



World's Children

Prevention of Child Trafficking Program





*You've heard the saying "It takes a village to raise a child."
The Franciscan Sisters are proving:
~ It takes a village to prevent child trafficking ~*

Overview

World's Children is funding a three-year Prevention of Child Trafficking Program to educate men, women and children about how traffickers dupe young women and snatch unwatched girls.

The total population of the target area for the project is 151,000 people. This is a particularly vulnerable area in India for trafficking. Over a three-year period, the Franciscan Sisters and their team of five staff members plan to educate, organize and train 30,000 people living in 48 villages including 10,000 school children.

With a blanket of watchful eyes, we believe child trafficking can be stopped in this targeted area. If this effort proves to be successful, we hope to expand this project to more villages in the future.



You can see by this photo that the sisters truly work in small rural villages. The women are meeting with a local council elder to discuss how to end trafficking in their village.

Strategy

As they educate rural villagers about how traffickers operate, the sisters and their team try to reach the entire village population with different techniques. The team holds meetings with the village sarpanch (elected head of the village) and the panchayat (the council that works with the sarpanch). The sisters and their team explain how traffickers operate and then ask these village elders to take an oath to be the guardians of the girls in their village.



Village women attend classes about trafficking.

"India is the most dangerous country for women in terms of human trafficking, including sex slavery and domestic servitude, and for customary practices such as forced marriage, stoning and female infanticide."
—Thomson Reuters Foundation

Community Vigilant Committees



Once there is buy-in from the village government, these village elders also are encouraged to create **Community Vigilant Committees** comprised of village politicians, self help group representatives, the government nurse for their village, local teachers and the government revenue officer. These community committees can be relied upon to take action when anyone in the village reports an incident or a strange person acting suspiciously.

The Women

Women's self help groups already exist in many villages. Generally these groups are set up to help women start savings accounts, gain loans, learn new skills and support each other in a male-dominated society. Now a new purpose is being introduced by the Franciscan team.

The village women learn about traffickers and are encouraged to track newcomers to their villages and immediately contact authorities when a girl is suddenly missing. They are taught the importance of education for girls and the danger of sending girls to distant places for work or marriage.



A self help group of women wait for a program to start that will teach them what they can do to stop trafficking.

The Men



Education, awareness and community vigilance can end child trafficking.



These determined young men (right) and women (left) meet to find out how they can protect children from traffickers.

The Children

School assemblies are arranged and the team discusses what to watch for in the school and village (photo right). The children are told to notice if another child stops attending school, or if a friend is suddenly missing. They are taught that when they see those things happen they need to inform their elders and teachers.

The most enthusiastic students in the 6th through 9th grades are invited to form a **Child Vigilant Committee (CVC)** in their schools. These are students that other, more timid students can approach with troubling information. The CVC students then decide whether or not to call the Childline hotline or to first talk with teachers or village elders. All over India people are being urged to call the Childline number on their cellphone if they see a child in danger.



School assemblies are an important part of the anti-trafficking campaign.



While other children play in the school yard, these concerned girls are forming a Child Vigilant Committee (left). Children discuss vigilance in a committee meeting (right).



School children perform a play for their village demonstrating how to recognize and stop traffickers.



School girls pose with Sister Regina, heroic organizer of the Prevention of Child Trafficking Program.

The Team

Because most adults must work all day, the only time to reach them is in the evenings. The team shows a movie featuring two young women who were rescued from traffickers. The women tell their story in the film and warn viewers about the tricks that traffickers use.

Posters are put up in a village announcing an open-air public meeting for a particular night. Because entertainment is almost non-existent in these villages (no movie theaters, very few televisions) the turnout for these events is large. The team brings a projector, screen and diesel generator to the event, along with posters and flyers.

After the movie is shown team leaders lead a discussion about steps the people can take to protect their children.



Villagers watch a video with trafficked women who tell their stories.

Inter-village Communication

Because traffickers move in and out of a village quickly, the team is creating communication networks between nearby villages. If a child is suddenly missing, calls are made to neighboring villages asking about any suspicious people or about frightened children seen accompanying an adult. Already this quick response network has allowed the sisters to rescue girls from their traffickers.



Every village has a government nurse. Anti-trafficking posters are being placed in this clinic where the nurse can further explain how traffickers operate.



Share this report with your friends online: www.worldschildren.org/trafficking-update

Sometimes the family is to blame

(You may find these true stories difficult to read)

Sadly, not every trafficking incident is caused by a stranger; sometimes the girls' families are complicit in the sale of their own children. In their most recent report, the sisters describe how four girls, aged 14 to 19, were tricked by their own uncle into accompanying him to a park where five men and three women were waiting to whisk the girls away.

