

Abstract Submission for ILC 2013

Prevention of disability

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MOBILISING COMMUNITY THROUGH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT LEPROSY SERVICES IN BIHAR, INDIA: EXPERIENCE FROM A PILOT PROJECT

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Preferred Presentation Method: Oral or Eposter

Would you like to be considered for the Young Scientist Award?: No

Introduction: Bihar is one of the three states in India yet to achieve the goal of elimination of leprosy and every year contributing around 15% of the new leprosy cases. There is slight decline in new case detection from the year 2010. Implementation of Disability Prevention and Medical Rehabilitation (DPMR) services is still a major challenge. There is a need to intensify the efforts for further reduction of leprosy burden and support leprosy services with greater involvement of community.

Methods: Damien Foundation India has initiated a pilot project to support leprosy services in Gaya and Nalanda districts of Bihar in partnership with nine local Non Government Organizations (NGO). These NGOs are mainly involved in rural development, women empowerment through self help groups, education of school drop outs and child laborers. Field coordinators selected the NGOs, trained them in self care and suspect referral, and established coordination with government health system. The field coordinators supervise and monitor these local NGOs. They are responsible for the collection of monthly reports. The intervention includes updating the list of persons affected by leprosy with disabilities; follow up and counsel the patients to practice self care; refer suspects and patients with complications to Primary Health Centre; support patients under treatment; identify, provide and monitor the livelihood support of needy affected persons and facilitate to receive government entitlements. Retrospective data was collected from local NGOs and General Health System and interviews with the civil society partners were done to understand the challenges perceived by them.

Results: The local NGOs were able to update the list of persons affected by leprosy with disability. From the initial list of 1138 persons affected by leprosy with disabilities, after addition (292) and deletions (200), the final list had 1230 persons with leprosy related disability. The new case detection has been increased by 6.6% (126/1918) when compared to the data six months before the implementation, the female cases increased by 15.4% (114/740) while there was 12.7% (48/378) rise in detection of child cases. About 35% of total persons affected by leprosy with disability were practicing self care regularly. The proportion of persons with plantar ulcers has declined by 7%. Out of 308 suspects referred to PHC by the local NGOs, about 90 were confirmed leprosy. After involvement of local NGOs in the field there is remarkable change in the attitude and perspective of the other general population towards the leprosy affected persons.

Conclusion: Even with the weak infrastructure and network of these local NGOs, the short term results are encouraging. The strategy need to be critically examined for its sustainability and long term impact on leprosy services.