PREFACE

HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination is a global problem. Stigma and Discrimination against people living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) are obstacles in the way of effective responses to HIV. Understanding the extent of stigma / discrimination and the underlying causes is necessary for developing strategies to reduce them.

During this third decades of HIV/AIDS many research has been conducted by NGOs and Governmental bodies at national level, where most of it concerned with Socio-economic impacts of HIV/AIDS, very few studies has been attempt on specific issues of women and HIV/AIDS, particularly stigma and discrimination faced by women infected and affected by HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The present study is an attempt to assess the knowledge of women about HIV/AIDS issues, uncover root cause and consequences of stigma and discrimination as well violation of basic human rights faced by women infected and affected with HIV/AIDS. The present study is confined to study of total100 HIV/AIDS infected and affected women (50 infected and 50 affected) under Darjeeling District of West Bengal.

In this study researcher uses the qualitative method to explore the nature of stigma and discrimination faced by the WLWHA. In this study in-depth interview, case study, personal experiences and observations has been used to understand the stigma and discrimination faced by WLWHA.

This study brings out a number of striking findings. 60% of the respondent are belong to the most economically productive and sexually active group i.e. 26 – 35 years. The mean ages of the respondent are 33.3 years. After so much effort on making people sensitize on HIV/AIDS but still many misconception prevails in society, 24% of the respondent believed that mosquito bite and sharing razor can cause HIV/AIDS.

The participants reported of discrimination by family, friends, at workplace and healthcare settings in different forms. The negative attitude among the family members are common phenomenon (64%) of the women faced neglected, isolated and avoidance, verbally abused and teased, deprived for using common amenities even some time treated
as untouchable. However there are many families (34%) which supportive and shown positive attitude towards the infected. This study explored the root causes of HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination are fear of getting infection (18%), lack of understanding on mode of HIV transmission (28%), HIV is shameful infection (38%), disagreed with their behavior or life style (6%) etc.

It has revealed that HIV has, in general, made a deeper impact on women who have faced more discrimination, compelled the women to start earning for meeting the increased needs of the family interims of household expenses, medical, educational expenses.

Challenging stigma, discrimination and denial in the context of HIV/AIDS requires commitment at all levels including governments, civil society, communities and individuals. HIV/AIDS is much more than a health problem. It touches human conditions, human security, human rights and social and economic development. A human rights framework is essential to encourage a reduction in HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.

Key Words: HIV/AIDS, Stigma and Discrimination, Human Rights.