaign.

- To provide basic facts about STD / HIV / AIDS.
- To identify persons with STD symptoms and counsel and refer them for treatment.
- To increase the risk perception and counsel and refer them for VCTC.
- To promote A.B.C. messages.
- To clarify myths and misconceptions relating to STD / HIV / AIDS and sexuality.

Description and Activities in the Stall

This year the AIDS Exhibition was set up the Xaveriana Grounds, just adjoining to the Lady of Snow Church, which brimmed with Special masses, and Festivities. About one lakh people would have attended the festival and about 25,000 had visited the EMPOWER –APAC AIDS stall.

The stall was inaugurated by Mr.Periyasamy, ex MLA and local VIP presides by Rev. Father Jerosin Kattar Parish Priest of Lady of Snow Basilica. Mr. Natrajamurthy DSP Tuticorin Town felicitated the occasion. Earlier, Mr. Sankar explained the need, objectives, and the expected outcome of this stall while outlining the activities that would take place.

EMPOWER had to setup a stall in the space of 20 x 20 feet in same exhibition grounds. Besides, counseling space for Men and Women setup in the stall manned by trained counselors. The stall was semi permanent structures with a closed all sides and the roof with a shape of a rectangle with cordons for one-way entry and other way for exit. The organization collaborated with another APAC NGO such Gramodhya and to organize a facilities for VCTC in the exhibition itself.

The exhibits depicting on STI /HIV/AIDS and ABC messages were displayed on the walls of the stall. Besides, a special electronic board was also exhibited at the exit of the stall for each visitor to test and verify his newly gained knowledge. A large Flex messages on Abstinence was Be Faithful displayed in the entrance of the stall.

The stall coordinator was Mrs. Jaya who is a trained volunteer and about 2 ORW and 2 volunteers apart from a trained counselor who formed a team. About 95 questions were prepared on STD/HIV/AIDS and on sexuality. As the awareness of HIV/AIDS is high, the volunteers asked questions to assess the levels of knowledge and skills an interested visitor. The successful persons were given small prizes such as pens, combs, key chains, soap box, powder cups and puffs, hair bands to motivate them to know more about HIV and safe practices. The persons who seek counseling was counseled in privacy and confidentiality.

EMPOWER involved the HLL representative of economy condom project and displayed the multi brands marketed by HLL available in the market and also offered free samples to the first time users. The condom demonstration was also performed to the seekers among the visitors.

Audios and Video shows on HIV / AIDS were conducted to seek attention of the visitors to enter the exhibition. The Pattimandaram by Solomon Pappyya developed by APAC attracted a number of visitors who watched the video program.

Besides, exhibition promotional efforts were taken to print handbills, special hoardings at vantage points and jingles aired in the exhibition grounds.

Everyday, from 5 p.m. until 12 p.m. the AIDS stall was open for the visitors.

Major OUTPUTS

The following are the main outputs of the exhibition.

- ✓ One to one interactions – 247 .
- ✓ Numbers covered through one to group – 710
- ✓ Number of IEC distributed – Ungallukka ---5637
- ✓ Number of Condom demonstration done- 213.
- ✓ Number of free condoms distributed - 7525
- ✓ Number of persons counseled – 43
- ✓ Number identified & referred for STD – 6
- ✓ Number referred VCTC – 62

- ✓ Number tested at the exhibition site for HIV- 11
- ✓ Number given prizes for the correct answers – 598

There were number of questions and subsequent counseling on sex and sexuality issues especially on masturbation, condom usage, STD symptoms and common myths and misconception relating to semen loss. Besides, a book on Comments about the exhibition was also provided to the visit on qualitative feedback.

During the last day of the exhibition, a VCTC camp was organized in collaboration with Gramodya. About 15 persons came for pre-test counseling and 11 had tested for HIV. The results are awaited from them.

Feedback of the Visitors:

About 2000 persons had written the feedback. Most of them with positive comments and encouraging comments. The following are:

- ✓ The exhibition was very useful.
- ✓ This knowledge was essential for life especially adolescents and youth.
- ✓ We learnt about safe sex.
- ✓ We learnt about modes of spread and not discriminate HIV positive persons.
- ✓ A very good opportunity to clarify our doubts about masturbation and semen loss.
- ✓ Learnt to use condom.
- ✓ The volunteers provided us an opportunity to ask any personal questions on sex and answered and clarified our doubts without judging us.
- ✓ The questions asked were relevant and encouraged us to participate and “get know about something but always afraid to ask.”
- ✓ We got know the places for HIV testing.
- ✓ The services of EMPOWER is necessary for an AIDS free Tuticorin.

