

WAH Proposal 2010 (Nominated by Atlanta)

Project Title: SINCHAN (Watering)

Project Sector : Protection and Development Children of Sex workers

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Central Asha Webpages For NISHTHA:

<http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=756> (Night Shelter- Atlanta)

<http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=1018> (Jagaran – Birmingham, DC)

Introduction

Nishtha, a totally community based organization was born in the mid-seventies. From the very beginning, its aim was to empower of the women / girls through awareness building on women's/girls' rights amongst them and empowering them to demand such rights. Nishtha presently works in more than 250 villages in 5 blocks in the District of South 24 Parganas.

Nishtha emphasise on the coordinating nature and tradition with modern learning tools to foster grassroots understanding about the needs and application in all spheres of the life as a contour of sustainable development. Its campaigns against child marriage, trafficking, domestic violence and gender discrimination has endeared the organisation in government and non-government circles by its inherent qualities.

The programmes of Nishtha are a reflection of continuous self analysis & subsequent proactive revisions that made us a participatory resource centre for community women, youths and elderly in the field of education and health for our target area.

Backdrop:

Women in India are traditionally relegated to second class citizenship and subjected to exploitation and discrimination in all spheres of life. The remote village of Baikunthapur in South 24 Parganas is no exception.

Most of the adults, especially the women have never been to schools themselves in their younger days. Illiteracy is a major evil in these households. Young girls and boys are often sent to factories, shops and markets as child labourers. Young girls often become victims of trafficking and sexual abuse. It is a great tragedy that when helpless woman gets sexually abused or raped, she has to bear all the responsibilities for the consequences. Sometimes she gets ostracized and in many cases she has nowhere to go but to land in brothels or commit suicide. For lack of education, proper knowledge and access to reproductive health services, they cannot enjoy human rights.

Birth of a girl child is considered an unfortunate event, and women are routinely victimized and deserted, or exploited and made victims of all kinds of violence. A few fortunate girl children do get a chance to go to school but are withdrawn as soon as their education turns costly with their promotion to higher classes and are married off to grooms of higher age and/or even knowingly face male oppression for dowry. Wife beating is a routine affair and girls grow up observing the its horrors at home and accepting the same as a natural fate in store for them.

Gender discrimination and violence are common phenomena. Child marriage, teenage pregnancy, unsafe abortion etc. are rampant resulting in the rise of the girl students' drop out rate.

Gross Dropout Rates Girls of Schools of General Education in 2004-05			
States / Nation	Classes I-V	Classes I-VIII	Classes I-X
West Bengal	44.10	63.55	80.24
India	25.42	51.28	63.88

Source: Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India

The socio-cultural situation in rural Bengal is peculiar. The parents do not feel it prudent to send their girl children to school. They regard it as a luxury. They worry about the dowry but not the education and nutrition of their daughters. The birth of a girl hence is not a happy event, but taken as a misfortune.

The interlinking relation between the drop out rate and child marriage is well known to all of us. As girls drops out because of marriage and of the dropped out girls are married earlier. The relation between the above mentioned information and data can be well understood as according to the Rapid Household Survey conducted across the country, West Bengal stands at number three position in child marriage only after Bihar and Rajasthan with an average of 54.9 percent.

Those fortunate girls, who get the opportunity to go to school, are also obliged to abandon education owing to their forced marriages. The distance of the high schools from their homes is also a big obstacle. The school authorities and the teachers are not

trained to be gender sensitive and seem to be indifferent to the problems of the girls. This attitude and environment are two major causes for girl students' drop out.

The parents decline to provide education to the children for they regard it non-productive. They want the children to toil in the field to help their parents. The acute poverty of these people compels the young children to go to different urban centres and industrial belts in search of employment. Simultaneously small cottage industries have been developed in recent years at the village level. These industries are employing only the young children because they may be paid at lower rate and they can be engaged for a longer period. Besides these factors there are various shops that also employ these children. As a result the education of these children is severely hampered and they are losing their childhood with all its rights.

