

International AIDS Memorial Day Gathering with Nepali Workers

In conjunction with the International AIDS Memorial Day (IAMD), Tenaganita mobilised Nepali migrant workers in Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia on 15 May 2007.

The programme was held from 8pm till 11.30pm, since that's the only time migrants who works seven days per week are free and able to participate in such programme. Despite being a workday, 230 migrants participated in the event.

This is the second time Tenaganita is organising IAMD with Nepali migrant workers. Similar programme was held with Nepali migrant workers in Klang, Selangor. The organisation has also held IAMD events with other groups of migrant including Burmese and Vietnamese.

The programme was started with a "Wild Fire" game to demonstrate how fast AIDS can spread and therefore the need to protect oneself from the diseases. This was followed by a powerpoint presentation on AIDS. A brochure on sexually transmitted infections and AIDS was provided to the migrants in Nepali language.

Raffie of Malaysian Treatment Access Advocacy Group (MTAAG+, a local advocacy for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)) shared on the ways to cope with being HIV positive. Being a PLWHA, Raffie also shared his experiences and especially the role he plays in preventing the disease. Raffie's sharing was well received by the migrants. It was responded with a series of questions such as what are the symptoms of HIV/AIDS and what's the difference between HIV and AIDS.

This was followed by a game to assess the migrants' knowledge on HIV and AIDS. It was noticed that some of the migrants are shy in talking about the issue. A migrant responded "how can I share this" when requested to list the ways HIV is transmitted.

The migrants were requested to state what role they can play to stop the spread of AIDS. This statement was pasted on a banner with the word "Leading the way to a world without AIDS", the theme of IMD 2007. Condoms were distributed to the migrants followed by a demonstration on proper condom usage.

The event ended with cultural programme by the migrants, which included singing, dancing, poem recital etc, followed by dinner. The programme was fully funded by the Ministry of Health, Malaysia through the Malaysian AIDS Council.

A round of evaluation was held with about 20 migrant leaders. Feedback from the migrants concluded that the programme was beneficial to them. There was also demand for more similar programme with the community. The organisation is planning to have awareness session on various topics with smaller groups of migrants in the area.

It was learnt that migrant have high expectation from Tenaganita in dealing with their cases. Similar pattern emerged in past year when there was an increase in cases received by Tenaganita from the areas where an event or celebration was organised with the migrants. Since it would not be possible for Tenaganita to handle cases of such a large number of migrants, it was decided that a team of peer leaders would be trained by the organisation for the purpose.