

2014 - 15

IF I HAD WINGS I WOULD FLY LIKE A
BIRD-FREE...



Sanlaap

Speaking of the Unspoken

Introduction to the Organisation

Born in 1987 and registered under the Societies Act in the year 1989, Sanlaap is a development organization working for the Rescue, Recovery, Restoration, Rehabilitation and Repatriation of victims of trafficking for forced domestic and other kinds of labour, prostitution & sexual abuse and child marriage.

1987 to 1989 was the germinating period for Sanlaap. A group of five members from different sectors of the society came together to form a platform to protest against the violence of women in the society. As society we meant Kolkata and its suburbs, but it took some time to decide on the structure, theme and strategy of the organization. Any organization needs a format and it was decided that we shall have five members among whom only two were full timers and the issue of our work will be 'gender. While more dissection was done we zeroed down to two main activities. To start with we took to training women's organizations to become more gender sensitive and rights based and the second issue was to protest violence against women within homes, in public vision and also within organization where she was a rightful worker. The vision of the organization was to show a Rights based Violence free life for women in the Public and the Private territory where she is not treated as a Human Being but a "Woman".



Becoming an Organization

After the registration of the organization on June 30th 1989 the formal committee took over and two male members who were there were asked to generously leave and Sanlaap became an All Women Organization thriving to change the society.

Individual Consultancy of the founder member brought the organization nearer to women and children who were the vulnerable part of the society. There were two very sensitive action research which brought the organization to the lives of vulnerable women and children who came from the underdeveloped, deprived, marginalized parts of the society. Though the organization was already working on Action Research it decided to try for funding to take its dreams of working on Rights of Women, forward.



Working with Bay of Bengal Programme among the Women Prawn Fry catchers in Purba Medinipur and 24 Parganas (South), we came in touch with brave women, who were young, worked to get prawn fries from the tributaries of Bay of Bengal and stood ten hours in the chest deep water to catch prawn fries which were thin as thread and difficult to see even with very clear eyes. What was interesting was that these women went to the sea alone or in groups and sold their catch to the agents who had given them advances (Dadan) and who exploited their skill and hard work to profit from the sale to bigger agents who owned land and parts of water bodies where these thread like prawn fries were grown. What we learnt was that the agents gave them very poor price and the women were also treated badly by their husbands. These were regular encounters and very few women protested against it. **“Once a small adolescent girl had told me about the meaning of marriage. She had cleared my thoughts about it. According to her marriage was fun,**

Sanlaap is a development organization but at the same time a movement. We have tried to remain innovative but have not changed colours. We have only one main objective. We want to stop human trafficking. Human Trafficking is organized crime against women and children and we are always going to work with this ultimate goal in our mind.



Sanlaap is not a project but a movement. In 1987-98 when it was being stated and planed for registration.

new clothes and good food but lot of violence from the husbands and in-laws which continued throughout the lives of women but the fun did not. So much has been learnt from the involvement with the women, which would not have been possible by reading books or going to the Universities. With these women and girls we ran small education centres to give them basic education, lots of information about being a human with equal rights.

After a few big and small research Sanlaap involved in a research of **“Sexually abused girl children,”** in Kolkata and one district namely 24 Prgs (South), which is adjacent to Kolkata. Choosing families who consented to speak to us was a challenge but we did. In one and half years time we were able to speak to 1600 girls and their families to find out about their abuse. The age group was 10 to 18 yrs and we always took the help of the family and that too of the mothers who took care of that particular child. In some cases we spoke to young girls after talking to the mother and the doctor in charge of the child. The result of the study and the interviews of these girls (minor), exposed us to another side of the society. Here the male members were abusive and exploitative but the girl child was treated as if shed was at fault. Violence, social stigma, loss of face, punishment everything was suffered by the girl who mostly was tricked or violated by forced. What surprised us the most was that some girls after the rape or continued sexual abuse are thrown away by the family and they landed in Red Light Districts of India.

