

Rehabilitation of Transgender Community through Capacity Building & Group Entrepreneurship - An Innovative Project implemented by CED (Tamil Nadu), Madurai

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Rehabilitation of TGC

- It is generally reported that Transgender Community (TGC) resorts to begging and practicing sex trade for their living.
- They are considered as a High-Risk segment in the prevention of HIV/AIDS by development agencies. Several NGOs are working with TGC.
- Behavioral modification amongst the TGC is necessary for HIV/AIDS prevention and it is a big challenge to the development agencies.

Approach to Rehabilitation

- The TGC isolate themselves as a group and move away from the normal society and resort to begging and indulging in socially non-acceptable activities for their living.
- TGC can gain economic independence either through gainful employment or profitable self employment. They need education and training for the purpose.
- However, Behavioral modification amongst the TGC is the pre-requisite for development through skill training or entrepreneurship training.
- Further, guidance is needed on alternate and credible economic activities.

Issues addressed in the process

- TGC needs to acquire marketable / employable skills
- They require business opportunity guidance
- They require credit linkage and management training.
- They need mentoring and guidance on a sustainable way.

Rehabilitation of TGC is needed for HIV/AIDS prevention

- TGC is recognized as a High-Risk segment in the HIV / AIDS prevention.
- Behavioral modification will reduce the risk in the spread of HIV / AIDS.
- Moreover, credible and alternative economic activities will motivate them to move away from the socially non-acceptable activities.

The approach of TAI – VHS

- TAI-VHS with the support of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was established for targeted intervention of a specific group i.e. commercial sex workers including Transgender Community for HIV/AIDS prevention activity. They covered nearly 50,000 Commercial Sex Workers including TGC in Tamil Nadu state.
- CED (Tamil Nadu) is a state level entrepreneurship development institution supported by Ministry of MSME, Government of India and Industries Department, Government of Tamil Nadu.
- TAI-VHS promoted skill training amongst the Commercial Sex Workers including TGC on marketable and employable skills through Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (Tamil Nadu), Madurai.

Economic Development Activities for TGC

- The NGO intervention method was adopted in the HIV / AIDS prevention in the cases of High-Risk Groups including TGC.
- Regarding the economic development activities, The TGC was eager and enthusiastic to work independently as a group and also form a federation without the intervention of NGOs. TAI-VHS agreed to this model.
- The TGC formed CBOs and Federation and were trained by CED (Tamil Nadu) on Entrepreneurship Development.

Business model

- CED was requested by TAI-VHS to identify a commercially viable business venture, provide capacity building, design a business model, provide hand-holding and then make them independent in running the business venture.
- The CBO formed by TGC in Salem city was taken an experiment. CED designed a Business model of Fast Food Restaurant with south indian delegacy, i.e., Idly. A common kitchen with four retail outlets was designed and 20 members of the TGC were trained in food production and food & beverages (F&B) services.
- CED experts stayed with them for training and guidance in the initial period. The project was funded by TAI-VHS.

How the model reduces HIV/AIDS related health issues?

- When the TGC gains economic independence, they need not resort to socially non-acceptable activities for their living.
- The economic independence will further make them support other members in the TGC from exploitation.
- Economic independence may lead to behavioural modification.
- All the above will lead to reduction of the risk associated with HIV/AIDS.

Experiences in the business model of TGC

- There were challenges in modifying the behaviour of TGC and making it suitable for a business situation. Initially, they were excited about the opportunity and co-operated.
- The project received all India publicity by all the TV channels and Newspapers covering the novel experiment. Even the District Collector invited them to establish a retail outlet in the Salem Government Hospital.
- There was rousing reception among public as they were neat and presentable in the F&B uniform. The TGC were not isolated. The public supported the activity as it was socially relevant and acceptable.

Lessons learnt in implementing the business model in Salem City of Tamil Nadu

- There were problems when CED experts left Salem city. Thereafter, the project failed since there was no unity among the 20 members of the TGC. They were conflicts within themselves in sharing of responsibilities, etc. There was no external intervention as they were independent.
- Due to lack of education, they had a number of other behavioral issues, a legacy of TGC over a period of time.
- Guidance and mentoring needed on a sustainable way by a reputed NGO.
- The economic development of TGC without education and exposure requires better attention. Guided and Group Entrepreneurship will be more suitable to them.