

Final Report on Community Needs Assessment Survey

Submitted to:

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Financial Assistance Given by:

International HIV/AIDS Alliance, UK

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December 1995

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1. INTRODUCTION

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, AIDS, caused by Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV), has by now become an endemic. According to reports from world Health Organization as of January, 1995 up to 18 million people worldwide are HIV positive and of them 4 million are having AIDS. This number, of people infected with the virus, transmitted chiefly by unprotected sexual intercourse, transfusions of contaminated blood, sharing or reusing of contaminated needles etc. is increasing everyday by 6000. And even according to conservative estimate 40 million of world population will be carrying this by the turn of the century, of whom at least 50 percent will be woman giving birth to around 10 million HIV's baby.

Though AIDS related risk behaviors, like multi-partner sex or homosexuality are socially accepted part of western culture, the scenario is more dangerous in this part of the world comprising mostly of underdeveloped countries, which can be attributed to the existing poverty and illiteracy and consequent lack of awareness about the disease among their vast populace. Of ten million Asians already infected by HIV, three million hail from South & South-East Asia. Poverty associated with diminishing agriculture productivity and population explosion gives rise to landlessness and the migration of landless in search of wage employment resulting in family fragmentation. Thus an appreciable number of people in the countries in this region are engaged in occupation which entails long periods of separation from their stable sex partner. This home away work force, driven by the basic instincts, could logically build up contacts with commercial sex workers and thus have every chances to become mobile launching pads for HIV or other micro organisms liable for sexually Transmitted Diseases.

In Bangladesh, a least developed country with a conservative society and high family values, the scanty number (33 persons) of infected persons up to now can not by itself explain the threats. According to a projection made in a recently published world Bank report (The Daily Star : 09/06/95, AIDS cases in our country will cross 30,000 by the year 2000. The severe impact of AIDS has also highlighted the necessity to prevent and cure other infectious diseases that like HIV, are passed on during unprotected sexual intercourse, Having a sexually transmitted diseases increase the risk of being infected with HIV or of passing on HIV, by as much as nine times during sex (Where one partner has HIV). Who estimates that, at least one in ten sexually active people is infected with an that STDs have a major impact on people's health, specially for women and newborn babies. In developing countries like ours STDs are among the five most common health problems for which people seek treatment. But most of the time services are not available, are inaccessible or of poor standard.

There is no time that both the Government and Non-Government organization put their maximum effort and work hand in hand to fight the spread of these deadly diseases. And since medical science has not yet succeeded in finding a cure to AIDS, only way we can check its aggression is through a better prevention and care method. CEDAR has already taken full preparation to hammer home their "three a" three phase plan including Assessment of selected target population; development Awareness among them and taking specific actions to prevent the onslaught of STDs/HIV/AIDS.

2. BACK TRACK

Concern for Environmental Development And Research (CEDAR), since its inception on 7 June, 1989 is consideration AIDS and other STDs as a major threat towards a safe Bangladesh in 21st century and as such has taken up various activities in this connection. The HASAB NGO support programme, on the basis of the initial application submitted by CEDAR on 20 July, 1995 has invited two vital members of CEDAR in an workshop arranged at the CDS premises from 6-10 August, 1995 to impart a thorough training on population assessment.

Later on, CEDAR submitted a proposal for carrying out an assessment on the truck drivers at Aricha Ghat, Manikgonj in connection with their socio-economic condition, education level, health and sanitation etc., Which was accepted by HASAB. Under an agreement signed with HASAB on 4-10-1995, CEDAR is carrying out the current project entitled " Population Assessment".

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objectives of the present study are:

- To assess the knowledge attitude and practices (KAP) of the target community, i.e., truck drivers, in connection with socio-economic conditions: education level, health and sanitation status and recreation etc.
- To design an effective STDs/HIV/AIDS Prevention programme for the target community, if such a program is necessary at all for them as would be indicated by the results of the assessment

The Specific Objectives of the Study are:

- a) To understand the usual pattern of the target community by observing their everyday life, range of income, intra- and extra-community interaction etc. and to estimate a subsequent risk level towards being exposed to the diseases.
- b) To inquire about their general health conditions and usual health habits.
- c) To assess their general sex practices
- d) To measure their level of awareness and eagerness about STDs and other diseases.

4. TARGET AUDIENCE

The truck drivers have found to be a potential ground to be the target of the assessment.