Coverage in the Media:

All the visual media such as Sun T.V, Jaya T.V., Raj T.V., Karan T.V., S.D.R. T.V., Tamilan T.V., Satya T.V., Muthu Saeithkal and A.M.N. T.V covered the inaugural function and the activities of the stall . Vernacular print media Dinakaran carried the news about the multi-media campaign.

RIGHTRANGA CAMPAIGN:

EMPOWER had spearheaded the Right Ranga Campaign in Tuticorin District covering all blocks mostly outside the intervention area in collaboration with other NGOs ,CBOs, government departments , educational institutions etc. in the months of October and November 2006.

Innovative Efforts / Special Program organized for creating awareness

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY	DETAILS OF ACTIVITY	DATES
Display of Materials	All I.E.C. related to Right Ranga displayed.	24. Sept.-23 Oct 06.
Distribution of I.E.C.	Ungaluuka and Nalammudan vazhga & HIV Guide book for SHG distributed during women convention, youth convention, rally and I.P.C. during exhibition and street play.	24. Sept.-23 Oct 06
Wall righting and Hoarding	3 Messages- Palayamkotai road	10-13 oct. 06.
Inter – personal communication	3210 persons through I.P.C.	27 Sept. -23 Oct 06
Street Play performance and Exhibitions	10 street plays and 14 exhibitions	Silverpuram, MZaveriyarpuram, Anthoniyarpuram, Perianayagipuram Kulshekarapattinam, Erachi, Ottapidaram SIPCOT , Sattankulam, Tuticorin Bus stand
Innovation Approaches adopted by the NGO for promoting the campaign.	Sticker pasting campaign by RTO and ASP.	04.10.06
	30X 10 sq. feet Digital Flex Board kept in the prime location in Tuticorin.	18.10.06 6 months
	Police Recruiting Training School . Perururani- Exhibition L.C.D. Presentation	18.10.06
Rally details	320 students from Govt. Polytechnic and Samuel Polytechnic participated.	10.10.06
Youth convention L.C.D. Presentation	320 students from Govt. Polytechnic and Samuel Polytechnic participated.	10.10.06
Women convention	325 SHGs women participated in Tuticorin, Srivaikundam and Ottapidaram Blocks	17.10.06
Communication on wheels –Right Ranga	2103 from general community including the slum population	16 th & 17 th October 06.

Vandi	witnessed the van.	
Right Ranga Clubs	Inauguration and Public meeting and oath taking and distribution of name boards and play equipments.	22 & 23 rd Oct 06

Major part of Right Ranga campaign was concentrated outside target area. The main activities within the area were Communication on Wheels within the slum intervention areas, which operated for about 2 days. Besides, the Right Ranga clubs were formed within the target area because of the need and for effective monitoring and follow up of the activities.

Right Ranga Youth Clubs towards Abstinence

We are about 20 Unmarried youth from aged 17 to 25 years all involved in fishing had been motivated by EMPOWER Staff to form the Right Ranga Club. We were impressed by "Right Ranga" as the image, voice and style of delivery reminded to Super Star Rajinikanth. As we are crazy about Rajinikanth we seriously gave attention to the messages in the T.V. and F.M. radio.

EMPOWER outreach worker began to speak about Right Ranga and invited us to various programmes such as youth rally and convention. We participated only in the rally and could not attend the one day convention because all of us were working. Then the popular Right Ranga Vandi came to our area where we all watched to the panels and learnt information for our healthy life. Again the outreach worker motivated us to form a Right Ranga youth club to sustain the activities of the Right Ranga I.E.C. campaign. We immediately agreed. We were sort of loosely knit group with few gym equipments. We used to this opportunity to stabilize into a youth club. We requested EMPOWER to buy us some gym equipments which they readily agreed.

We immediately cleaned a small piece of vacant land which was formerly rubbish dumping pathway. We fenced it using local materials. EMPOWER gave us a name board, Carom Board and lot of banners, stickers, posters and 2 standing boards. We arranged them in our club area and were proud to have an identity.

There was a simple inauguration when the Executive Director Mr. Sankar administered the oath and explained about the purpose and objective of the club as follows :

To promote healthy lifestyle among youth to practice abstinence contributing to prevent STI/HIV/AIDS

Frankly many of us have unsafe sex both with women older than our age and also have sex (oral and anal) with young boys. Though already we know about HIV/AIDS through EMPOWER Staff we did not realize that we are at risk for HIV. Now, we are meeting everyday in the evening at the club when the outreach workers and the counselors talk to us everyday. We also stocked few boxes of condoms.