Area Back Ground

The red light area is situated in the Puratan Bazar area of Baruipur under South 24 Parganas. There are 105 sex workers live permanently in this area and about 150 floating sex workers visit every evening to run their business. The sex workers live in the very small and dirty rooms, some times without any window. All the rooms do not have the facility of the electricity. The roads are very dirty and the Kancha (not metalled) drains emit very bad smell. One can see waste materials are dumped here and there. Since morning, country liquors are sold and many people start consuming this liquor from morning. The environment of the area is always very tense, unhealthy and dangerous, as there is no law and order present in the area. The brothels are owned by some maasi or antisocial elements and the sex workers work under their control. The sex workers do not have any protection here and they are manhandled by the maasi and the hooligans frequently. Some rich person or hooligan or any antisocial element can easily take away any girl by paying money. The children of the sex workers are getting attached with the social environment of the area. Neither they go to school nor do they have any idea about health and hygiene. Their mothers have little

chance to take care of their respective children. The children are all malnourished as their mother fail to give them proper and nutritious food. The income of the mothers is quite low and they are to part with some portion of their income with the maasi and the babus. The children some times are sexually abused. They develop many antisocial habits and learn abusive languages. When they grow up many of them also become anti socials, alcoholic and drug addicts. They do not have any alternative better way to live. So even when some of them get some better chance, they fail to adopt in new situation as at times they feel this hampers their independence and machoism and ultimately return to their own area and lead the same antisocial life. The condition of the girl children is more pathetic. Many of them in their early teens are forced to accept the same profession as their mothers have as young girls have greater demand, paid higher and mother has become old to attract the clients.

Our target children are born of commercial sex work by their parents and mothers in particular. Who are forced or lured to the trade against their will and at very early age. Ignorance of target group is an advantage for baiters in this trade and they are concerned to inculcate the same among the off-spring to retain their stranglehold encourage immoral activities using the children, alike their mothers. As for fathers, very few of them are involved in children's life in purposeful manner. Thus, the socio-economic background of the father does not have any impact on the child. It being the mother's earning that fathoms the grooming of the child. The meagre earning of the working mothers are devoured in meeting room rent, satisfying the police and pimps, daily meals, cheap dresses and cosmetics, paying for health maintenance, country liquor that forms an integral part of the profession. It leaves very little for the children and their future. The children, in turn, learn to stay out of the way during the time of their mothers are in business. They get addicted to various vices like smoking, and drinking liquors, learn about sex and sexuality and pervasive abuses. To supplement the mothers' meagre income children often do menial work for the clients and others. Held in contempt and

ostracised by the inmates of the non-sex workers' households these children lead a miserable existence.

Though primary education is compulsory in India and the children from red-light areas are eligible for admission. However, it is the discrimination and neglect that refrains the children from continuing education. The teachers as well as the parents of the other children object to their admission and the unfair upbringing prove to be a disaster. Thus, door-opening will be a challenge, which NISHTHA with its strong rapport in the community, is well versed in it.

NISHTHA started a night shelter for children of sex workers at Baruipur red light area providing safety and foster care with nutritional support, clothing and story telling, games, non-formal teaching, recreation and health facilities to 32 children in age group of 2 1/2 to 14 years. It is a protection cum teaching centre for which, the funds are being sought.

NISHTHA has developed its own teaching learning methodology to ease the learning process for the otherwise timid, less exposed and conservative children. The basic literacy was encouraged in matched to surrounding nature and commonly practiced and understood activities. The aim was to make the education effective in real life and enable the children to grasp help their working mothers e.g. using the shape and size of paddy fields to learn geometry, rows of sowing for counting, production for longer and bigger calculations or colour, shape, size and odour to relate to botany, lifecycle, geography and literature. Leadership training, life skill training, S.R.H. issues, gender discrimination etc. and cultural excellence are added to compliment learning. The same objective is for the children of sex workers to equip them with adequate knowledge, information, training and education.