- As per latest (1992) available data there are 38392 registered trucks in Bangladesh according to BRTA (Bangladesh Road Transport Authority) sources published in BBS Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 1993.
- Every truck has got at least one driver and a helper, which makes a total of nearly 70,000 workers in this area.
- There are 2 major countrywide truck drivers union namely-Bangladesh Truck Drivers Union and Bangladesh Inter District Truck Drivers Union with memberships of 14,000 and 1100 respectively. However these figure exclude the

non card holder drivers and helpers enlisted with Bangladesh Motor workers Union.

- The truck drivers, 100% of whom is male, has to stay away from their wives for a good number of days at a stretch while taking trips to far away places.
- It is inferred that during this home away periods the truck drivers, driven by the instincts, or being devoid of healthy recreation or due to other to-be-assessed reasons might pilgrim to commercial sex workers or might resort to drug abuse, thus exposing themselves as well as their stable partners to the threat of being infected by the sexually transmitted diseases.
- Thus a methodical assessment of this community can provide us with some insight into the behavioral facts related to the prevention and cure of AIDS and STD in this country as a whole

Geographic Location:

Considering the constraints in time and funds allocated we have selected *Aricha Ferry Ghat* at Manikgonj District to be our target location.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Study Area : Aricha Ferry Ghat, Manikgonj
Sample Size : 100 (Face to face interviews)

5.2 Instruments Of Information Gathering

As this very assessment requires to produce more qualitative than quantitative output, unstructured methods of data gathering were given preference. Following methods were used

- Focus group discussions
- Face to face interviews on the basis of an pre-printed outline
- Observation on the lifestyle of the target group and their milieu
- Retrieval of data/information from secondary sources

5.2.1 Focus Group Discussions

- Five (5) focus group were formed each comprising of 8-10 members.
- Among the first three (3) groups one comprised of truck drivers only, one of helpers only and the others comprised both drivers and helpers. These groups excluded any one leaders, So that the group opinions were not influenced by dominant members of the community.
- Group 4 comprised of union leaders and drivers/helpers on a 50-50 participation level.

- Group 5 accommodated two truck drivers, a union leader and one or two representatives from any other local groups chosen during the project period on the basis of their interrelation with the target audience, e.g. a salesperson from one of the local drug stores, a Hekim from a local Dawakhana, sales managers from the most visited local restaurant, boarding house, liquor shops, etc.
- Field coordinator was responsible for recruiting the group members and ensuring proper group behavior.
- However the group comprising of drivers only served as a pilot group. And a guideline for the following group discussions was developed on the basis of the info. Gather from the said discussion.
- Project coordinator himself was the moderator of the discussions. He was assisted by the field coordinator as an observer in the cases of all groups. Each session lasted for about 60-70 minutes.
- Four sessions were audio taped. The pretest group (drivers only) could not be taped.

5.2.2 Face-to-face interview:

- One to one interviews started after the completion of focus group discussions and a preliminary summarization of the group discussions.
- Hundred target people were interviewed, representing all the subsections of target community, e.g. drivers and helper, married or unmarried, young or aged, those who have and with a family and those who don't etc.
- A questionnaire was designed and supplied in print to the interviewers for each interviewee.
- The places of face to face interviews were beside the cabs, at the restaurants, or at the boarding where they stay.

5.2.3 Observation on the lifestyle of the target group and their milieu

- Two of the field investigators, and the field co-coordinator were engaged in observation and key-note taking on the daily life as well as the intra- and extra interaction of the members of the community
- Observers also accompanied drivers on their journey from Aricha-Dhaka to have a closer look at their behaviors and practice.
- Observers also visited the brothel at Daulatdia, on the other side of the river.

5.2.4 Retrieval of data from secondary sources :

- Reports or articles on the target community and issue printed on various govt. and non-government publications were reviewed thoroughly for relevant facts and figures.
- BIWTC (Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation), Aricha office was also visited for secondary data.

5.3 Data Processing

- Field investigators sat in a group to sort and code their field notes.
- Open responses from face-to-face interviews were post coded as much as possible and were be input to a database software, namely DBASE IV and were then be analyzed by SPSS PC. The remaining of the text data were summarized after marking and sorting by cut-and paste technique.
- Project coordinator with the assistance of field coordinator took up the content analysis of the focus group data by interpreting the audio tapes.
- Data from observation were summarized by the field coordinator and submitted to project-coordinator.

5.4 Validation of the findings

The qualitative data gathered by reduction were summarized and the preliminary findings were bounced back to the community for validation checking. A questionnaire for this purpose was developed. All the findings were verified to be correct by the target people.

