



STORIES of HOPE

BANGLADESH

A Faith-Based Response to HIV/AIDS



The Masjid Council for Community Advancement holds HIV/AIDS training for local imams.

With Emergency Plan support, the Imams hope eventually to reach approximately 550,000 individuals with life-saving information about HIV/AIDS through their Friday sermons.



Faith-based organizations possess an extensive geographic reach and a well-developed infrastructure in the developing world. In coordination with host governments, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR) draws upon the capabilities of faith-based organizations to contribute to an effective, multi-sectoral response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In Bangladesh, religious and cultural traditions call for community harmony and respect for religious leaders. The Emergency Plan supports these traditions through a partnership with the Bangladesh AIDS Program, formally working with religious networks to incorporate religious leaders into a culturally sensitive response to HIV prevention, care and support. The program partners with imams and other leaders to reduce stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS; to promote utilization of counseling and testing services; to promote abstinence and faithfulness; and to address community and social norms that increase an individual's risk for HIV infection.

Under the Bangladesh AIDS Program, a local faith-based organization called the Masjid Council for Community Advancement draws on existing religious networks with the goal of eventually reaching 50 percent of the general population over the next three years with messages about abstinence, faithfulness and partner reduction.

With Emergency Plan support, the Masjid Council for Community Advancement and Family Health International developed a training curriculum that will be used to train approximately 600 imams this year. With Emergency Plan support, the imams hope eventually to reach approximately 550,000 individuals with life-saving information about HIV/AIDS through their Friday sermons. In addition, the Masjid Council for Community Advancement is working with religious leaders to produce and air four satellite television talk shows and 40 episodes of Islamic television programs discussing HIV/AIDS and related issues. It is expected that around two million people will have exposure to HIV/AIDS messages through the talk shows and Islamic television programs in one year.

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

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