In the brothels, the adult women told us that most of them were brought as a minor, tricked or sexually abused by their relatives, friends, loved ones or just strangers who took advantage of their vulnerability.

This was 1989 and Sanlaap as a team decided to work in the brothel areas to provide justice to women who were abused before coming and again while they lived there.

As an organization Sanlaap went through some change also. The older committee members left and in a conscious decision the first committee with all staff members joined the group with two part time workers from the Red Light Areas, both of whom were experienced members of the community of women in prostitution. In the mean time Sanlaap received financial support from abroad as Indian Government always supported projects against set schemes and all our projects were need based innovative projects to support women and children living in the Red Light Districts of India. Sanlaap ran simple Drop-in-Centres where Women came to share their problems and children came to have fun, food and also get help to their school home work. From our point of view they were kept safe, sent to school and given one good meal. The youth were involved in positive programmes and came to our workshops, sports and also made their own group's.

Stories from 2014 – 2015

SNEHA

The shelter home Sneha is running approved under the J.J. Act. We generally have 100 minors and 50 adults who stay there. Sometimes the numbers go beyond the capacity of the home, particularly the minors but because of the excellent rapport with the CWC (Child Welfare Committee) and DCPS (District Child Protection Scheme) we are able to run the programme.

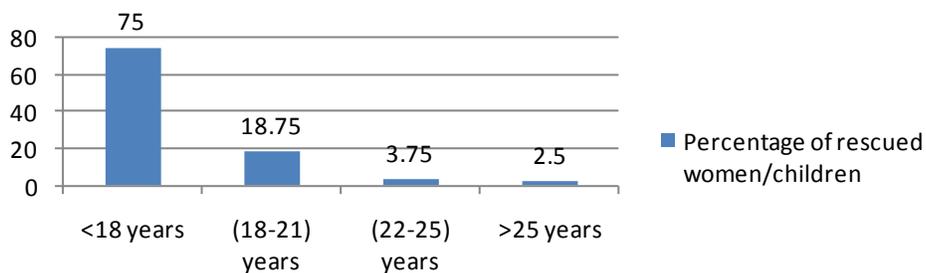


Children who are generally given refuge here are from different vulnerable background. These are children who are trafficked from West Bengal, Nepal, Bangladesh and at times from other states of Bihar and Jharkhand, UP and MP. Presently we get many children from West Bengal trafficked for domestic labour and sexual exploitation. Cases of child marriage

has also has gone up where minor girls ran away with adult men and parents lodge cases of kidnapping and abduction against the groom, boyfriend or the main involved and the child is kept in the shelter for protection.

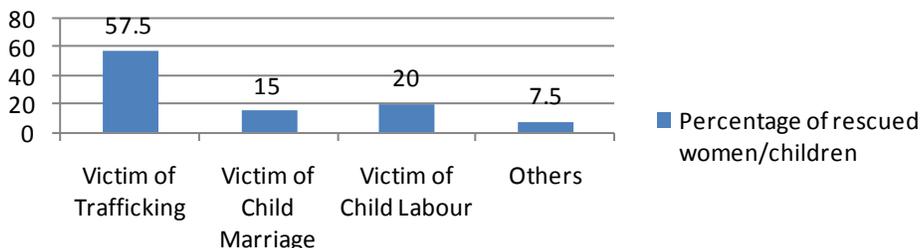
In the last three years we have received cases under 14 Foreigners Act. Children from Myanmar cross the borders of Bangladesh and West Bengal. They travel from the border cities of Myanmar after violence and move with their families. When they are refused residence in Bangladesh they cross the legal borders and enter India to travel to Delhi and Jammu where they are given part-time refuge. After arrest the adults are sent to correctional Homes in West Bengal and the children go to Shelter Home. The adults try to get Refugee status from UNHCR and then try for their children living in shelters.

Bar Graph Showing Different Age Groups of Rescued Women and Children



At Sneha these children learn to read and write in local language (Bangla) and very soon become a part of the home by doing vocational training, going to non-formal school and most of them are non-problematic on a day to day basis.