6. ACTIVITIES TO DATE

6.1 Workshop and training

A five day Orientation and training workshop entitled "Training Workshop on STD&HIV/AIDS and Population Assessment Techniques" was organized for the field staff from 05 Oct., 1995. The workshop ended successfully on 09 Oct., 1995.

A brief report on the training workshop is attached with this report (Annex 2).

6.2 Preparation for fieldwork

The field team was led by the Field Coordinator Mr. Wahiduzzaman. He headed for Aricha on 12 oct., 1995 and made necessary arrangements there. The Field Investigators reported to Aricha on 13 oct. 1995. The Project Coordinator made sure that all the requirements were procured and taken to field.

6.3 Field Activities

Field work started from 13 Oct., 1995. A brief description of the activities carried out at field is given below.

- **Requirement of Participants:** Participants for focus group Discussions were recruited on 13 and 14 October as per group imposition delineated in the proposal from among drivers and bbbb waiting for ferry at ghat. The Participants enlisted in the Recruitment/Attendance sheet” and were given a time, date and place ouch for the discussions.
- **Focus Group pretest:** The first group comprising of drivers only was decided to serve as a pretest group. The discussion was told on 14 oct., 1995 at 2000 hrs. Some problems were faced initially concerning the place selection which is discussed below. However, once started, the discussion continued smoothly.
- **Other Focus Group:** The other focus groups were conducted as below

Group	Composition	Time Date	Place	No of participants
Group 2	Drivers and helpers	1900 Hrs 16 Oct, 1995	Aricha Ghat	6
Group 3	Helpers	1000 Hrs 17 Oct, 1995	Aricha Ghat	9
Group 4	Drivers and Union leaders	1900 Hrs 19 Oct, 1995	Aricha Ghat	7
Group 5	Drivers, Union Leaders and others community.	1000 Hrs 24 Oct, 1995	Union Office, Aricha Ghat	9

- **Preparation of Interview Questionnaires:** On the basis of the proposed preformed attached with the proposal and the preliminary findings of the focus group discussions already held a questionnaire was designed and developed for in-depth interview on 20-21 Oct., 1995. A copy of the questionnaire is enclosed (Annex-3). 100 copies of the questionnaire was sent to field on 21 Oct., 1995.
- **Conducting Interviews:** One hundred (100) person were interviewed by the field investigators from 22 Oct. 27 Oct., 1995. Field coordinator supervised the whole process ensuring proper selection of interviews such that they represent different cross-section of the target community, e.g., drivers and helpers, married or single, young or aged etc.
- **Observations:** Throughout their stay at field the project staff made observations and took notes. They also visited relevant places like the Brothel on the other side of the river at Daulatdia, local drug stores, traditional healers, local wine (Bangla) shops etc. On 28 Oct., 1995 investigators divided into two groups and rode back to Dhaka city from Aricha on two trucks to take a closer at the men while at the steering.
- **Secondary Data from Field :** Some government office at Aricha Ghat were visited for gathering secondary data as shown in the following table.

- **Table of Offices visited for Secondary Data:**

Date	Office Visited	Officials met	Remarks
21 Oct 1995	BIWTC Serial Box, Aricha Ghat	1. Mr. Zakir Hossain, Terminal Superintendent 2. Mr. Mahmudur Rahman, Terminal Asstt.	Data were gathering about the no. of trucks ferried per day. However the data obtained could not be authenticated.
21 Oct 1995	BIWTC Area Office, Aricha Ghat	1. Mr. Nurul Alam, AGM (Commercial) 2. Mr. Atahar Hossain AGM (Marine)	Data were obtained from the Block Position Book maintained daily

BIWTC: Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation

- **Recheck of Major Findings:**

On 9th November, 1995 Field Team went back to the community with a questionnaire to recheck the major findings of the assessment. Mahmoda Akther KAbita, Project Coordinator, HASAB visited the field on 10th November, 1995. The field team came back to CEDAR the same day.

6.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed in CEDAR under the supervision of Project Coordinator and with the aid of Computer Analyst from 1st November, 1995. The method described in methodology was for data analysis.

7. PROBLEMS FACED

At the initial stage of our getting involved with this community, as faced some problems before gaining a thorough access. This community is still in backward stage epically in community development. The concept of community development is still unknown to them although there does exist a congenial atmosphere for the same.

