

# Organisation Profile

## **Introduction**

TRY – To Reach You, is a social work organization reaching out to the socially, educationally and economically backward sections irrespective of caste, creed and religion. This organization was started as a tribute to a dream. When Anandkumar, a student of the Madras school of social work, died without realizing his ambition to start a welfare organization for the under privileged, his classmates took up the cause.

TRY's primary focus is to provide education for the underprivileged children in the society, priority is given to the children's of commercial sex worker's for whom education is a dream. Most of the 13 children who are now part of the TRY home are children of commercial sex workers.

This organization works on a community based method where mother/parents and children are all involved. It provides a secure home, care and education to children who are abandoned, neglected or those belonging to broken families, especially the children of commercial sex workers. Many of these children have been abused and need a secure safe home away from such abusive situations that will enable them to develop into productive members of society. It is also understood that providing a safe home, care & education to the child, by itself will not find a permanent solution to the bigger problem of prostitution and sexual/physical abuse of the children of the women engaged in prostitution.

TRY hopes that by working in close touch with the mothers and engaging them in dialogue and making them feel secure by finding them other means of earning an income, it will create an impact that can be more lasting than just functioning in a charity mode of providing for the children alone. TRY believes in family and community based rehabilitation. TRY does not wish to be a dumping ground for the socially neglected. It is an organization where people come to solve problems and are rehabilitated to join the social mainstream and contribute as useful citizens. Deserted women and the sex workers are given counseling so that they can stop their profession. TRY strives hard to get these commercial sex workers out of their profession by reaching out to the community and finding them alternative jobs and also provide them with moral support and counseling in trying to keep them in those jobs.

## **Aims & Objectives**

- To provide a secure loving home, and education for the children of sex workers who are vulnerable to abuse because of the profession of their mothers.
- To promote awareness in the society of a sensitive and difficult issue i.e., prostitution and the plight of the children of people involved in that profession.

- To rehabilitate women who work as commercial workers to get out of that profession by giving them counseling and finding them other means of earning an income.
- To eventually establish a center for open dialogue and effective action to combat the problem of prostitution and also provide a forum for women and children in such abusive situations to seek help and escape from it.

## **Achievements**

Since TRY was established in 1996,

- Forty-two Families had been given counseling / vocational training and rehabilitated. TRY had helped the women who were indulged as sex-workers to find an alternate profession and thereby lead a normal life.
- More than 85 children from underprivileged community between age group 3 – 10 years, have benefited basic education, shelter and care. More importantly by rehabilitating their mother / parents / family they had been successfully put back into the mainstream of social life as useful citizens.
- Because of the good social work background, TRY had also helped several street children, mentally retarded children, physically disabled children by coordinating and working with other organizations & agencies.

## **Involvement with Asha**

TRY has a long history with Asha Chennai, Asha Boston, and Asha Syracuse. Chandravel, the coordinator of TRY, has been an active volunteer for Asha-Chennai for several year. He has been a critical member in the implementation of several Asha-Chennai projects. TRY has been receiving support for their operational costs from Asha Boston and Asha Syracuse the last couple of years. Anuradha Raghavan of Asha Boston and Radha Ganesan of Asha Syracuse have been offering critical support over the years.

Chandravel has been attending the Asha India conferences over the last 3 years. Through such forums, he has made contacts with coordinators of other Asha supported "sex workers children" projects like Guria (Varanasi), Street to School(Kolkata). Once the home is established, it will serve as a meeting place for a meeting of these minds. TRY has potential to evolve as an integrator for large scale connected action across India, uniting projects in this "sex workers children" category.

# Project Proposal

## **Objective of the proposal submitted for WAH funding:**

**To build a permanent home that will be owned by TRY organization.**

TRY Children's home is presently running in a monthly rented house at Ramapuram, Chennai.

### **1) What are the disadvantages of running the TRY home in a rented location as opposed to its own permanent home?**

There are many disadvantages of renting a home as opposed to having a permanent home. Because the mothers of these children are commercial sex workers, there is an instant reluctance and often a refusal to even consider renting the house to them. Housing is a priced commodity in a place like Chennai and there are scores of people trying to rent houses. Because of this, it is very difficult for TRY to find houses to rent in the first place. And even when they do find homes, the landlords are quite uncomfortable because of the taboo associated with the profession of their mothers. So TRY is left to the mercy of the landlords to not change their mind at their whim. In the past 3 years, the home has shifted 3 times. Mostly the children feel the impact of this because they also have to shift schools each time the house location gets shifted.

Also there are other peripheral, yet important problems that TRY has had to contend with during such shifting of locations. One example is when the principal of the school the kids were moving out of, refused to give the children their transfer certificate because it had been a few months since the academic year had begun (but TRY had no choice in the matter because they had been asked to move out and it was hard enough to find another home, so they had to take what they got at that point in time). The reason the government school refused to give them their transfer certificate was because they would have difficulties in getting the funds allocated to their school if they didn't show a certain number of students registered in that school. Just so the education of the children would not get compromised for a whole year, Mr.Chandravel the coordinator of TRY had to practically threaten the school authorities that if the transfer certificate was not issued, he would conduct a fast on the school premises along with a bunch of supportive locals (that he claimed he could gather) until the transfer certificate was issued. TRY has had to go through such difficult terrain just to keep some minimal functioning of the home and keep the children in school.