Bar Graph Showing Different Types of Victimization Faced by Rescued Women and Children



We have personally visited Delhi and Jammu to visit the families of these girls residing in Refugee Camps made by themselves. The Government of India does not have a written mandate to

keep them in the camps but have a non-committal policy to keep them. Police, BSF and Jail authorities are instructed to behave with them peacefully looking at their vulnerability.

The girl children from Bangladesh are rescued by police and other NGOs like IJM and Justice & Care, and they get refuge at Sneha till their cases are going on. On completion Sanlaap Repatriates them back to Bangladesh with the help of the Task Force which is represented by different NGOs and department (Police, BSF, Social Welfare) under the Convenorship of the Principal Secretary, Department of Social Welfare.

‘Sneha’ has a separate house for 50 adult women who are rescued from mainly forced brothel prostitution but also from forced labour. After counselling these young women are sent back home and in case they cannot go back they are given training and later jobs to relocate and work for survival. It needs to be mentioned though that some of the children and adults continue to stay in at Sneha when their families are not identified, when their families discard them or they fail to give us the right address. In the adult home we also have a couple of older women who are HIV positive, very unwell with heart ailments or are mentally disable and cannot talk about their address.



The shelter has vocational training for girls above 16 and some of them do very well. The runaway girls sometimes come with advance pregnancy and the children are delivered while they stay with us. Some of the trafficked girls also come with similar problem. It is really difficult for these children themselves who become mothers and stop every growth of themselves after they deliver their children at the shelter.

The staff at the shelter provides continuous support to these residents to help them with a healthy growth. There are counselors, social workers, house mothers, vocational training teachers, and other necessary staff to look after these girls. There is a continuous stream of new girls coming, older girls going and those who cannot go continue to stay there until they become adult and find their own home.

Apart from the regular staff there are several professionals who provide consultancy and supervisory assistance. These are doctors, lawyers, Researchers, Mental Health

Practitioners and musicians, dancers, theatre workers' who provide immense support to the girls and the organization itself.

SOPAN

The second major programme is distributed in the Red Light Areas of Kolkata. The drop-in-centres, as call it are spaces provided in the Red Light Areas to be used by children who live there. Their mothers are in prostitution and live a life of poverty and servitude for several years. Having a child or two are accidents or incidents that they dream as a woman. Our growing up or social education is such that even these women who do not get 'maternity leave', or support of the family decide to become a mother. This is the only thing that they have of their own. The men who visits them cannot take away this one thing that they have, their children.



We started in Kalighat Red Light Area, famous for its Kali Temple and Red Light Area where there were about 808 houses and 1000 women who lived there. Our experience over there was good and with the suggestion of the mothers living there, we started SOPAN our drop in centres. Over the years we sent children to formal schools and stopped them from becoming drop outs by giving them special educational support, organizing sports regularly and training them in different cultural activities. Once upon a time even 20% children did not complete school but today not even 20% become dropouts.

The activities in Kalighat took us to other Red Light Areas of Sonagachi, Bowbazar, Khidirpore, Tollygunj etc. it needs to be mentioned many other organizations came to work in the RLAs. Over the years Sanlaap has taken up activities like education, training of youth, different issue based awareness classes, livelihood option with older women in prostitution etc. Voices were and are raised in Red Light Areas for the women living there for their

safety, security, awareness and livelihood option. The women living there have formed their own organization and are raising their voice for their own right, government is bringing up several schemes for them and their children, NGOs are working for their awareness – these are some of the successes in the area. Lot has to be done with the children though to stop second generation abuse of these children.

Sopan in Red Light Areas is not a programme but a campaign, a voice to bring change SOPAN is a Bengali word which means ‘Stairs’, and we have been able to lay the stone to bring about strong stairs for women and children to climb towards the light from darkness that exists at the bottom of the staircase.