We also faced some problem while organizing them for focus group. For example, considering the noises prevailing in the ghat premises. We offered the first focus group to have a boat-ride with us deep into the river while we could have the discussion. The participants though at first agreed with us later on denied to go in the river showing unacceptable (to us) reasons. When we let them decide on their own they took us on top of a loaded truck waiting at the ghat and the discussions turned to be the most finely one.

Due to a countrywide four day Political *Hartal* (strike) called by the mainstream opposition parties we had to change our work plan and stay at field for two more days than what we planned.

Though the general response among truck drivers was very much enthusiastic for us some of the target community refused altogether to respond. Especially a group of 6/7 truck who hail from the south Eastern part of the country (and who seemed to have lot of anguishes within themselves) gave a straight faced 'No' to our repeated request to open up.

8. DETAIL OF FINDINGS

8.1 Focus Groups

Focus Group 1: Drivers

Ours is a "Chutia" (fucker) department- Md. Aziz, truck-driver, Rangpur district. Truck Drivers are universal fuckers (Biswachoda) – Abdur Rouf, truck driver, Rangpur. The day we are behind the steering, we acquire a free visa (to hell) – Karim Mridha, driver, Chittagong. These excerpts are enough to express the way the truck drivers of focus group one feel about themselves and their profession. This group meant to be a pretest, turned into the liveliest one, though initially the participants were somewhat doubtful about our objectives, they even denied meeting us on the first location. We selected, on a boat in the river *Jamuna*. However, when we agreed to have the discussion at a shop at the ghat, as selected by the participants they took no time to open up. When we asked about the hassles faced by them on and off the road, one said, Truck drivers have three enemies- Police, Customs/BDR and Dacoits. They blamed overloading of truckers (which serves the owners interests) as being one of the main causes of accidents. The drivers coming mainly from rural areas started their carrier as helpers at an average age of 12 years. Some mentioned untoward family environments, e.g.- unfriendly behavior from step mother, as their reason for leaving home and taking profession.

It was February, 1995 I was at *Babubazar*, Dhaka, loading my truck for a trip to Barisal. Someone passed me the sad news that my wife was dead. But I had no choice but to unload the truck at the destination before going home. Three days had passed by then, and it was all over, I could not even see her face before being laid to the final rest- other drivers stories are no different than this tragic one told by Rafiqul Islam. They can't attend holly gathering, neither family festivals nor can they take proper care of their spouses and kids for being away from home for unmemorable numbers of day at a stretch on duty. They also have to stay awake for night after night, which makes their body and mental disturbance, driving them towards unusual practices, like taking drugs, alcohols, having uncontrolled and unprotected sex.

The drivers have histories of various diseases. When asked about the type of medication they avail, maximum of the response were sympathetic. They opined that government should arrange for special hospital for truck professionals at places like Aricha Ghat. The drivers were very much free and frank about their sexual practice. Though the average age of this group was more than the later groups, they were least hesitant on discussing about going to commercial sex workers. Most of the drivers, as the participants opined, visit the brothel at *Doulotdia*, on the other side of the river, while they have to wait for the serial at the ghat. They feel no guilty at doing this. However one mentioned that his wife can always detect (?) whether he slept with other women while he was out.

They are very much reluctant about condom. Some think condom hinders getting the full pleasure out of sex. However, one said that "yes, it's safe to use condom, but when we get

drunk, we forget even where we are, let alone condom”. Drug addiction is seen prevalence among the truck drivers, and those who take drugs are generally neglected by others, but we drivers are very much fond of *Bangla* (Local wine), said Suruj Mia of Chittagong. We blamed the excessive income of drivers for exaggerated life. Shortage of Mal (money) kills their hobby; he said. All the participants know the name of common STI like syphilis, Gonorrhoea, etc. And generally resort to look for treatment. Some even know the name of some medicine. Two of the participants heard the name AIDS from TV, and have no sound knowledge about this disease.

The drivers are very much short of recreation equipments. They generally spend their time playing cards or carom or gossiping at tea stalls. Of course, a good number of them are going to the *Para* (brothel) or Bhatikhana (local wine shop) as recreation. Some of the participants have at least a television; some of them have video cassette player at their home.

The discussion of group one, since it was decided to be a pretest was not recorded. However extensive note taking was done.

