



# prayas



Newsletter of the Sanctuary group

Volume 1 Issue 4

## Editorial



Welcome to the print edition of Prayas. All issues of Prayas and contact information is available on Asha's website (<http://www.ashanet.org/focusgroups/sanctuary>).

The rescue and rehabilitation of a trafficked minor can be thought of broadly as having 3 stages: pre-rescue/rescue, post rescue counseling and stabilization, longer term rehabilitation and/or reintegration. Daring rescues make interesting headlines, but work after the rescue is equally challenging, if not more.

We open with an article from Vasu of Child Rights Trust in Bangalore, who is proposing a certificate course in anti-trafficking training. While this course may not meet the widely felt need for a trauma and related specialty care, this promises to start to addressing the equally widely felt need for well trained counselors at an operational level. We like this article particularly because it brings into focus an important aspect of the whole process. There is often a mismatch between the legal requirements, the minor's complex needs, and the rescuers abilities. Striking a balance and stretching the boundaries is a familiar exercise to many, but there are cases when the child slips through the cracks. We ask you to share ideas and concerns, gaps you perceive and methods in which you have handled the situations.

We have heard from many of you on many occasions, the issue of trafficking itself needs to be addressed by a movement against it. Toward this end, in recognition to an area of relatively untapped potential energy we present the two articles on the youth involvement. They offer a starting point for several threads of discussion. Many of you already tap this energy in different efforts. We welcome you to share with us your successes or hardships in harnessing the energy youth in society.

We close with reports on two meetings that happened in Pune and Lucknow.

## What's After Rescuing—Vasudeva Sharma, Child Rights Trust

The purpose of this paper is to raise certain questions and move toward suggesting a few measures in preparing the professionals to handle the post rescue situations or rehabilitation.

### The Gap?

The biggest gap existing at present is the lack of structured training that enables personnel to understand the complex situation of the victims and to work with them in a concerted manner. In many cases persons with inadequate theoretical background or practice handle the rescued, who are in need of protection and care. Often, even a person with postgraduate degree in Social Work or Psychiatric Social Work may not be in a position to deal with complex situations. In many cases the people in charge of the post rescue operations are not equipped with necessary legal education and do not have protection too.

Some of the issues / problems they have to handle are :

- Protection of the victims and the other members of the homes
- Home management - logistics (food, clothing, medical care, etc)
- Health care - physical wounds, diseases including STIs.
- Counseling, emotional and trauma care
- Legal complexities, police cases, court hearings, etc.
- Preparation of the case studies

- Special treatment of the victims depending on the:
  - age (children below 6 years, 6 to 8 years, 8 to 10 years, 10 to 14 years, 14 to 18, and above)
  - background (orphans, destitute, abandoned, kidnapped, abducted, trafficked etc.)
  - situation at the time of rescue (child labourers, begging children, with children and women subjected to either
  - commercial sexual exploitation or sexual crimes including rape etc)
- Handling police, visitors, media, relatives and guardians of the victims
- Planning rehabilitation package
- Escorting the victims for legal proceedings, home visits, identifying the spots of abuse or torture
- Keeping the emotional balance of the victims to continue with the cases, if there is prosecution takes a long time

This list is not exhaustive! Practitioners and those who have experience in handling rescues will certainly be able to add to the list above. Due to the increased attention to trafficking as an issue and the proactive work by both the central and state governments in preparation of the state plans of actions to combat trafficking (in all sectors), more and more organizations and groups getting involved in rescuing children and women who are subjected to bandage, forced labour, exploitation, etc. There is a need to equip the new generation of workers, volunteers and facilitators with the necessary knowledge, tools and techniques. This involves not only developing their theoretical understanding of the issues involved but also helping them gain hands-on practical experience in handling complex situations in an effective manner.

