

## Psycho-Social intervention: A peeping ray of hope to access services for PWID.

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### Introduction:

CARE Bangladesh has been implementing the HIV program since 1995 in Bangladesh and playing a leading role in the HIV program sector, especially for people who inject drugs (PWID). At present, CARE Bangladesh is implementing Comprehensive prevention programs for people who inject drugs (PWID) and their partners in 13 districts of Bangladesh and providing services through 35 service centres among 14,035 PWID funded by the Global Fund. CARE Bangladesh took different strategies and activities to minimise the spreading of HIV infection among the PWID to meet the project's goals and objectives. As the bio-medical intervention has been prioritized in the Harm Reduction program model, the psycho-Social intervention played a significant role in harmonizing the services and clients to convince the PWID to link with comprehensive services, especially for HIV-positive clients. A recent survey shows that HIV prevention has been reduced compared to previous survey due to the continuation of harm reduction programs with bio-medical intervention<sup>1</sup>. According to the IBBS 2020, the HIV prevalence rate was 4.1% in Dhaka among PWID, whereas in 2016, it was 27.3% in Dhaka A1 and 8.9% in Dhaka A2.

Drug addiction affects both the brain and behaviour since it has multiple effects on the body, mind, and nervous system. Drug abuse alters the perception, emotions, and feelings of users, eventually causing mental health issues, such as depression,

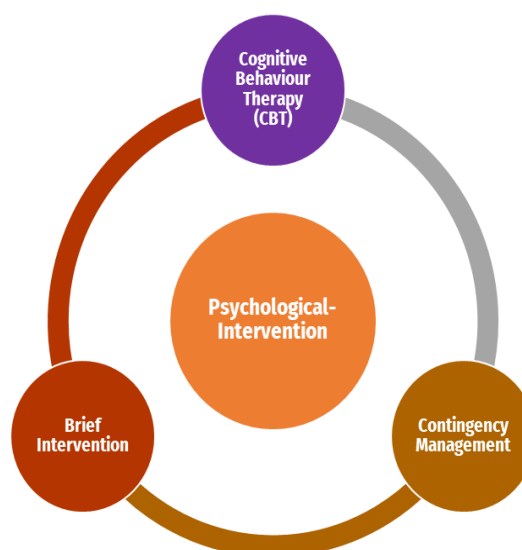


<sup>1</sup> Integrated Biological and Behavioural Survey (IBBS) 2020

bipolar disorder, anxiety etc., besides other health issues. Psycho-social support is one of the key ingredients to successfully integrating the drug user into harm reduction services.

## Discussion:

On average, PWID in Bangladesh who are enrolled as a service recipients of harm reduction services have been injecting drugs for over ten years and suffering some form of mental illness. A harm reduction package is a combination of different services- such as sterilized Needle-Syringe distribution, Condom promotion, treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, ulcer on injecting site, HCV drugs who are Hepatitis-C positive, Anti-retroviral therapy who are HIV positive, Isoniazid prevention therapy (IPT) for HIV positive (PLHIV), Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) as a prevention program. However, psychological support among these groups is well regarded for increasing adherence to services and enhancing well-being. Several psychosocial approaches- including case management of OST patients, brief intervention, motivational interviewing, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), contingency management, and development of social support groups, including peer counselling and advocacy- have been in place to reduce drop-out client trends from OST, increase adherence to ART and HCV-HIV co-infection management, completion of TB treatment with proper medication, IPT for PLHIV for prevention therapy from



Tuberculosis, taking of regular medication for sexually transmitted infection etc. Mental health support is the mainstay of drug use disorders for many people. It teaches individuals how to avoid trigger factors, replaces negative thoughts and feelings with healthy ones, benefits of treatment and maintains adherence, and helps involve family, friends, and social support system. Effective integration of prevention, treatment and recovery services helps individual drug users to maintain a healthy life and social well-being. The Counsellor worked hard to manage the clients, and it was not easy for them to conduct counselling sessions with the PWID. They followed different methods of counselling for PWID through case management. Following counselling sessions have been conducted during the counselling session through different psycho-social interventions.

**Brief Intervention**

- ✚ Increase Awareness
- ✚ Raise Concern
- ✚ Add Perspective
- ✚ Enhance Motivation
- ✚ Engage in Change Process
- ✚ Improve Adherence
- ✚ Sustain Change

**Cognitive Behavior Therapy**

- ✚ Psycho-education
- ✚ Pros and cons analysis
- ✚ Problem Solving
- ✚ Thought Challenge
- ✚ Behavioural Experiment
- ✚ Relaxation Exercises

**Contingency Management**

- ✚ Define target behaviour
- ✚ Identify reward
- ✚ Select outcome indicator
- ✚ Joint decision on schedule of contingency
- ✚ Monitor progress
- ✚ Provide personal feedback
- ✚ Small is not trivial

**Result:**

Regarding the continuance of services for PWID, psycho-social intervention was essential and effective in the PWID project. PWID and their family members grasped the value of everyday services through regular counselling sessions. As a result, programmatic data for the last year (January-December 2022) demonstrates that the retention rate on methadone therapy was, on average, 90%. On the other hand, 97% of PLHIV maintained adherence to taking Anti-retroviral Therapy (ART). The project completed the IPT therapy among 70% of HIV-positive individuals. Moreover, 97% of HIV-HCV has been managed successfully in the last year. All the successful outcomes were possible for psychosocial intervention.



*“I am mentally stable and come back to normal life by the help of psychosocial intervention from counselor of CARE Bangladesh. I am very much thankful the way they supported me in every step of involvement me with treatment care and support and integrated me with my family and friends.”- Md. Sayed; PWID of Jurain Service Center.*

**Photo:** Psycho-Social Counselling Session

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