Participants: Truck Drivers **No. of participants:** 9
Date: 15/10/95 **Time:** 20:00 hrs.
Facilitator: Tariqul Islam **Observer:** Wahiduzzaman

List of Participants:

SL No	Name	Contact Address	Profession	Other Info. (Age, Family, Education etc)	Religion
01	Md. Ali	L.T.U Office Rangpur	Driver	40, 3 son & 2 daughter, to IV	Muslim
02	Abdur Rouf	L.T.U Office Rangpur	Driver	30, 1 son & 1 daughter, to IV	Muslim
03	Md. Aziz	L.T.U Office Rangpur	Driver	50, 3 daughter & 1 son, V to X	Muslim
04	Nurul Mia	L.T.U Office Rangpur	Driver	40, 2 son & 1 daughter IV to V	Muslim
05	Karim Mridha	L.T.U Office Rangpur	Driver	32, 2 daughter & 1 son, V to VI	Muslim
06	Jalaluddin	L.T.U Office Rangpur	Driver	35, 2 son & 1 daughter, V to VII	Muslim
07	Rafiqul Islam	L.T.U Office Rangpur	Driver	35, 3 daughter & 1 son V to IX	Muslim
08	Hanif Mia	L.T.U Office Rangpur	Driver	45, 3 son & 1 daughter, V to IX	Muslim
09	Mostofa Mia	L.T.U Office Rangpur	Driver	40, 2 son & 2 daughter, V to X	Muslim

Names are changed.
 LTU: Local Truck Drivers' Union

Focus Group 2: Drivers & Helpers

The discussion of focus group 2 took place on a quiet place on the stranded trucks at midnight. The group, comprising of drivers and helpers helped me, among other thing among the driver-helper interaction.

The drivers were more vocal in the whole discussion and sometimes senior helpers to express their views. Only one of the helpers a little bit senior (age 25) was at per with the drivers. The helpers did not mention any unfriendly behaviors in their group (which they mentioned in group-three).

The general findings on issues like professional hazards, risk, harassment etc. were almost similar with group one. Some of the findings are given below:

They asked about their religious practices. Rajab Ali of Tangail expressed their job nature do not allow us to practice religion moderately than Chan Mia, a driver from Dhaka said, " Yes, we are pious, but we are not fanatic, neither do we care much about what religious leaders say.

The participants opined that hands on training (which they get being a helper) is the only way to become a skilled driver as institutional training ", they said, "can never acquaint of a real life situation, e. g.- given a truck loaded with 10 tons of grain". Both drivers and helpers also stressed upon the taken by the drivers in teaching their juniors every steps from terrain to traffic rules.

Though the drivers dominated the helpers, they both didn't feel shy to discuss about their sexual habit in front of each other in a language considered most filthy in our society. One helper even demonstrated the way he used to walk, when he had Syphilis. One thing, the helper made clear, they went to the brothel for the first time with some other helper, not with their driver.

Focus group 2 participants mentioned *Jatra*, *Kavigan* as means of recreation. One of them even was an actor for sometime in a *Jatradal*.

The sense about condom was same as group one. Chan Mia said it is the duty of 'Magis' (commercial sex workers) to keep them clean from diseases, why we should bother using condoms". Mostofa Mia heard the name of AIDS and think that having sex with animals is the main reason for spread of AIDS.

Besides, two interesting comments by Chan Mia is to be mentioned. He thinks the lack of sleep and the consequent of huge stress in the body is liable for being their over-sexed. There is a method of testing woman whether they have STDs- a piece of lemon on the women vagina before having sex, if it is painful then the woman is surely having some sexual disease. "

Participants: Truck Drivers & Helpers **No. of Participants:** 6
Date: 10/10/93 **Time:** 19:00 hrs.
Place: Aricha Ghat
Facilitator: Tariqual Islam **Observer:** Azizul Haque

List of participants:

SL	Name	Contact Address	Profession	Other Info. (Age, Family, Education etc)	Religion
01	Chan Mia	L.T.U office Jurain, Dhaka	Truck Drivers	36, 3 sons VII	Muslim
02	Rajab Ali	L.T.U office Tangail	Truck Drivers	40, 2 Daughter 1 son, VIII	Muslim
03	Rahimuddin	L.T.U office Dinajpur	Truck Drivers	35, 3 Daughter V	Muslim
04	Mostafa	L.T.U office Dinajpur	Helper	20, Unmarried, V	Muslim
05	Golam habib	L.T.U office Tangail	Helper	19, Unmarried , Illiterate	Muslim
06	Habir	L.T.U office Dinajpur	Helper	21, married, VI	Muslim

Names are changed.

LTU: Local Truck Drivers' Union

Focus Group 3: Helpers

Focus group 3 was different in nature from the first two groups both in composition and in environment. The participants were helpers only and it took place at broad daylight as it was difficult to gather the helpers after sunset, they being solely assigned with the truck by their drivers at evening.