A formal course might be appropriate course may be appropriate for imparting the necessary training. Some suggested topics are: (open to expert input for developing and fine tuning):

#### Background:

- Context - Understanding the socio economic, political and cultural situation of the society
- History of Rescue - What succeeded and what failed and why?

#### Process:

- Rescue - why, from where (from adoption field to commercial sexual exploitation)
- Roles - The profession of helpers: counselors, facilitators, rescuers
- Execution - Planning rescue, post rescue and rehabilitation
- Rehabilitation - what, where, when, who, why and how?
- Reintegration - rejection, run away and missing cases.

#### Government/Legal:

Role of Government - Local to national government

Legal Issues - rescue, possession, shelter, prosecution to handing over to the guardians and parents,

#### Best Practices:

Working together, in an integrated and concerted manner— convergence - networking both govt. and NGOs (team work)

Handling media

Shelter - management, handling complexities, long term shelter and its effects on rescued personnel and managers

Police and Law Enforcement

A certificate course is being planned along these lines. The period of this training may be in capsules or in a one time course. We hope that the training course can help in preparing more number of people who have rights-oriented perspective. The Karnataka government in collaboration with UNICEF is training police on women and child rights.

## Youth Involvement

Development in general and prevention of trafficking in particular requires cooperation from everyone - young, old, rich, poor, male, female - to improve law enforcement, to ensure visibility and sustenance of ongoing efforts, to address fundamental gender inequalities, and/or to refine the economic model which provide healthy livelihood options for everyone and so on. This requires capable and sensitive individuals performing appropriate roles in society in professional capacity and in personal life organized as a broad coalition.

Coalitions exist even today but are not strong enough. They don't have the necessary geographical reach, philosophical depth and the diversity of thought and action. The nature of trafficking is such that without a broad coalition, it will continue to survive and even thrive. Strengths of such coalitions are built up over time through investment for the long term. But investment in what? How? Why? However the answers are articulated, they will lead to the young men and women of our society. Systematically and carefully shaped, then youth can be powerful force for change - now and in the future. Youth as a segment have some unique qualities that are relevant to anti-trafficking and related efforts.

First, they are generally more open to ideas and experiments. This combined with their idealism, can help establish bridges with stigmatized and marginalized groups. In Lucknow, for example, young men came forward to marry girls from particular high risk village community which was one step towards ending their social and cultural isolation and stigma.

Second, when the individuals themselves are from such marginalized groups, community within and without are generally less prejudiced which opens up opportunities for progress.

Third, younger generation is much better at staging organized activities because of their natural openness, energy and resourcefulness. Youth has proven to be key to awareness campaigns involving trafficking, AIDS etc. The largest AIDS awareness program before NACO started was Universities Talk AIDS program involving some 150 universities. Rural awareness campaigns, for example, routinely feature creative street plays and puppet shows conceptualized and executed by youth.

Fourth, victims are getting younger over time. Adolescent girls form the bulk of trafficked victims, for example. Half of new HIV infections in India rest in the age group of 10-25. Peer education efforts driven by youth themselves has always been great tool to spread awareness.

And of course, today's generation are tomorrow's citizens. Progressive, knowledgeable and skilled youth can form the long term basis for change in attitudes towards gender, class, economics and governance which are key to addressing the more fundamental issues in trafficking. They can be initiators of mass actions today and in the process trained for future involvement in society. There are several challenges in large scale youth involvement in a sustained way:

First, progressive groups do not proactively engage current generation many times because of unwillingness or misconceptions. It needs to be overcome to create opportunities for direct involvement that is key to building and leveraging relevant skills, initiatives and resourcefulness.

Second, many efforts are adhoc and one time. We need to mainstream and institutionalize involvement in community issues. The involvement can be through formally recognized groups in urban areas such as NSS and NCC, through political groups and movements, and even through informal but strong groups such as dalit groups (Ambedkar 'sanghas'), movie star fan clubs and so on.

