

Project Proposal
on
‘Night Shelter’
for the Children
of Sex-Workers

AREA OF IMPLEMENTATION
Baruipur Block, South 24 Parganas
District, West Bengal, India

PROJECT PERIOD
April, 2020 to March, 2021

IMPLEMENTED BY:
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ABOUT NISHTHA :

For nearly four decades, 'Nishtha', a grassroots level women's organisation has been working for the empowerment of girls and women in nearly 300 villages of five Community Development Blocks in South 24 Parganas district in the state of West Bengal. Our programmes encompass mainly awareness building on their rights and demand such rights on necessity.

It thrives for creating strong public opinion against child marriage, trafficking, girl's drop out from schools, gender discrimination, and injustice, violence against girls and women and in favour of creating strong public opinion on human rights of women. By performing these pertinent programmes, it has been able to achieve its massive acceptance in government and non-government sectors.

Nishtha modus operandi has been creating village level adolescent girls (*Kishori Vahini*), women (*Mahila Mandal*) and senior women groups (*Borishtho Dol*) to act for empowerment of girls and women through mobilizing their communities for undertaking action to improve their environment, speak up against violence, and advocate for their rights through the different BCC programmes in their own groups. In case of any untoward happening, they concertedly stand by the victim and take requisite actions to protect her. Nishtha also runs a Day Care Centre for the children having special needs. About 60 such children regularly attend the centre at the premises of Nishtha and get the required treatment from the qualified physiotherapist, speech therapist, occupational therapists, and psychologist and so on. Both the children and their mothers have their lunch provided by the Nishtha.

Besides above, Nishtha has taken up a very much challenging programme i.e. running a Night Shelter (safe shelter) for the children of the professional sex workers in order to bring them back to the main stream of the society and instil a dream among them to lead a dignified life in the days to come.

RATIONALE :

Location of the project area, Baruipur is the busiest sub-division of South 24 Parganas District and Kolkata city is very near. Being the prime business location of this sub-division, the area has high inflow of migratory population from remote rural areas of the district and Kolkata also to purchase

vegetables and guava. Baruipur and its adjacent areas are very much famous for large scale production of guava and quality is also superb.

Puratan Bazar (Old Market) is a red light area in Baruipur. Around more than one hundred fifty sex workers are in the area and of them more than hundred sex workers have made their permanent settlement in a particular geographical periphery to run their business while others being floating sex workers have been coming from different areas.

Living condition of them is very unhealthy to be precise, more or less similar with other brothels in different cities. They live in dark shanties and dirty rooms having almost no ventilation at all. Majority of the rooms have no electricity and in unhygienic and dilapidated condition. Narrow lanes are very dirty and the Kancha (non-metalled) drains emit very bad odour always. The surroundings are heaped with waste materials which are dumped here and there. Liquor trading starts from almost early hours of morning with the people consume throughout the day. As a result, the area remains very tense, unhealthy and dangerous, as the law and order situation often goes out of hand at slightest of reason. So called *maasis* are the owners of the brothels and they have close nexus with the local anti-socials. They control the brothel and the sex workers have no protection here and they are frequently manhandled by the *maasi* and the hooligans. By paying more money to the pimps, girls are often taken by the rich clients to the hotels or elsewhere even out of state.

Under this circumstance, children of the sex workers have drastically been suffering. They are being grown in this nasty environment they have been the victims of this unhealthy social environment. These children have no scope for going to school. They are completely in the dark regarding good health and hygienic environment since the sex workers have no idea about taking care of their children for their desirable upbringing. Hence, the children are grown being malnourished without having nutritious food from their mothers. Earning of sex workers are excessively meagre moreover, a significant portion of their earning go to the *massi* and some portion is spent for their cheap dresses and liquor as well. Their basic necessities are not met with the leftover amount. Most of their clients are rickshaw pullers, daily wage earners or truck drivers etc.

Many antisocial habits, abuses, rough and slang words are being learned by the children. Majority of them especially the boy children become offenders.

Girls are often become sexually abused sometimes very brutally. Afterwards, many of them become anti-socials, alcoholic and drug addicts. They have no any other alternatives to lead a decent life and become completely ignorant about their legitimate social as well as legal rights. Eventually, a few of them sometimes get some better chances, but without utilising the scope for leading better life they prefer to come back to their own known area and lead the same anti-social life as it appears to them much more convenient. The worst sufferers are the girls; almost all of them have to accept the profession of their mothers even before their puberty period. More or less nobody knows or meets their fathers and so the fathers have no role in rearing of these children. A negligible amount is spent for their growing up is from the poor income of the mothers.

Therefore, a safe protected environment to live and access to proper education and their legitimate rights may save these children of the sex workers from being anti socials. Now, primary education is compulsory in India and the children from red-light areas are also have their rights of admission to schools, but many school authorities do not intend to give scope to them to get admitted in the school as they seem guardians from the society may object to admit their own children in that school. So, school education becomes nightmare to the children of the sex workers. As a result, ultimately there have no any other avenues to lead normal life rather they have become anti-socials or sex workers.

Keeping in consideration of the pathetic condition of the children of the sex workers, Nishtha has sincerely been running this Night Shelter as safe shelter for the last couple of years to bring these deprived children to dream for leading a normal life by way of educating them in a school, sensitizing and convincing the sex workers, community members and finally, the school teachers and the school authority also.

