

Radio Dramas Help in HIV/AIDS Fight

<http://www.firstlight.cn> 2007-03-09

[作者] Asian Development Bank

[单位] Asian Development Bank

[摘要] 7 March 2007.MANILA, PHILIPPINES - In small ethnic communities scattered around the uplands of the Mekong region, groups of women come together during afternoons to listen to a rare form of entertainment – radio dramas that teach them about HIV/AIDS, trafficking and drug use.

[关键词] ethnic communities:HIV/AIDS:Radio Dramas

7 March 2007.MANILA, PHILIPPINES -

In small ethnic communities scattered around the uplands of the Mekong region, groups of women come together during afternoons to listen to a rare form of entertainment – radio dramas that teach them about HIV/AIDS, trafficking and drug use.

These minority women, mostly from the upland ethnic groups of the Thai-Myanmar-Laos-

China border regions, are vulnerable to exploitation in the region's sex industry. With limited education, and knowledge about how to protect themselves, they are also at a higher risk of acquiring HIV/AIDS.

Formerly, their isolation protected them from the spread of the deadly HIV/AIDS virus. But with newly constructed roads and the opening of borders, the situation is changing. The flow of people from one country to another for trade and employment has increased, as has trafficking of drugs. Increased injecting drug use has also aggravated the spread of HIV/AIDS in the region. For instance, in Yunnan Province, about 21% of female injecting drug users also engage in commercial sex work, thereby further increasing their vulnerability and risk to acquire HIV.

The radio dramas they listen to were produced by an innovative technical assistance project that embarked on an information and communications technology –based education campaign to combat HIV/AIDS. The dramas are written in local languages and target ethnic minorities.

"Radio dramas have been found to be an effective vehicle for reaching young people, who are frequently unresponsive to public service announcements or didactic programs," says Anupma Jain, an ADB Social Sector Specialist.

A new regional technical assistance project, funded by the Poverty Reduction Cooperation Fund, will further help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, human trafficking and non –traditional drug use by expanding the scope of the earlier project.

Carried out in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Bangkok, the new project is producing radio dramas in more ethnic languages and covering new ethnic groups living in the cross –border areas of Cambodia, Yunnan Province of the People's Republic of China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Thailand.

The new project includes four additional ethnic minority languages –

Akha in Thailand; Tai Neua and Tai Lue in Yunnan Province; and Khmu in Lao PDR –

and is piloting the production of radio dramas in the Kreung language spoken in Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia, where established broadcasting infrastructure is limited.

"A vast number of ethnic minority groups live in the region and speak different languages and dialects. Their collective stories make up the essence of these radio dramas, which help educate others in their communities about the risks of HIV/AIDS," says Ms. Jain. The dramas are written in the local languages by native speakers, as opposed to being written in English or the national language and translated to the local language. They are based on intensive research on life stories, issues and concerns.

"This way, the audience can really identify with the stories," she adds.

Once the radio programs are developed, they are translated into English and the national language to check for the accuracy of the information being delivered. The programs are accompanied by local music and sounds to enhance authenticity and emphasize cultural richness of ethnic groups.

Once ready, these programs will be broadcast on local stations or through other communication systems such as loudspeakers or community –based radios. Tapes and compact disks of the program will also be produced and distributed for use by communities and health workers.

