BP recognises the importance of HIV/AIDS awareness from both a humanitarian and business perspective and believes it can help limit the spread and effects of the epidemic. The BTC/SCP Pipeline Projects have implemented an HIV/AIDS Awareness and Prevention Programme (HAPP) in response to BP’s position on HIV/AIDS and in recognition of the potential link between construction activities and the spread of infectious diseases.

Implementation of the HAPP has been complex due to the social, cultural and geographic setting of the project. Many of the regions crossed by the pipelines are economically depressed, and as a consequence basic infrastructure, including medical facilities, has suffered from an acute lack of investment. The socially conservative nature of the communities along the route has required particular sensitivity when engaging in discussions of sexual health. The isolated nature of the communities has also contributed to a lack of awareness of these issues.

Working closely with NGO Partners the BTC HAPP has been developed to provide vital information to employees, communities and groups at risk to the virus. Across the Project, the HAPP has reached over 25,000 people to date, and is being adopted by the host Governments for wider dissemination.

World Vision, an international NGO has worked in Georgia since 1994 in the fields of HIV/AIDS/STI (Sexually Transmitted Infections), human rights, and children’s support. Together with their partner HERA XXI, a specialist local NGO engaged in HIV/STI issues, they are working with BTC in Georgia to implement a project called ‘SAFE!guard Your Health’ to reduce the risk of HIV and other STIs among the construction workforce, camp staff and local communities.

‘SAFE!guard Your Health’ was launched in April 2004 to educate both the construction workforce and nearby communities about HIV and other STIs and how to reduce the risk of contracting HIV or STIs. To date, over 1,300 construction workers in Georgia have taken part in either Toolbox Talks or information sessions in camps. Educational materials and presentations were prepared and/or presented in Georgian, Russian, English, Spanish and Hindi, in order to reach the varied groups working on the Project. Staff of both BTC and SPJV were actively involved in ensuring training was attended by a wide group of workers and often acted as translators.

In addition to targeting construction workers and camp staff, World Vision and HERA XXI are working in communities near construction camps, specifically with youth, health workers, and commercial sex workers (CSWs). The SAFE! Project has also empowered young men and women to make informed choices about reproductive health and HIV/STI prevention. One element of the programme is to train selected youth to be peer educators. They in turn have reached 258 peers through both formal and informal training. As one peer educator from Akhaltsikhe District says “HIV/AIDS/STIs is a world wide problem. It is very important for me and I am glad that I can provide my friends with the information that I have already obtained about HIV/STI. If we act together we will see the results, the people will be informed and thus protected from these life threatening diseases”. In addition, peer educators themselves are learning valuable skills that can be used again in the future.

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