Third, issues faced by current generation are complex and multifaceted. Because of lack of experience and age, short attention spans, and desire for immediate action, shorter term solutions are sought for and not enough investment goes into the solutions. We must facilitate greater understanding of the issues and develop leadership through training workshops and activities. We must invest in institutions and processes that train youth and create leaders out of them.

Fourth, role models for current generation such as actors/actresses and sports men/women must be tapped so that the inspirational component is also addressed. Providing visibility to ongoing efforts also helps.

Last, programs must be designed with care so that programs are not hijacked by any particular vested interest and do not cause harm to the individuals - physically and psychologically. Youth from red-light districts are known to suffer from malnutrition and from low self-esteem. Further many of them have traumatic experiences. Organizing such youth can help or prove detrimental depending on how it is conceived and implemented.

Most Sanctuary partners are well aware of these issues but they can redouble and coordinate their efforts to tap into this resource pool of youth.

## Youth Involvement – Some Observations Melli Annamali

Young adults seem to be the most promising group that can bring about change in India. They are idealistic and energetic, they are optimistic and hopeful, and for the most part they are keen on seeing a better India. Their energy and their ability to work with others can be seen from the number of groups such as movie star fan clubs, dalit associations, and caste based groups that are formed by youth.

There is a difference whether the young adults come from within the marginalized community they are trying to help, or from better off position but motivated by ideals like equality and justice and thus working for the marginalized community. In the latter case, the involvement level varies with time, especially with commitments like exams, education, family, marriage. When the youth come from the marginalized community itself, there is a very strong sense of identity with the problem. If the problems of the community are addressed, their own problems, and the problems of their family and friends, are effectively addressed. This is a powerful motivation. Many movements have recognized this and realize that involving youth is a key component in the movements gaining momentum.

I have worked with the SS study center, in the KN slum in a city in Tamil Nadu and want to share some specific observations. This center is entirely run by youth from the KN community. The SS center started as a study center for children, and now is basically the hub of activity for the children – it has a library, it has clubs ranging from Journalism to Drama to Science, it is the place where they celebrate all festivals together, and in the evenings it has regular classes. The youth volunteers are those who have made it to college, and they conduct classes so that younger students can get questions clarified. The whole center functions like one big family. The youth volunteers initially did it for free, but are now paid an honorarium of Rs. 500 a month. A key factor in the success of the center is that the structure of the center empowered youth to take decisions themselves. They had a sense of involvement, and a sense of doing something. The structure also enabled the specification of clear parameters of 'success'. The youth was encouraged to come up with new and different ideas, and guidance given where necessary.

One issue to keep in mind while engaging youth from the marginalized communities is the question of the youth's livelihood. When compared to youth from more privileged backgrounds their need to work for financial security is more urgent. Besides day to day livelihood needs, there are also the pressure to meet the requirements of family crisis like illnesses, weddings, loans etc. A job at an NGOs is typically low-paying, They rarely have a security net for people working with them when sudden financial needs arise. This raises an important questions:

*If it is possible for the youth to get more financial security by being employed in a regular job, should they be encouraged to sacrifice that and work on the issue at hand? In our experience we have found that many youth are willing to do just that, from a deep desire to see their community to do better. We have all heard the stories of youth with families subsisting on a day-to-day basis spending several days helping victims of the Tsunami.*

*But what is the role of the NGO when there is a financial need? In this particular case, we are exploring setting up a fund with low interest loans for such needs for the youth.*

**An eye-opener:** I once suggested to M, a youth volunteer and the primary motivation behind the SS center, that he visit Chennai and meet with an Asha volunteer there. He took my advice, and the Asha volunteer introduced him to several people, including the state education secretary. At the end of the day M asked 'does Asha only work with large scale efforts?' His universe was the KN colony. That is where he wanted to bring about change. We had just assumed that like us, he would be interested in and try to 'solve' all of India's problems. He was not interested in grand, large-scale plans. His focus was KN, and his vision was to change things there and in the surrounding areas. We have seen this with other youth groups as well. Like an ocean that is built one drop of water at a time, such local and focused efforts are integral and critical component of larger scale efforts. It is important that the youth see a place for themselves in the larger picture and the relevance of their efforts in the larger scheme of things. Through a simple question M helped me identify the need to facilitate such a process of understanding and coordination.