It was already observed during focus group 2, that the drivers comminuted the helpers' views when they sat together. Focus group was more fruitful in getting helpers' independent views.

Helpers at first seemed to respect their drivers very much, as they were addressing them as "Ustad's" (teachers) at every occasion. But, as we went deep into the discussion, it started to reveal that the helpers are in many cases bullied by the drivers. The helpers have to stay by the truck as night watchman, while the drivers go for rest or to Nanibari' (brothel). The helpers also have to wash the truck regularly. Some of the helpers are allowed to smoke in front of their Ustad, while some are not. Some helpers also alleged that drivers make unnecessary delay in teaching the helpers. The helpers are not allowed in drivers' (Addas). (Gossiping Places). However, this sort of malpractice might have become traditional as one of the helpers was saying. "We will do the same, when we will be Ustads".

Best of the helpers were unmarried and at or near their ferns. They were sort of shy to start talking about sex related issues. However, once opened up they too were found to be regular customer of Daulatdia Brothels. They don't see any use of wearing condoms. They also

mentioned that, they feel shy of buying condoms from shops. But this shame does not check their ‘Magi Lagao’ (having sex with sex workers) as one of them said.

The helpers are very much found of ‘Hindi’ songs, they opined that video cassettes will be more effective to impart any knowledge to them than anything in print, since many of them cannot read.

When asked whether they ever donated blood or know their blood group, most of them gave a negative answer. One smart guy however mentioned to have C (?) group. The helpers opined that condoms should be distributed to every truck at a small price, as they shy of buying them from shops. The helpers are unhappy with the money they get. We could have taken richer food and bbb more films at ‘Anandamoyee’ (the only cinema hall at Aricha). said a helper from Tangail.

Participants :	Helpers	No. of Participants :	9
Date :	17/10/95	Time :	10:00 hrs.
Facilitator :	Tariqual Islam	Observer :	Wahiduzzaman

List of Participants

SL	Name	Contact Address	Profession	Other Info. (Age, Family, Education etc)	Religion
01	Abdur Rahman	L.T.U office Tangail	Helper	22, Married, VII	Muslim
02	Adam Ali	L.T.U office Tangail	Helper	19, Unmarried, V	Muslim
03	Hossain	L.T.U office Dinajpur	Helper	21, Unmarried, V	Muslim
04	Abdul Goni	L.T.U office Rangpur	Helper	20, Unmarried, V	Muslim
05	Mominul Islam	L.T.U office Tangail	Helper	19, Unmarried, Illiterate	Muslim
06	Kibrea	L.T.U office Tangail	Helper	21, married, VI	Muslim
07	Haider	L.T.U office Bogra	Helper	18, Unmarried, II	Muslim
08	Nazrul Islam	L.T.U office Bogra	Helper	20, Unmarried, IV	Muslim
9	Zohurul Mia	L.T.U office Bogra	Helper	22, Married, VII	Muslim

Names are changed.

LTU = Local Truck Drivers’ Union

Focus Group 4 : Drivers & Union leaders

Focus group 4 took place at the Aricha Ghat branch office of Bangladesh Inter District Truck Drivers Union Regd. No. F-1665,1995-96. Union Leaders with portfolio like organizing secretary, Office secretary, Treasure, Members etc. were present with the Truck drivers.

The leaders were more reserve in expressing their views than the general drivers. The media is picturing us as ‘Ghatak (killer) drivers but they don’t dig into other people/causes liable for road accidents”. said shajahan sarker, Office secretary, whoever visits the red light area turn into truck driver as soon as they enter the area, whereas ‘sarengs’, sukanis’ (launch master/staff) and even students go to those women,” Claimed Saifur Rahman, organizing secretary.

Most of those participated in focus group 4, know about AIDS. One of the leaders even arranged two workshops on AIDS in collaboration with Voluntary Health Service Sytem (VHSS), a Dhaka based NGO. However the output of the workshops was short term,. Because expert from Dhaka went to Aricha, delivered some lecture, had a nice lunch and came back. The leaders opined some sort of permanent education process on AIDS, STD and related issues.

One of the leaders, while discussion about the excessive alcohol intake of drivers, opined that some of the drivers feel that they can drive properly only with an adequate amount of alcohol in their stomach.

The leaders seemed to keep more busy with the union activities, e.g. visiting offices and central leaders etc..., than building up contact with the community.