After undergoing counseling we felt all of us need to be tested for HIV. EMPOWER thorough an anther NGO called Gramodhaya arranged a VCTC camp with in our Right Ranga Club premises. We were very worried till the results of all the fifteen members tested were negative. Then we took a vow that we would reduce our risk behavior and attempt secondary abstinence.

Meanwhile EMPOWER had given us gymnastic equipments such as weight lifting a rods and weight up to 2,000 kgs. We intensively began to concentrate on good physique and exercise regularly. This has attracted many other youth in our area and membership has increased to 50. We have collected membership fees for last 3 months and a bought foot ball and volley ball. So, all the members of the club have a chance to either play games or exercise.

By channeling our energy in games and physical fitness, the need to have sex has markedly reduced for most of the youth. Only the fraction of the money we earn is given to the family. The major portion is squandered for alcohol, smoke, sex, cinema and clothes. Besides, with help of EMPOWER we are in the process of forming self help groups to practice savings and credit to start new entrepreneur initiative.

It is true that Right Ranga and EMPOWER had changed the course of our life to make healthy choices and reduce risk.

WORLD AIDS CAMPAIGN:

In this World AIDS Day, EMPOWER was identified as one of the nodal NGO by APAC and IHN for identifying NGO and channeling the financial support. Hence, EMPOWER guided the IHN member NGOs to apply and get the grant from APAC-VHS. About 20 NGOs from Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Tuticorin, Theni, Coimbatore and Andhra Pradesh had received grant from EMPOWER.

Details of Activities by EMPOWER:

RALLY: On 1st December 2006, EMPOWER had organized the rally and Seminar involving the III students. The District Collector Mr. Palaniyandi I.A.S. flagged off the rally at about 10.30 a.m. while large number of health and development officials participated during the occasion. The rally with rising of HIV prevention slogans went through the Palyamkottai road and via the employment office, Korampallam main junction about 1500 persons standing on the main roads showed great interest and enthusiasm.

Exhibition:

Mobile Exhibition with umbrella stand and foldable tin sheets on propagating A message (designed by APAC) was organized at the III campus from 10. a.m. to 4. p.m.

Inauguration of the Seminar:

The inauguration of the Seminar was held at one of halls of Government III Korampallam. The principal inaugurated the program while the executive director of EMPOWER presided the program. The president of the District Positive Network talked about positive prevention. Earlier, the training officer welcomed the gathering while the NSS program officer proposed the vote of thanks.'

Muti-Media Presentation:

Mrs.Meera Shankar did LCD presentation on the theme HIV/AIDS and young people for about two hours on topics –epidemiology–global ,Indian and Tamilnadu, risk perception, modes of spread and relationship with STI symptoms ,HIV tests available –ICTCs, against

stigma and discrimination of PLHA ,Genital hygiene , resisting Peer pressure, need to abstain before marriage were highlighted . Two batches were done about 100 students participated in each.

A number condoms were taken away by the fourth class employees of the ITI . Many of them demanded VCTC camp to be conducted their campus. Three students reported STI symptoms are from the target community of EMPOWER SIP and are referred for STI and VCTC.

S.No.	Details	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
1	Name of the Activity	Rally	Seminar	Street Play and Exhibition
2	Objectives	To sensitize the community on issues relating to HIV/AIDS.	To increase the level of knowledge on HIV / AIDS among the age group – 17-25. To clarify the myths and misconception about HIV/AIDS.	To reduce stigma and discrimination among community
3	Target Group Addressed	Govt. ITI Students and general Community	Govt. ITI Students and Students of Fisheries Colleges	Govt. ITI Students and the faculty.
4	Date	1.12.2006	1.12.2006 and 19.12.2006	1.12.2006
5	Specify the details of activities	Rally from Tuticorin District Collectorate to Korampallam Government ITI. 240 Students and about 20 faculty members, street play volunteers and also staff of EMPOWER participated.	A multi-media presentation on theme HIV/AIDS and young people was imparted to students of two batches (before and after lunch)to a 100 students in each batch to Korampallam Government ITI. 74 students of Government Fisheries College participated on 19.12.2006.	
6	District	Tuticorin District	Tuticorin District	Tuticorin District