Goal

To provide protection, relief and some essential rights to children of sex workers.

Objectives

- To provide a conducive atmosphere for children born to sex workers by keeping them away from abusive language, running errands to get liquor and drugs, physical abuse and above all, a safe environment for joyous learning.
- To admit and help retention of eligible children of sex workers in mainstream schools.
- To distribute educational materials, renovate school building, conduct sensitization meetings in locality to create a caring community.
- To involve government authorities and other stakeholders.

Target Group

Direct beneficiaries will be 32 children of sex workers and 150 sex workers will be indirect beneficiaries.

Strategies

- a. Include all the children in the red light areas in our day educational centre and night shelter.
- b. Continuous sensitization programs in the community and the local formal schools so that these children find it easier to be integrated with the others.
- c. To run our centre as a full fledged primary school for all children irrespective of their birth in the area with help of local community and government.
- d. To provide educational materials, clothing, health care facilities, night meal & breakfast, scope for development of finer senses so that they can develop good hobbies.

Activities

- To provide back up support to these children so that they can carry out education in formal schools through interactive and interesting learning methodologies.
- Providing nutritional support in the form of tiffin (twice a day) to the children.
- Mainstreaming the out of school children to the formal school.

- Involving these children in various cultural skills like songs, dances, role-plays, games etc. so that the soft skills of children is developed and they come out of the typical machoism and antisocial mind set.
- Taking these children to excursion visits so that they go out from their monotonous life, have an opportunity to see and interact with outside world and learn during the process.
- Regular sensitisation and interaction with school authorities to have greater acceptance and understanding for these children.
- Regular sensitisation and interaction with mothers and other local stakeholders to ensure that the children are protected from an environment of abuse and antisocial activities and are encouraged to carry out their education.
- Regular assessments of attendance and age-specific performance of children will help us to monitor the progress and plan in future.
- Regular interaction with schools, institutions and mothers will help to bridge the gaps in utilizing facilities offered from government.
- Ensuring regular health check up for these children.
- The adolescents among these children and all the sex workers are imparted with health education including sexual and reproductive health, prevention and management of R.T.I/ S.T.D/ HIV/AIDS.

Requirement

Previously we were running a night shelter with due support of ASHA. Recently, we have been fortunate to have support from AID for running the centre during day which includes providing nutritional support during day time, back up education, basic hygiene maintenance and ensuring safe space during day. This support has helped us in building a proactive positive environment for these children which in turn will help them be a respectable citizens of the society preventing them from becoming anti social element or enter in to flesh trade.

The infrastructure which we are presently using is of bamboo and tali roof on a piece of land owned by Nishtha. Till date we were somehow managing in this infrastructure but after starting of day care where children take bath, study and also have tiffin we are now unable to manage in that space. Also, present infrastructure considering its nature requires continuous maintenance.

So, in order to smooth implementation of programme we require basic infrastructure. Considering the present need the day care requires **1 big bathroom (for small children who take bath with the support from caretaker), 2 small bathrooms, 2 toilets, 1 kitchen with small store, 1 dining hall, 1 classroom cum prayer hall along with two rooms for children for their stay in night.**

In order to have the basic infrastructure we could avail either of the two options:

- i. Buying an already constructed house having more or less same provisions and using it for day care. (The cost for the same will be on a higher side, but will have transparent utilisation of money)
- ii. Undertaking construction as per the above requirement in the same place where presently day care runs (it will cost little less but requires lots of energy, time for monitoring and accounting the construction). We have nearly 1600 square foot space land (out of which 1000 sq. ft. can be the space for ground floor construction) and if we opt for this option then our requirement can be met up by constructing a two storied building. As per the estimates, we will be requiring more than **Rs. 13 lakhs** in this case. **Exact Break up depends on the availability of houses around the area.**

Conclusion

With these support we expect that the children will continue education, gradually have an environment conducive enough to ensure the proper development and will be leading their life in a safe and non-discriminated environment which is conducive for their development.