



Emerging leaders: towards achieving the rights and entitlements of sex workers

SEEMA PROJECT
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CARE has a long history of working in Bangladesh to end poverty. Its previous experiences of working with the two specific marginalized groups of women in urban areas - sex workers and garment workers engaged in insecure work - have shaped the project SEEMA.



- The image consists of several distinct graphical elements. On the far left, there are two white silhouettes of people, one adult and one child, holding hands. The background is a solid dark gray. At the bottom, there is a curved shape composed of two colors: a green section on the left and an orange section on the right. Five small white dots are arranged vertically along the center of the dark gray background, starting from the bottom and ending near the top.

This information package highlights the impacts of the project on sex workers.



The SEEMA project is envisaged to empower sex workers with an overall objective **to contribute to the reduction of urban poverty in Bangladesh through reducing the social and economic exclusion of the most marginalized women in urban communities and fostering their empowerment.** The specific objective of the project is to promote and protect the rights of female sex workers through improving their human condition and social position.



Impact Group :

600
SEX WORKERS
FROM DHAKA,
TONGI AND
TANGAIL



LEADERSHIP
CAPACITIES

APPROACH

To achieve its goal, SEEMA adopted the empowerment framework. Based on this framework, activities are employed to strengthen the position of sex workers in 3 interrelated aspects - agency (human condition), structure (Enabling environment; social position) and relationships.

Strengthening the agency of sex workers in regard to their (1) psychosocial well being, (2) leadership capacities and (3) functional literacy was strategically planned to bring changes in their social positions and ability to demand their due rights.

The impacts of the capacity building activities carried out by SEEMA in these three topics are captured in the pamphlets enclosed in this package.



FUNCTIONAL LITERACY



PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING

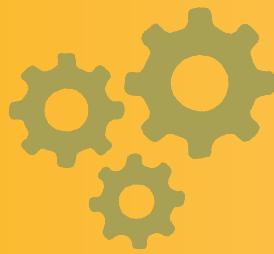


LEADERSHIP CAPACITIES

Leadership Capacities

Developing the leadership capacities of the sex workers is necessary in enhancing their self-agency and a key step in the process of empowerment. SEEMA provided leadership training to the identified natural leaders of the sex worker communities to improve their agency and skills towards becoming the leaders of their own selves, communities and institutions.

The trainings were designed to provide knowledge on the qualities of a leader, necessity of leader, responsibilities of a good leader, how one can be a good leader, types of leadership, decision making and conflict resolution. Additionally the leaders were provided knowledge of existing services in their location and their right to access the services. The skill-related component of the training built their capacity to organize meetings, engage in negotiation, advocacy and networking. Real situations were simulated to encourage the leaders to make decisions.



The acquired skills and knowledge with the positive attitudes and ethical behavior of sex workers influenced positive changes in their own institutions and their social position.

IMPACTS AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

- Ability to take appropriate and democratic decisions increased.
- Practicing the learned ethics to be a leader; hearing the voices and opinions of everyone, maintaining equality, creating flexible and friendly environment in groups, working as a team and keeping confidentiality.
- Internal confidence brought smartness in their appearance and postures.
- Confidence increased in managing and leading their families, communities and institutions.
- Information seeking practices about rights and different issues concerning the lives of sex workers increased.
- Greater courage to take up any task and move around independently after knowing their rights as a citizen.
- Greater motivation among sex workers to take up positions in their organizations.

IMPACTS AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Better communication between committee members of their organization, Durjoy Nari Shangha (DNS) and general members. Increasing number of members with leadership qualities are attending the meetings and contributing towards the strengthening of DNS.

Knowledge on qualities of a good leader helps the members of DNS to select an honest and suitable leader.

IMPACTS IN THE SOCIAL POSITION OF SEX WORKERS

The trained leaders of the sex worker communities have gained acceptance and recognition at various spheres. Their presence is accepted and voices are heard in different meetings and forums arranged by civil society, non government and government organizations.

- ★ Sex workers are allowed to enter offices including police stations to seek assistance.

 They are accepted in positions and jobs other than sex work. For instance sex workers are given responsibilities to manage people at election centers during national elections.

-  Sex workers are benefitting from improved relations with the house owners, medical centre staff, religious leaders and local elites.

 In some areas ward counselors, the police, local politicians and BGB (Border Guard Bangladesh) are consulting with the sex workers on decisions related to them.

On their part the sex workers are clearly articulating their opinions and decisions in common forums and negotiating for decisions in their best interest.

With the support of trained leaders, sex workers are being able to access services without hesitation and demanding their rights if the services are denied.

The solidarity within sex workers and their groups have increased in achieving justice and protesting against injustices.

FROM THE VOICES OF WOMEN

"We are inspired to become good leaders after the session on 'Quality of a good leader'.".

"Leadership does not mean running for money; it means leading the members with the best interest of the community."

"Now we are aware of the good qualities that a leader must possess and know how to exercise them."

"As we are in solidarity, outsiders cannot harm us"

The leadership trainings enhanced the leadership capabilities and confidence of sex workers, strengthened their solidarity and uplifted their position in the society.



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