SANJOJAN

Campaign and Advocacy on Anti-Trafficking Issues & Child Protection

We have always named our programme in a poetic way. Thousands have children and their parents have benefited from Sanlaap programmes in the districts.



In the districts we have worked with the NGOs based in villages and town. Several NGOs are part of our Reintegration programme even today. The Role we play together are various. Sanlaap continuously organizes training and capacity building programmes, awareness raising activities in the Community areas, Capacity Building for community leaders Police and other Law Enforcement Authorities Government Officers. Under this campaign Anti-trafficking Campaign, Advocacy with local & State Government, Training & Capacity Building, Research and Documentation are all joined together and becomes an important part of Sanlaap Programmes.

All Programmes of Sanlaap is related meaningfully to each other. Under this programme all district level NGOs & CBOs play a very important part in the Reintegration of the survivors

of trafficking who come to shelters of Sanlaap. The home-study reports, return of survivors, monitoring of her stay back in the village is done by these CBOs.



The strongest point of this programme is working together with CBOs based in the District Towns and villages. All thoughts of Anti Trafficking Issues of Sanlaap are translated into Action by these organizations.

Under the “CHILD SAFE ORGANIZATION” Programme worked with more than 20 partner organizations. Out of them with 10 partner organizations worked exclusively on Child Protection involving the children and the caregivers form the CCIs run by these organizations. We have also supported them in developing their Child Protection Policies.

Within the state we have organized several training programmes on issues like Unsafe Migration, Trafficking, Child Sexual Abuse & exploitation and Gender with children, youth, caregivers and different other stakeholders.

Special Trainings were organized with Police & Labour Officials on the issue on Migration & Trafficking for Labour in Chattisgarh & Jharkhand.

As an active member of the following networks SANLAAP took part in different advocacy initiatives at local & regional level –

1. ATSEC (Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children)
2. CBATN (Cross Border Anti Trafficking Network)
3. CACT (Campaign Against Child Trafficking)
4. NACG (National Action and Coordination Group)
5. CCRP (Coalition for Child Rights to Protection)
6. CATW (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women)
7. NAWO (National Alliance of Women’s Organizations)

8. MAITREE

Two of our vigilance committees are fully functional in the border areas of Nadia & Dakshin Dinajpur and they are actively dealing with cases of Child Protection & Unsafe Migration.

RESEARCH & DOCUMENTATION

Like every years, this year also we have done Research, Written reports and documented information of each and every girl who pass through our shelter Sneha.

Research done under this programme, Films made, Photograph taken and Training materials developed, printed and distributed give a separate meaning to 'Sanlaap', which if translated means 'Dialogue'.

We have conducted following studies on the nature and extent of sexual violence against children, including (commercial) sexual exploitation, assessing the Child Protection System and vulnerabilities:

- a) *Looking at child protection scenario including legislation and program/policy of Government.*
- b) *Understanding the nature of (sexual) violence against children and sexual exploitation involving young adults*
- c) *Understanding the situation of Sex Tourism in West Bengal.*

We have also completed a study on "Children in forced Sexual Exploitation" in the red light areas of Faridpur, Bangladesh.

We have developed films and taken numerous photos with help of professionals, staff and volunteers and we keep them for our daily use in the campaign.

Some important Research has been done by our staff on issues relevant to us and also in collaboration with Women Studies, University of Kolkata & Jaiprakash Institute of Social Sciences under Vidyasagar University. We have also been a part of research done by scholars from India and other Universities of UK and U.S.A

Several Posters have been printed for awareness programmes taken up in the districts.

Some of the materials are as follows :-

- Film
- Training Module
- Booklet
- Handbook
- Poster



FUNDERS & SUPPORTERS

All the above would not have been possible without the help of funders and supporters. The following Groups have always worked in Partnership.

