

Progress report Dec 2023-Feb 2024, Bangladesh Chapter
Promoting Mental Wellbeing of the Children of Commercial Sex Workers

Reporting Period: December 2023 to February 2024

Report prepared for: SiTara's Story Inc.

Report prepared by: Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation

Introduction:

This progress report is made for SiTara's Story Inc. as part of the project named *Promoting mental wellbeing of the children of Commercial Sex Workers* implemented by the Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation (IWF) in partnership with Banchita Somaj Shangho a local NGO dedicated for the development of commercial sex workers and their children in Jashore, Bangladesh.

The project has been implemented in Jashore Sadar Upazila to support children of commercial sex workers from Babu Bazar Brothel.

Activity: Meeting/Workshop/Training with students:

Achievements:

- Through a base line survey, IWF identified 50 children of CSWs who are studying in 4 schools named Jashore Zila School, Jashore Girls School, Nimtoli Government Primary School, Upshahar College Jashore in Jashore Sub District.
- These students participated in mental health awareness training and workshops which include mental health first aid training, social and emotional learning, safe guarding training etc.
- They also participated art and cultural program, sports, literature program and debate programs to raise mental health awareness.
- A major achievement of this project is to develop 4 numbers of Peer Support Group in these 4 Educational Institutions. Each School has a Peer Support Group of 20 students including the students of CSWs who are actively engaged in promoting mental health awareness with other students.

- A total number of 100 teachers were actively engaged in promoting mental health awareness within these educational institutions. Out of 100 teachers a total number of 16 teachers were trained as Certified Mental Health First Aiders. These trained MHFAider (s) were trained to identify any emotional and mental health issues among the students and able to provide mental health support on a first aid basis.
- After the safe guarding training, the peer leaders were in a better position to identify if any of their classmates are at greater risk of bullying and sexual abuse. They have identified that some of the girl students faced cyber bullying. In this context, IWF invited a youth led organisation called Cyber Teen, who works in Jashore for raising cyber security awareness within the young population. After the session Cyber Teen also assisted the victim of Cyber Bullying to get justice. With the support of Cyber Teen and School Authority, IWF has created a referral pathway for any students of these schools facing any cyber bullying to get practical support from the respective authority.

Major Challenges faced during the reporting period:

IWF is implementing a 4 years long community based mental health program in Jashore District from May 2022. The project was part of a consortium led by ADD International Bangladesh and supported by IWF and other two organisations. IWF was responsible for implementing the project activities in Jashore District. However, this project is ending in May 2024 which posing a great challenge for IWF to continue its activities in Jashore District.

The project office and Project staff in Jashore will be closed by May 2024. In this situation IWF is not in a position to run the project titled 'Promoting Mental Wellbeing of the Children of Commercial Sex Workers' supported by SiTara's Story Inc. without additional funding.

Financial analysis of the project:

IWF has received BDT 635,359 from SiTara's Story inc. including TAX and VAT (BDT 79,481). Up to February 2024, IWF has spent BDT 505,735. The remaining balance is BDT 129,624 which will be utilized from March to May 2024.

Please note that the remaining balance for the period from June to August 2024, for volunteer cost BDT 15,000 taka and partial payment of the office rent BDT 15,000) will be utilized for a project closing meeting with the students, parents and other stakeholders in May 2024.

Recommendations:

- After closing of the project in Jashore by May 2024, IWF would like to continue its program with marginalized students i.e. children of Commercial Sex Workers. IWF recommends

continuing to support these children in Dhaka Division. IWF is already in contact with Shishuder Jonno Amra an organisation run by a former Commercial Sex Worker. There are 45 children who live in a center where they receive shelter, food, education support and some physical health examination. However, these children have a neglected and an abusive childhood which put them in a risk of trauma and mental health issues. Therefore, the founder of the center named Hazera Begum requested IWF to help them with mental health support. If SiTara's Story is interested we can collaborate with Shishuder Jonno Amra and extend our support to them.

Activity Plan for next quarter (March 2024 to May 2024):

Sl. No	Activities	Unit	March '24	April '24	May '24
01	End line Survey	1			1
02	Meeting/workshop with Students	1			1
03	Follow up meetings with students and mothers	2		1	1
4	Home Visits	3	1	1	1
5	Field Monitoring visit	1			1

Conclusion:

The project is sensitive in nature and need to keep the identity of the children and their mother confidential in all communication materials published under this project. The project is also sensitive in nature as it is addressing abuse and violence perpetuated directly and indirectly to the children of the CSWs. The whole project location is captured by the local influential and human rights violation is frequent. The CSWs and their children are also ostracized by the community at larger and therefore it is difficult to mobilize local resources to support the implementation of the project.

For future endeavor, IWF seek support from SiTara's Story to continue to support the children of Commercial Sex Workers in Dhaka with Shishuder Jonno Amra which is run by a former Commercial Sex Worker Hazera Begum. Shishuder jonno Amra is a reputed organisation providing shelter, food and some educational support. IWF fill the gap by providing mental health and wellbeing related support to them. A detail plan will be submitted to SiTara's Story upon receiving their feedback on this report.