### **2) What are the advantageous if TRY had its own permanent home?**

As is clear from the difficulties that TRY has had to contend with because of the nature of the organization (i.e. – involving children of sex workers and rehabilitation of sex workers), TRY would benefit immensely from having its own home.

- a) Most importantly, it would alleviate TRY from having to compromise on the education of the children by shifting them from school to school at random times in an academic year.
- b) It would give the children a feeling of stability that is crucial to them feeling secure.

- c) It would relieve Mr.Chandravel of the uncertainty that crops up time and again when they are asked to shift out of their rented home and allow him to focus on the needs and development of the children.
- d) It would allow him to take on more children making it more cost efficient (i.e. more children for the same money spent in a smaller rented home) and giving that many more children who live in potentially abusive situations the security of a home offered by TRY. In particular with this project funding TRY would expand its operations to cover over 50 children.
- e) This would provide some income generation potential for TRY. Madras School of Social Work often contacts organizations like TRY to see if they can accommodate visiting social work interns from foreign countries. Till now TRY has not been able to take any such interns. In addition to bringing TRY in contact with potential donors this would also provide a regular source of income by renting rooms in their property to such interns.
- f) It would allow Mr.Chandravel the time and freedom to use the space to bring the mothers to the home (in rented homes, he has to worry about the opinions of the landlords) and give them the necessary counseling and also allow more interaction between the mother and her child while they are at the home.
- g) The growth of an unique organization like TRY that has taken up such a challenging objective (which is often not dealt with by many well meaning organizations because it is a socially uncomfortable issue to deal with) will set an example for many others to not shy away from this issue and it would save many children from getting into abusive situations because of the profession of their mothers.

### **Cost Details:**

Cost of 2 grounds land in Ramapuram: Rs 14 Lakhs.

The cost of land in Ramapuram is about Rs 8 Lakhs per ground. However since the owner of this property knows TRY and would like to help, he is willing to sell this land for Rs. 14 Lakhs. This land is ideally located for TRY for several reasons:

- Proximity to SRM hospital.
- Proximity to a corporation school.
- Close to the Porur main road and thus easy access to rest of the city.
- Excellent ground water availability.

Cost of registration of Land: Rs 1 Lakh.

Cost of construction of 2000 Sq. feet of building: Rs 10 Lakhs.

Note: This would leave some land that can be built upon later. Another 2000 Sq ft. of built space can be added at this ground.

Total Cost: Rs 25 Lakhs

Local donors have offered TRY Rs 11 Lakhs if TRY is able to raise the remaining amount required for the construction of its home.

**Total Funding Required from Asha = Rs 14 Lakhs. = US \$30,000.**

### **Why should TRY be selected as a WAH 2003 project?**

There are reasons why the cost per child for this project is a little on the high side. Since this organization is dealing with an urban problem that is quite rampant in Chennai, the home cannot be moved to some distant village just to keep costs low. The children are in Chennai and the mothers who are given counseling and gradually weaned out of their profession are located in the city. In order to make it as cost effective as possible, Mr.Chandravel has decided to buy a home in the outskirts of the city. Also the home has to be built near some hospital because some of the children have health issues (one child is asthmatic) and he needs to be able to take them to the doctor and to some hospital that is not too far off from the home. After such considerations, it was decided that the home would be built in the outskirts of the city that would strike a balance between costs of buying land and also being close to good medical care and good schools.

One other possibility that can also be considered is that the land for the home be registered under Asha Chennai's name. At some suitable point down the road, perhaps in 5-10 years, the core team may make a decision to transfer the ownership to TRY organization completely.

Besides these there are several reasons why Asha should support this project and form a long term partnership with TRY.

- (i) The TRY children of sex workers have had a very difficult time over the last 4 years, being constantly moved around. They have shifted residence over 3 times during this period as no one wishes to associate with or rent to children of such background in a stable fashion. Once the TRY home is established with WAH support, it is expected that up to 50 children on this background will come to benefit for the long term.
- (ii) High quality support will be balanced with impact on higher numbers of children in the coming years. Asha Chennai and TRY both believe in Quality \* Quantity balance.
- (iii) TRY has a history of close working with Asha. Therefore there is a great deal of trust in their credibility and capability.
- (iv) TRY in partnership with Asha-Chennai has potential to evolve as an integrator for large scale connected action across India, uniting projects in this "sex workers children" category.
- (v) Through this TRY, Asha Chennai cooperation, we propose to bring greater focus in year 2004 for projects in India impacting children of sex workers.

For these reasons we believe TRY is a good candidate for WAH2003.

### **Contact information:**

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