

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

AREA OF IMPLEMENTATION

**Baruipur Development Block,
South 24 Parganas District,
West Bengal, India**

PROJECT PERIOD

April 2019 to March 2020

IMPLEMENTED BY:

NISHTHA

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ABOUT ORGANIZATION

'Nishtha', a grassroots women's organisation has been working for three decades in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. From the very beginning, its aim was to empower the women/children through awareness building on their rights and demand such rights on necessity. Nishtha presently works in more than 300 villages in 5 blocks of the area. Its campaigns for promoting awareness against child marriage, trafficking, domestic violence and gender discrimination, sustainable bio-farming has endeared the organization in government and non-government circles by its inherent qualities.

To address these issues several women's community groups has been formed by Nishtha which create influential social networks in the rural areas called *Kishori Vahini* (Adolescent Girls' Group) & *Mahila Mandal* (Women's Group), have empowered women to mobilize their communities to take action to improve their environment, speak up against violence, and advocate for their rights. Apart from this Nishtha has taken up to work for children of sex workers of the areas through teaching cum day and night care shelter programs, creating a path for their connection to mainstream society.

RATIONALE

Baruipur is one of the busiest sub-division of South 24 Parganas District. Being so close to Kolkata, the area has high inflow of migratory population from remote rural areas of West Bengal.

In Baruipur, there is a red light area is situated in the Puratan Bazar (Old Market). There are more than two hundred fifty sex workers in the area out of which more than hundred sex workers living permanently in this area to run their business, the rest being floating sex workers.

The sex workers live in dark shanties and dirty rooms, sometimes without any ventilation. Most rooms are without electricity and in unhygienic and dilapidated condition. The lanes are very dirty and the Kancha (un-metalled) drains emit very bad odour always. The surroundings are heaped with waste materials which are dumped here and there. From early hours of morning, liquor trading starts with people consuming them throughout the day. Therefore, the area remains very tense, unhealthy and dangerous, as the law and order situation often goes out of hand at slightest of reason. The brothels are owned by persons known as *Maasi* and are often jointly owned with some antisocial elements; with the sex workers working under their control. The sex workers do not have any protection here and are manhandled by the *Maasi* and the hooligans frequently. Many of the rich clients, hooligans and anti-socials exercise their rights to take away any girl by paying money to the

pimps. The most badly affected because of the given situation are children of the sex workers, who are getting acquainted with the prevailing social environment of the area. They neither have the provision of going to school nor do they have any idea about health and hygiene maintenance. Their mothers have little chance to take care of their respective children. Thus, the children grow up malnourished as their mothers fail to give them proper and nutritious food. The regular income of the mothers is quite low and they have to part with some portion of their income and share with the *Maasi* and for the comfort of their customers. The children also develop many antisocial habits and learn abuses and rough and slang words. Most of them specially the boy children become offenders. They are often sexually abused. When they grow up many of them also become anti-socials, alcoholic and drug addicts. They do not have any alternative options to live a good life and remain ignorant of their social and legal rights. So even when some of them get some better chances, they fail to utilise these chances and ultimately return to their own area and lead the same antisocial life. The condition of the girl children is far more pathetic. Many of them from their early teens have to accept the same profession as their mothers have.

Many do not get to know or meet their fathers and so the socio economic status of fathers does not play any role in rearing of these children. The little amount spent on their growing up is from the meagre income of the mothers. The small income of the sex workers find many takers with part going to the *Maasi* as commission, a part spend for the comfort of the customer, a part on cosmetics, cheap dresses and liquor. The little left there after is just not enough to secure their necessities.

The only way to save these children of the sex workers from becoming anti socials is to provide them with their rights of a safe protected environment to live and access to proper education.

Though primary education is compulsory in India and the children from red-light areas are entitled to exercise their rights of admission to schools, many schools refrain from taking them fearing their loss of reputation. It is this discrimination and neglect that has refrained the children from continuing education. The teachers in the schools as well as the parents of the other children object to their admission and the unfair outlook prove to be the reason for their tendencies to become anti-socials. Nishtha through the years have been relentless trying to work in these areas with the intention to get formal education for these vulnerable children, through sensitizing the local community and nearby schools.

BACKGROUND & ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST

While working during this period, Nishtha has met the need and objectives of past years with success to a great extent.

- Children of school going age are now being admitted to formal school. The school teachers and other parents have gradually started accepting these children.

Two of the boys are studying in class IX while one of the girls is in class X and will be completing her secondary studies next year while one girl is studying in class 12 and will soon complete her higher secondary studies.

AIM

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

PRESENT TARGET GROUP

30 children of sex workers in age group of 3 to 14 years living in Puratan Bazar Red Light area.

OBJECTIVES

- **To provide a conducive atmosphere of care & protection** for children born to commercial sex workers.
- **To ensure education** of these children in formal schools / institutions.
- **To ensure greater acceptance and sensitivity** in community as well as government authorities and other stakeholders towards these children.
- **To safeguard childhood care and special protection of 6 babies** belonging to the age group from 6 months to 2.5 years.
- **To provide sufficient space for kids for playing games** during their stay at shelter.
- **To equip a boy having skills in painting** to be a professional painter and the teacher of painting for the children of shelter as well.

STRATEGIES

- To run the centre as a full fledged night shelter for all the children of Baruipur red light area in Nishtha's safe shelter during night time, thus keeping 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 are most vulnerable.

- To admit and help retention of eligible children of sex workers in mainstream schools.
- To ensure enabling facilities for the children & promote behavioural change in the children by developing finer senses so that they can reduce their aggressiveness, and main proper hygiene and supporting them with clothing, hygiene materials along with night meal.
- To educate the community and involve government authorities and other stakeholders to ensure greater acceptance and sensitivity towards these children.
- To provide special care for protection of childhood to 6 babies as these babies are deprived of having requisite care by their mothers because of attending their clients.
- To restructure the space for playing games by the children.
- To get the boy having skills in painting admitted in Art School for enhancing his skills.

ACTIVITIES

➤ **Running a full fledged night shelter:**

- The Night shelter will be operating for the children of Baruipur red light area in Nishtha's safe shelter for these children at night when they are most vulnerable.
- The shelter will run from 4PM to 9.30 PM (Due to implimentation of new rules and stricter monitoring by government, we have been compelled to close down the night shelter at 9.30 PM after the children take their dinner)
- Providing night meal to these children.

➤ **Education:**

- Ensuring retention of the school going children and their admission in formal school.
- Providing educational guidance in the form of tutor to get extra support for coping up with the pace of education.

➤ **Mainstreaming in Formal Society & Behavioural Changes:**

- Promoting the development of hygienic habits like tooth brush, combing, hand washing, etc.
 - Providing hygiene kits to the children.
 - Provide clothing and other materials for 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.
- **Crech:**
- To run a crech for providing legitimate care and protection of childhood to 6 babies aged between 6 months to 2.5 years during the period while their mothers are attending their clients.
- **Space having roof with tin to be covered with grills, windows and false ceiling for playing games :**
- To renovate existing available space for children to play games at the top floor. A shade with tin has already been done from the unspent balance amount of the last year with prior approval. Now, four sides of the space need to be covered with grills and windows and false ceiling is required to protect from excessive heat at the top floor.
- **Support a boy possessing skill to be a professional painter:**
- Get the boy admitted in Art School for enhancing his skill in painting and provide him pocket allowances. In future, besides earning for himself he also acts as teacher of painting for the boys of the shelter as well.

BUDGET

The total proposed cost of implementation of the project will be 12,04,800.00.

The detailed budget is attached as annexure.