7	Block	Tuticorin Block	Tuticorin Block	Tuticorin Block	
8	Name of the place (specify Panchayat Level / Block level / District level)	Korampallam Panchyat.	Korampallam Panchyat.	Korampallam Panchyat.	
9	Direct Reach	Male	251	201 ITI students and 36 fisheries college students	260 males
		Female	20	36 fisheries college students	25 females.
		Total	271	275	295
10	Indirect Reach	Male	1000	237	0
		Female	250	36	0
		Total	1250	0	0
11	Total Reach (Direct + Indirect)	Male	1251	237	260
		Female	270	36	25
		Total	1521	275	295

List of collaborative organizations (including Govt. Dept. CBOs, NGOs, Industries, etc.)

S.No.	Name of the Organization	Type of Collaboration
1.	Tuticorin District Administration.	Participation in the Rally.
2.	Government Industrial Technical Institute	Participation of the students in rally, multimedia presentation, street play and exhibition.
3.	Government Fisheries College.	Participation of the students in multimedia presentation.
4.	Tuticorin District Positive Society Network.	Participation in the Rally and in the inaugural program.

List of VIPs participated in the programmes.

1. Mr.R. Palaniyandi ,I.A.S.
Tuticorin District Collector
2. Dr. Liaquat Ali
Deputy Director of Health Services and District AIDS Nodal Officer.
3. Mr. A.K.Ganapathy

- P.A. to District Collector – (Development)
4. Mr. Kandasamy
District Extension Educator.
5. Mr. Chelladurai
Principal, Government I.T.I.

Feedback about the programme:

The students and faculty found the program very useful as they came to know a lot of new information about HIV/AIDS. They were happy that their myths and misconception about HIV/AIDS and doubts relating to sex and sexuality were cleared. They also learnt to keep their genital hygiene clean.

The faculty and the other employees felt that the students needed such programs as many seem to indulge in high risk behaviour. The class IV employees took away all the condoms and requested EMPOWER to organize a VCTC camp.

Achievements

S.No.	Activity	Number	Total Beneficiaries
1	No. of one to one interactions	52	52
2	No. of one to group interactions		68
3	No. of counseling	4	4
4	Referral for counseling to other NGOs	0	0
5	Referral for VCTC / ICTC	2	
6	Referral to NGO involved in HIV/AIDS for additional information	10	10
7	Referral for STI symptoms	5	5
8	No. of IEC Materials distributed	1,300	750
9	No. of IEC Materials displayed (banner, sticker, red-ribbon, poster, etc.)	25	2000
10	No. of free condom distributed	350	50
11	No. of condom sold	0	0
12	No. of condom demonstration	26	20
13	No. of SHGs involved	0	0
14	No. of youth clubs involved	0	0
15	No. of NGO Staff involved in the programme	8	-
16.	If conducted Rally, specify no. of persons participated	340	2000
17.	Any other specific activities Street play	240 295	300

	Exhibition		
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Usefulness of IEC Materials provided by APAC:

The newly prepared materials World AIDS day was quite varied and made a catchy display. The right ranga standing boards were a centre of attraction for youth was Ungalukkaga was better accepted than Nalamudan Vazha.

Innovative approaches adopted by the NGO.

EMPOWER mobilized the PowerPoint presentation used by UNICEF for educating the youth on HIV/STI and sexuality. Later, EMPOWER updated the on epidemiology slides from UNAIDS websites.

Besides, the students had opportunity to interact the staff team for the full day during the exhibition and after the street play.

Efforts taken to mobilize the community support.

EMPOWER had always tried to reach the marginalized. Hence, the as soon as ITI was approached they readily collaborated and made all arrangements for the program. The district administration was glad to collaborate with EMPOWER as the program was on Dec 1st.

Some of the ITI students were from EMPOWER Target area and agree to volunteer for project activities. This program strengthened the advocacy with District administration.

Monitoring of activities by NGO.

The Executive Director of EMPOWER participated in the program and guided and monitored the program activities for the full day.