## Meeting Notes — Pune, Dec 13 2004



Success is a state of the mind, and such a state of the mind needs a healthy body and spirit. To this end Asha-Sanctuary teamed up with Swadhaar, Pune to organize a seminar on malnutrition and girl-child drop out, both related to poverty and factors that often lead to exploitation, especially of the girl-child.

Ten local organizations were present as Dr Shirole set the tone with a slide show depicting the results of malnutrition and neglect. Government schemes usually start with school age children, and he underscored the fact that this fails children below school going age. Dr Nandita Kundu, Additional Director of the Institute of Health Management, Pachod, Pune Centre later highlighted the need to tackle malnutrition before it set in, and that it was simpler than one would think. Local/indigenous diets are reasonably balanced and made up of locally available healthy ingredients, and should be promoted, perhaps with a little tweaking.

Dr Suman Karandikar led the discussion on girl-child enrollment and drop out problems. The major reasons she cited for this phenomena were: (1) Sociological problems more for Girl Child dropout than academic problems (2) Poverty is not the basic problem. The child is not interested in schools. Poor children do not like the four walls of a school. They prefer nature and open spaces where there is freedom of movement. (3) Languages of teachers are different from language of the children in the classroom, (4) Books and syllabus are uninteresting and do not relate to their daily life (5) Teachers are intolerant and condescending.

It was observed that as long as children remain earners within the lower economic classes there will always be pressure on them not to attend school. Not only the parents but those amongst us that make this possible also share the blame. We make the problem worse by (for example) by promoting begging by handing out money at street corner, by employing under age maid servants and in general being apathetic to the problem that we see around us.

Dr Kundu indicated that IHMP could conduct training workshops for those interested, and there was general consensus to follow up on this. Since the groups actively network under the ARC (Action for the Rights of the Child), interaction amongst them is consistent and active.

## Meeting Notes — Lucknow, Jan 2, 2005



Asha Sanctuary organized a meeting amongst 4 NGO's: Guria, (Asha) Natpurwa/RAH, Odanadi and NEED. Discussions centered around alternative livelihood options, skill building for women entrepreneurs, and leveraging collective strengths to gain economic empowerment which would lead to social empowerment.

Organizations had very different styles of operation. NEED (Network Entrepreneurship Economic Development) is based in Lucknow, and their strength is in organizing women's collectives and self help groups for credit and social mobilization. Guria, a non-profit organisation, has been fighting the sexual exploitation of women & girls specially forced prostitution & trafficking which has further become severe and complex due to sex tourism and spread of HIV/AIDS. Rah, based in Natpurwa (about 70 km from Lucknow) is community group working with the Nat caste, whose main profession is prostitution. Odanadi, based in Mysore, is involved in rescue and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Odanadi has recently promoted several business ventures for a young women collective, Manavi.

Neelkamals' concern about the difficulty to access the government funds allocated for the marriage of Nat girls was discussed at length. A systematic chain of communication was suggested as a first step. Mr Anil Singh shared his experiences getting women to participate in economic activities, understanding the markets and handling all aspects of their trade. Training in finance management or craft skills (zardozi or chikan work in particular) was discussed. Pros and cons of trading goods amongst NGOs' was considered, as marketing and retail outlets as looked into as income generating ventures for young women and girls. A need for 'fair trade' was highlighted and it was suggested that we, the international community, make this issue visible if we want to help grass-roots organizations help local communities.

We had an opportunity to meet a group of women see the chikan craft done by them at NEED. The quality of the workmanship was impressive.



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