- One of our most important donors is the **GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL** under its ICPS scheme. Hundred children can stay at the shelter rescued from different situations of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, forced child domestic labour, Missing and recovered children & Rescued children from child marriage.
- The **SCPCR (State Commission for Protection of Child Rights)** and the different **Child Welfare Committees** with whom we regularly work with.
- **CRY (CHILD RIGHTS AND YOU)** supported our campaign at the district level and have also provided part support in the Red Light Area programme.
- **SAVE THE CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL** from Sweden and Denmark funded us part of the cost of the Home and is also in the campaign programme.

- **TDH** has completed the project with us but has expressed their desire to do a feature film which will be taken up very soon.
- **ECPAT INTERNATIONAL and DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN** in Netherlands, and also from their International Secretariat have funded, Action Research, Documentation, training modules and campaign on Child Protection. Justice & Care has supported the organization with legal and food at the shelter home.
- **UNODC & ILO** supported us to do needs assessment, make training modules and train police officers and labour officials on the issue of trafficking for forced domestic labour of Women and children. In three stages, six trainings were organized in three states of Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and Delhi.
- **PLAN INTERNATIONAL** – Supported us to define Cross Border Routes from and to Bangladesh as Sanlaap runs one of the major shelters where Bangladeshi Women and children take refuge. The technical support is being given by DNet (Bangladesh) and Shakti Vahini (New Delhi).
- **UNWOMEN** supported us to train 20 survivors of trafficking who returned Home and has gone back to the School, Family, livelihood training and accepting new opportunities in life. This project also helped us to research the results of rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors after the exploitation and abuse they go through.
- **OFF THE MAT INTO THE WORLD and THE VILLAGE EXPERIENCE** supported us in building a Vocational Training Unit and Working Girls Hostel to the facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of the survivors. The Village Experience also supports Sanlaap in its Income Generation Program and continues to raise and donate funds to us at regular intervals.
- **SHINE A LIGHT** supported us by providing in crucial places like the DIC and Institutional Care Facility of Sanlaap.
- **ALICE IN DOT'S WORLD** contributes towards our Income Generation Program by placing export orders that generate income for the survivors and also aid in their skill building.

- **INDIAN BANK** is our official bank but it is an important part of the programme. Some 25 youth have been employed by them to clean their ATMs. This one hour work provides support to these young people for their further studies. Our bank also helps us to open accounts of all those survivors who have undergone training and are working independently within the shelter or outside earning regularly.
- Last but not the least, Sanlaap would like to thank the group of volunteers, especially Sindhura Sarikonda who founded Sanlaap, North America for their continuous support to Sanlaap through fund raising.

The report would not be complete if we do not write about our talented Committee Members. They are -

Designation	Name	Profession
President	Ms Vijayluxmi Kol	Health Practitioner
Vice President	Dr Arati Basu Sengupta	Gynecologist
Member	Ms Sarbani Goswami	Researcher, JU, Women's Studies
Member	Ms Rahima Khatoon	Senior Development Worker, Nari O Sishu Kendra
Member	Ms Ananya Chatterjee Chakraborty	Professor St. Xaviers & Feminist Filmmaker.
Member	Ms Smita Singh	Senior Mental Health Expert (Just Retired)

The three other members are Indrani Sinha, who is also the Founder Secretary, Tapoti Bhowmick – Treasurer and Rama Datta – Assistant Secretary who are also staff of Sanlaap and work as Director and senior project heads for a long time with Sanlaap.

Our Auditors is Gautam Basu & Co. (Kolkata)

Thank You All...

In this report I would like to thank all our members of the Executive Committee, our general members, Life Members, Staff & Consultants, our funding supporters, Government of West Bengal, Government of India for their extensive support, continuous suggestions in the partnership which has helped us achieve important success and helped us to Save, Protect, Rescue, Rebuild the lives of hundreds of girl children and women.

I would like to thank the newest member of our team “Budh Digital” who helped us design and put up our new website. They are working as a part of our team in making the website interactive and accessible for all of us.

I cannot but end this report without thanking our printers “Creative Associates”, “Ideas M & A” and others who help us with our designing, printing of e-magazines, training modules and posters.

Indrani Sinha