International Workshops participated:

A.Sankar	United Nations General Assembly Special Session	28 th to 2 nd June ,2006	New York USA
Meera Shankar	International Workshop on Life Skills Education for Youth Development.	February 2006	University of Madras

Participation in the other Meetings /Training programmes:

	Name of the Training	Name of the Staff	Organisers	No. of Days
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S.No:			& Place	
1.	Civil Society Consultation on UNGASS	A.Sankar	NACO & UNAIDS New Delhi	1 Day.
2.	Training on Rapid Assessment Study.	Meera Shankar	SHARAN Chennai	2 Days.
3.	Dissemination Seminar on the findings of RSA.	A.Sankar Meera Shankar	SHARAN Chennai	1 Day.
4.	Training of trainers Workshop on Drug use related Health Promotion	A.Sankar Meera Shankar	FHI Chennai	5 Days
5.	Comprehensive on Harm Reduction Approaches to HIV Intervention	Meera Shankar	RCSHA, Kolkatta	5 Days
6.	Reducing Substance Use Related HIV Vulnerability in Female Drug Users & Female Partners of Male Drug Users'.	A.Sankar	UNODC ROSA Pune	5 days
7.	DFID PMO - Harm Reduction Partner Forum	A.Sankar	DFID New Delhi	2 days
9.	DFID PMO - Harm Reduction Partner Forum	A.Sankar	DFID Goa.	5 days
10.	Human Rights Child Protection & Child Rights	Meera Shankar	UNICEF Chennai	2 days
11.	Workshop on Aquaculture	A.Sankar	MIOT & ACHI Chennai	1 day
12.	Workshop on mainstreaming HIV Prevention program	A.Sankar	CII Madurai	1 day
13.	Workshop on Advocacy	A.Sankar	Constella Futures & IHN Kodaikanal	2 days.

Dignitaries participated in programs of EMPOWER:

Mrs. Geetha Jeevan -Honorable Minister for Animal Husbandry

Mr. M. Appadurai – Member of Parliament , Tenkasi

Mr.R.Palaniyandi ,I.A.S. – Tuticorin District Collector

Mr. P. Anbarasu District Revenue Officer. Tuticorin .

Mr. John Nickelson .I.P.S –Superintendent of Police –Tuticorin District.

Mr.Thondiraj , Additional Superintendent of Police –Tuticorin District.

Mr. Mohammad Gouse Khan Gori –Deputy Superintendent of Police –Tuticorin Town

Mr. Natarajamurthy - Deputy Superintendent of Police - Tuticorin Rural .

Mr. Manoj Kumar - Municipal Chairperson- Tuticorin

Mrs. R.Mallika - Municipal Chairperson -Kovilpatti.

Mr. K.Kanagaraj -Municipal Commissioner, Tuticorin

Mr. M.Madasamy , Project Officer , Mahalir Thittam . Tuticorin District

Mr. Kathirvelu , Regional Transport Officer. Tuticorin District.

Dr. Subbulaksmi , Joint Director of Health Services. Tuticorin District

Dr. Saraswathi , Dean Tuticorin Medical College Hospital

Dr. Appanraj , Joint Director Health Services Tuticorin District

Dr. Liaquat Ali - Deputy Director of Health Services.

Mr. S.R. Sudharshan District Supply Officer.

Mr. A.K.Ganapathy - P.A. to District Collector - (Development)

Dr. C.helladurai - Municipal Health officer, Tuticorin

Dr. Vairamani - Municipal Health officer, Tuticorin

Mr. Mathivanan NYK, Tuticorin District.

Mr. Dhanapal , Territory Manger -Bharat Petroleum

AFFILIATIONS:

EMPOWER is affiliated to the following:

- ✓ Indian Harm Reduction Network - IHRN
- ✓ Initiatives for HIV/AIDS Net - IHN.
- ✓ National Coalition for Health Initiative- NCHI .
- ✓ Breastfeeding Network OF India. BPNI.
- ✓ Social Action Movement - TN NGO Forum - SAM.
- ✓ Federation of Consumer Organizations - Tamil Nadu - FEDCOT.
- ✓ Consumer Education and Research Centre - CERC.
- ✓ Campaign against Child Labour - CACL.
- ✓ Campaign against Child Trafficking - CACT.
- ✓ South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude - SACCS.

OUR PARTNERS:

We thank the partners for their support to EMPOWER.



United Nations Office Drugs and Crime -New Delhi.

- 👍 UNICEF –Chennai.
- 👍 Central Social Welfare Board, Department Women and Child Development, Government of India.
- 👍 AIDS Prevention and Control Project (APAC – VHS), Chennai.
- 👍 District Supply Office, Tuticorin District Administration.
- 👍 Mahalir Thittam , Women Development Corporation of Tamilnadu.
- 👍 SHARAN and DFID New Delhi.
- 👍 Tamilnadu Health System Govt. of Tamilnadu.