The leaders endorsed awareness program very much. One of the leaders opined that presently about 50% of the truck have audio players and an audio cassette campaign could be helpful. Some propose making short films or using clowns (shang) for imparting education. The leaders also ensure their highest cooperation towards any awareness activity taken up by CEDAR.

One of the leaders informed that the rural doctors (Polli Chikitshak) use the same needle twice or thrice or and these doctors should also be provided awareness along with the drivers.

Though the drivers have indifference and in some of the cases negative attitude towards union activities in the previous focus groups, the drivers present in focus group four seemed to be enthusiastic about the union leaders and activities. However, none of the drivers present in focus group 4 was present in the previous focus groups.

It was disclosed that the truck helpers do not have any union of their own and they are also excluded from the (Drivers Union. The union distributes a card to the truck drivers only when they become a member of any of the main two unions of drivers.

The union leaders were also different in looking and behavior than the drivers. The educational level of the leaders was higher than those of the drivers. They were comparatively polished in both dresses and conversation than the drivers. It did not seem like, the drivers become leaders gradually in the usual process of taking key role in union activities. Rather it was apparent that most of the leaders came from outside the community

Participants : Drivers & Union leaders
Date : 19/10/95
Place : Aricha Ghat
Facilitator : Tariqul Islam

No. of Participants : 7
Time : 1900 hrs.
Observer : Wahiduzzaman

List of Participants

SL	Name	Contact Address	Profession	Other Info. (Age, Family, Education etc)	Religion
01	Abdur Zabber	L.T.U office Barishal	Truck Drivers	40, 3 sons, 2 daughter, VIII	Muslim
02	Khoka Mia	L.T.U office Barishal	Truck Drivers	35, 2 sons, 2 , V	Muslim
03	Shopan Kumar	L.T.U office Barishal	Truck Drivers	42, 2 daughter, 1 sons, VI	Muslim
04	Subal Das	L.T.U office Barishal	Truck Drivers	32, 2 daughter, iv	Muslim
05	Tufan	L.T.U office Pabna	Truck Drivers	50, 3 sons, 2 daughter, V.	Muslim
06	Shajahan Sarker	L.T.U office Aricha Ghat	Union leader	45, 3 daughter, IX	Muslim
07	Saifur Rahman	L.T.U office Aricha Ghat	Union leader	41, 2 daughters, 2 sons, VII	Muslim

Names are changed

LTU = Local Truck Drivers' Union

Focus Group 5: Truck drivers, Union leader and community

This mixed group was somewhat tough to arrange and to handle. This group was organized mainly to observe the interaction between the target people and others having close contact with this community. However, this group was not a full success in this connection.

The drivers don't come to me these days, they go for 'needles' (injection) , said A, Samed a Kaviraj of Aricha Ghat cursing his luck. The drivers said that they go to these Kavirajes or other forms of Ayurveds only to get some magic medicine to enhance their virility, but whenever they have some sort of (Kharap Rog' (bad disease meaning STDs) they go to allopathic doctors. Drivers even expressed their lack of confidence on the ability of Aricha allopaths (in front of them) to treat severe forms of STDs.

The bartender of local wine shop was present and seemed to be very familiar and friendly with the drivers. These 'haramis' (local slung, meaning scoundrels) drink from the toes to the hair, the bartender said laughing

A Drug store dealer disclosed that the drivers do not usually come to his dispensary for condoms. The customers of 5/10 packets of condoms sold by him daily are mainly local married men.

A local boarding owner, present in the discussion opined that nearly 30 boarding houses, located at the ghat are boarded majority (90%) by the drivers. He however denied the drivers allegation that some of the boarding houses have arrangements for sex vendors.

The drivers were no less open in front of others in talking about sex than when they were among themselves.

Participants : Driver, Union leader & community

No. of Participants: 9

Date: 24/10/95

Time : 1000 hrs.

Place: Aricha Ghat

Facilitator: Tariqual Islam

Observer: Wahiduzzaman

List of Participants:

SL	Name	Contact Address	Profession	Other Info. (Age, Family, Education etc)	Religion
01	Abdul Kalam	L.T.U office Comilla	Union leader	41, 2 sons, 1 daughter	Muslim
02	Mazed Mia	L.T.U office Comilla	Union leader	45, 3 sons, 1 , Daughter, IX	Muslim
03	Rafiqua Alam	L.T.U office Comilla	Truck Drivers	50, 3 daughter, 2 sons	Muslim
04	Manik Mia	L.T.U office Comilla	Truck Drivers	35, 2 sons, 1 Daughter	Muslim
05	Abdul Malek	Aricha Ghat	Hekim	50, 3 sons, 2 daughter	Muslim
06	Rashid Mollah	Aricha Ghat	Hekim	45, 2 sons, 2 daughter	Muslim
07	Saiful Islam	Aricha Ghat	Dispensary owner	30, 1 1 sons, daughters, 1	Muslim
08	Shanker Pal	Aricha Ghat	Dispensary owner	32, 1 son, daughters, 1	Muslim
09	Khalil Mia	Aricha Ghat	Boarding Owner	48.3 sons 2 Daughter	Muslim

Names are changed.