Impact of running the Night Shelter:

Nishtha is greatly indebted to Asha for Education, Atlanta chapter to stand by the vulnerable children of Professional Sex Workers for arranging a safe shelter as Night Shelter. For its continuous support, some hopeful changes have been evident that are as follows;

- A habit has been created among the sex workers to send their kids to the night Shelter. In fact, the sex workers ignore their Babus, their clients who are dead against regarding sending sex workers' children to attend the Night Shelter. The reason is that these children use to bring

wine and other food items for the clients and Babus need not to spend anything for these tasks. Apart from these, aged clients used them for their own perverted sexual desire without paying any extra money. The mothers of these children didn't have any other option but to support the act of their clients.

- Frequent use of filthy language has excessively been decreased among the children attending the Night Shelter.
- Sense of hygiene has been enhanced among them.
- Habit of regularity to attend the centre and studying as well has been instilled among them.
- At the initial phase, school teachers compel the children of the centre to leave the school for speaking in abusive language and their unhygienic practice. Guardians of children of mainstream society prohibit their own kids to mix with the children of the Night Shelter. But for the last couple of years no such complaint has been arising against the children of the Night Shelter. It clearly shows that the children of the Night Shelter have been behaving well.
- Retention rate of attending school is about 80 percent.
- Since these children have none other their mothers, Nishtha wish these children to be with their mothers during the day time so that their mothers can cook food for them and feed them also. These children may get affection and love from their mothers like the children of mainstream society. During the initial 5 years, Nishtha could not be able to do it but for the last 5 years, mothers have gradually been convinced to attend these needs of children this way for their proper upbringing.
- These children have numerous talents and Night Shelter has been providing the opportunities to the children for enriching their finer senses through painting, singing, recitation and dancing etc.
- Aggressiveness of the children has successively been reduced due to having scope for nurturing their hidden talents by engaging the professional person in the Night Shelter.
- Night Shelter's children have been learning new games and sports otherwise, they used to involve in sex related games which are beyond the imagination of mainstream society.
- In order to save the girl-children from being trafficked or being involved in their mother's profession, they have been admitted in residential school or Govt. Homes while attaining their 13 or 14 years of age for ensuring their protection.

- A significant outcome of this project is that now a few children are studying in class IX, X and on the way to complete their Higher Secondary course.

But so many things have not yet been done that are required to be initiated e.g. many sex workers addicted in liquor or other substances cannot look after their child/ children properly, dropout among a few children are still in practice, many children have not been accepted in the mainstream society for their inappropriate behaviour etc. These mothers need to be met and convinced through counselling.

From this year, a **Crèche** for the kid in the age group from 4 months to 3 years has just been started. Previously there was no such scope for attending these tender-aged kids.

Project aim :

To provide an environment of protection and care, and ensure basic rights to the children of professional sex workers.

Existing target group :

A total of 30 children of professional sex workers belonging to the age group from 4 years to 13 years and 6 children of 4 months to 3 years of age living in Puratan Bazar Red Light area.

Objectives :

- To provide a conducive atmosphere of care & protection for the children of professional sex workers.
- To ensure education of these children in formal schools/ institutions.
- To ensure due acceptance and sensitivity among community as well as government authorities and other stakeholders about these children.

Strategies :

- To run the centre as a full fledged night shelter for all the children of professional sex workers living in Baruiipur red light area in Nishtha's safe shelter during night time so as to keep the children away from abusive language, running errands to get liquor and drugs, physical abuse and above all, a safe environment for joyous learning especially at night when they become most vulnerable.

- To admit and help retention of eligible children of sex workers in the mainstream schools.
- To ensure necessary facilities for the children & promote behavioural changes among the children by way of nourishing their finer senses through organising classes on dancing, painting, singing in order to lessen their aggressiveness, maintaining proper health and hygiene with necessary clothing and hygiene materials and finally, providing night meal to them.
- To sensitize the local community members and involve the government authorities and other stakeholders to ensure greater acceptance and sensitivity towards these children.

Activities :

- **Running the Night Shelter:**
 - The Night shelter will be operating for the children of Baruipur red light area in the premises of Nishtha's safe shelter at night while they are become most vulnerable.
 - The shelter will run from 4 pm to 9.30 pm. (As per the new rules and strict monitoring by the Government, the night shelter has to be closed at 9.30 pm after the dinner of the children)But still few children are staying at night at shelter as their mothers are addicted.
 - Night meal will be served to all the children.
 - Teachers conduct regular classes on the all subjects according to the syllabus of government school as they do not have any other place to read.
 - Organise sensitising meetings with mothers
 - Keeping all necessary records of Night Shelter
 - Adopt joyful method
 - Organise extracurricular activities for nourishing their finer senses
 - Create opportunity to mix with other children of normal society

- **Education:**

- Ensure retention of the school going children of the Night Shelter and their admission in formal school.
- Provide guidance for education with the private tutors as an additional support for coping up with the studies.
- **Mainstreaming in Formal Society & Behavioural Changes:**
 - Promoting the development of hygienic habits like use of tooth brush, combing, hand washing etc.
 - Providing hygiene kits to the children.
 - Provide clothing and other materials to the children.
 - Organize mothers' meeting once in every quarter.
 - Conducting regular home visits to interact with their mothers.
 - Arrange for exposure visits twice a year to Nishtha's village centres.
 - Conducting story telling sessions that improve their use of language through hearing and speaking.
 - Develop new games for them that can make them forget the games they have learnt during childhood that is often objectionable to other normal children and their parents.

Budget :

The total proposed cost of implementation of the project will be **INR 5, 64,500.**

The detailed budget is attached here in the attachment.