

'Healthcare for HIV victims still inadequate'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although the government has taken different initiatives to combat HIV/AIDS, different sectors including the healthcare services for the HIV victims are still lagging behind, speakers at a roundtable said yesterday.

Existing social stigma also hinders the HIV victims to enjoy their human rights and the journalists can play a significant role in this regard, they added.

Panos Institute Bangladesh organised the roundtable on 'Monitoring Indicators for Journalists: HIV/AIDS Programme in Bangladesh' at city's Brac Inn.

While presenting the keynote paper, Executive Director of

Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition (BWHC) Julia Ahmed highlighted the government's initiative to combat HIV/AIDS and a draft monitoring framework to ensure the rights of HIV victims and their families.

In 2007, 333 new cases of HIV infection were reported while AIDS cases are 125 and deaths are 14 in the country, a statistic that shows Bangladesh is no longer a low-prevalence country, especially when among the Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) it has stood 7 percent and is turning into a concentrated epidemic form, she added.

The speakers also said the journalists should not disclose the whereabouts of the victims as it push them to immense vulnerability and they should be more sensitive while covering HIV/AIDS issues.

Empowerment of the vulnerable group should be addressed along with the affected people's nutrition system and increased healthcare facilities. Besides, the border areas that are vulnerable to the disease and migrant workers should be given more importance.

At the same time, while treating the HIV/AIDS positive babies, the vulnerability of their mothers should be considered, they added.

BSMMU Prof Nazrul Islam, Dr Halida H Akhter, Associated Press Bureau Chief Farid Hossain, Panos South Asia Country Director Bangladesh Moyeen Ahmed and journalists from different news media attended the roundtable.

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