LTU : Local Truck Drivers' Union

8.2. Observation Report :

Throughout the assessment period intensive observation was made on the target community and other people at the location as well as on the spot itself. Some of the key points that came out of the observations are given below:

- Truck drivers generally gossip play cards or loiter around in groups 10 to 12, comprising drivers hailing usually from the same area (district) of the country.
- Traditional healers, like a magic ring seller, *Kaviraj* etc. are observed to suffer from want of patients.

The 'ring' seller Firoz Mia was found to be surrounded by some helpers and hotel boys. One Dr. Siddiqur RAhman, R.M.P (Rural Medical Practitioner at Daulotdia Rail Station., near Daulotdia Brothels, reported that women sex sellers come to him only with severe stages of venereal diseases. He is also called on into the Brothel, within which there is no medical facility.

In the Daulotdia Brothel. there is no electricity nor proper sanitation. However adequate tube wells were provided by one Jabbar MATbar of Daulotdia. The sex workers complained that their clients don't like using condoms. The sex workers also alleged that most of their earnings go to brokers.

There are some prostitutes at Daulotdia, who migrated to the Sonagachi Brothel, Calcutta, India and came back to Daulotdia afterwards. These women should be thoroughly checked for possible occurrence of HIV.

Local groceries and dispensaries sell different brands of condoms, e.g, Panther, Raja, Sensation etc. Five to ten packets of condoms are sold per shop day. But the main customer of condoms is married people of the locality, not the truck drivers or helpers.

The expertise of the allopaths at Aricha Ghat is not that high. Most of them are RMPs (Rural Medical Practitioners) passing a short course in Dhaka. There is a government health complex at Uthali, two miles away from Aricha, where M.B.B.S doctors provide treatment.

There are two homeopathic dispensaries, where 20 to 30 patients go for treatment each day.

There are some folk singers, who sing on ferries and collect money from the listeners. One such singers, Sadek Master is found to be very popular among the drivers.

The only movie theatre at Aricha, Anandamoyee Hall is visited mainly by helpers.

Audio cassettes are regularly played at restaurants and stalls.

9. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A Summary of the findings obtaining by focus group discussions in depth interviews, observation and secondary data gathering are given below.

Bangladesh Scenario:

There is no sound data about the total number of truck professionals in Bangladesh. However, as per latest data (1992) available from the Bureau of Statistics 38307 trucks were registered throughout the country. It is estimated that there are about 30,000 (thirty thousand only) trucks in the private sector alone. Generally there are two drivers per truck for trucks making long distance trips. There are in total 50,000 (fifty thousand) trucks in the country as a whole. It is also estimated that there are thirty five thousand truck helpers in the country. None of the truck professionals are reported to be female. No nationwide data is available about the average age of the truckers.

Aricha Ghat:

Aricha is a river port located in the middle of the country at Shibalaya thana of Manikgonj district on the banks of the river Jamuna. All the trucks carrying goods from the eastern part of the country to the west and vice versa have to be ferried through this ghat (jetty). There are two ghats on the other side, one at Daulatdia of Rajbari district connecting the south-western districts and the other at Nagarbari of Pabna district connecting the north-western districts. Aricha ghat is thus a strategic location which truck drivers from all over the country has to transit through. Due to inadequate number of ferries, lack of proper management, etc. trucks have to stay back at the ghat from three to four hours to days before they get the serial to board the ferry.

The following table gives a picture about the truck traffic through Aricha everyday:

Date	18 Aug. 1995		24 Sept. 1995		13 Oct. 1995	
Route	Crossed	Waiting	Crossed	Waiting	Crossed	Waiting
Aricha-Nagarbari	370	400	561	455	434	310
Aricha-Daulatdia	259	40	336	86	433	105
Nagarbari -Aricha	332	741	576	250	471	295
Daulatdia -Aricha	230	92	333	152	303	53

Source: Block Position Book: BIWTC Area Office, Aricha