The girls were taken to a rented apartment where they were raped and beaten. But the sisters learned about their abduction and alerted the police, who descended on the apartment and arrested the traffickers.

The nuns tried to return the girls to their families but that turned out to be very difficult. The uncle who had sold them was the deputy sarpanch (village leader) and a powerful man who threatened his own family if they reported him. The girls' families were afraid of him and reluctant to press charges. It took a lot of persuasion to convince them to do that.

A girl whom we will call Sunita was 14 years old and an orphan. She stopped going to school when her parents died and she went to live with her grandmother. But the grandmother was too old to properly care for Sunita and an aunt and uncle offered to care for the girl. Instead they forced her to become a prostitute at a bus station in their city.

The sisters saw the girl and learned about her desperate situation. When they tried to rescue her the nuns were physically threatened by the girl's aunt and uncle. With the help of police they rescued the girl and sent her to a government hostel where doctors discovered she was now HIV-positive.

A Heartbreaking Situation

Sister Regina sent this sad report:

“About a week ago, the news about the **police raid of brothel homes** in a district which is about 75 kilometers from our head quarters hit the headline of all the news papers.

“According to the press report, the police raided several brothel homes and they rescued more than 40 girl children even as young as five years old. Most were trafficked from the nearby villages. It was established that these young children were injected with hormones to make them attain early puberty.

“Reading such reports was very painful and it is a anguish and a challenge to our team working to combat human trafficking.”

What is the price for a trafficked girl?



Sister Regina answered our question: “It depends on the customers. Often the trafficked girls change many hands. Every point has its own price. At the place of their origin it is sometimes around Rs.10,000 (about \$139). This I came to know from some rescued victims. It is heart breaking to listen to their stories.”

“It doubled our determination to work in all possible ways to raise awareness in the public and to protect each and every child in this region.” —Sister Regina

The Sisters Took Immediate Action



World Day Against Trafficking

Sister Regina describes the World Day Against Trafficking.

“In the backdrop of these sad and painful happenings, we organized the World Day against Trafficking event to raise awareness that was hosted by a tribal welfare high school.

“We took this opportunity to loop in the allied departments like the Police Department, District welfare officer, Child Welfare Committee, ChildLine team, etc.”

“There were several speakers on this issue of human trafficking who highlighted the need for correct information, vigilance, and awareness, protection, welfare schemes and education opportunities for the children.”

“Through various examples the children were made aware of how human trafficking is taking place even in the most remote villages and cautioned them to beware of those who come to offer a glamorous life in the cities in the name of job, marriage, education etc.

“Several girls came forward to share some of their negative experiences both in the society and the family.”

“We resolved whole heartedly to combat human trafficking and promised the children that we will be at their side at any time in case of need and that they can count on us for their safety.”



Around 1,000 girls enthusiastically participated in the event.

“The children took an oath with full voice and determination vowed to protect themselves from all danger and harm by being assertive, vigilant, informed, cautious, taking all precautions to safeguard their life.” —Sister Regina

“I am very happy and grateful to you and your partner organizations for the support you have been giving towards the human trafficking project in our area which is helping to save many innocent girls from being trafficked.” —Sister Regina



These June 2018 statistics indicate the progress and challenges of the three-year Prevention of Child Trafficking Project since it began in April 2017.

First-Year Accomplishments

51 girls have been rescued from trafficking.

29,384 villagers in 41 villages have watched a trafficking awareness video.

10,368 children in 41 schools also have watched the video.

55 women's self-help groups, comprised of 8,103 women, have met to discuss prevention of trafficking.

62 Community Vigilant Committees have been formed.

40 Child Vigilant Committees have been created.

Other Groups—The sisters also have worked with a variety of other parties affected by trafficking. They met with:

- **180 sex workers** to motivate them to give up business and help them take up other occupations.
- **256 taxi drivers** because these men provide the primary means of transportation for traffickers.
- **96 police officers** since rescue can be a real challenge due to threats and lack of shelters for those rescued.
- **342 various members** of groups such as farming and youth groups.

Challenges

1. Sometimes the safety of the staff is at risk from well-known members of a village.
2. Some people are reluctant to have these programs in their villages.
3. In some villages there is 100% illiteracy and so it takes more effort to help them understand.
4. There are cases where even the police are helpless because the parents are uncooperative when they feel the reputation of the family may be damaged.
5. Some girls have been sold by their own relatives.
6. Some staff members have been threatened by children's relatives and traffickers.

Security is a critical need

World's Children is currently raising funds to provide security personnel for the sisters and their team when they travel and make presentations. We want to ensure their safety.

We thank the sisters for their bravery and dedication to end child trafficking in India.

We thank you for supporting them in this heroic endeavor.

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