

CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOPS IN THE REGION OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

STOP (Stop Oppression of children and women) held two capacity-building workshops on the prevention of human trafficking in the Manali and Solan areas of Himachal Pradesh on 13th and 15th of March 2023, respectively. In both areas, the sessions began with the introduction of STOP's work as an NGO, the basic objectives of the workshop, and a detailed primer on the laws related to trafficking, child marriage, juvenile justice, etc. A group discussion was also conducted and written and verbal feedback was sought from the participants.

AIMS OF THE WORKSHOP:

The main aim of this workshop was to build a network of organizations with the intent to empower them in the prevention of all forms of violence, especially against women and children. The workshop discussed all the forms and mechanisms through which human trafficking takes place, with a special focus on the region of Himachal Pradesh. The objective of the meeting was to strengthen the capacities of different grassroots stakeholders that work on the prevention of human rights abuses.

METHODOLOGY:

The workshop had two main phases: Planning and Implementation.

Planning: One of the core objectives of the workshop was also to strengthen partnerships and explore synergies with partner organizations. Additionally, the workshop sought to capacitate organizations that are small in scale with regard to their financial resources, as well as those that work at the grassroots within remote and rural villages/towns in the region. The following stages were involved in the planning of the workshop:

- *Lead partner organization identification:* STOP researched and reached out to its network of grassroots organizations that operate within the Himachal Pradesh region. It conducted two virtual consultations to identify the main issues and concerns that are particular to this geographical area. Each organization discussed at length the various challenges that they face at the community level, which were then annotated thematically.
- *Second line of partnership generation:* As part of this consultation, each organization was encouraged to reach out to its own partner organization network (while adhering to the overall criteria for potential participants that had been shared beforehand). In this manner, STOP was able to bring into its partnership fold, several organizations

that registered for the workshop in order to become part of the larger anti-trafficking movement led by STOP.

- *Research and Logistics:* A module was consequently developed by the team at STOP, which was based on its preliminary consultations with relevant organizations. The goal was to develop workshop content which is region specific as well as one that would allow the participants to visualise possible scenarios that occur in their areas. As part of its logistical arrangements, a senior manager from STOP visited the state and its local organizations to determine the most suitable geographic location for conducting and hosting the workshop. Based on the field visit and with assistance from local partner organizations, two locations were identified, which cover the regions of both Manali and Solan.

Implementation: The workshop's content was divided into two sections: informative and experimental.

- *Informative:* The organizations discussed the existing laws that will help them in directly addressing issues of trafficking. They also discussed initiatives, local government schemes and infrastructural benefits that would assist them in undertaking preventive actions to combat human trafficking. The workshop also discussed state level mechanisms that can be instrumental in spearheading preventive activities of human trafficking.
- *Experimental:* Following the feedback that was gathered from each organization and based on preliminary discussions with each team member, STOP developed local scenario-based exercises for the workshop. The aim was to capacitate organizations in understanding not only the word of the law but also its applications to different scenarios. Additionally, these simulation exercises allowed the participant organizations to develop a deeper understanding that is rooted in a learning-by-doing approach facilitated via experience-based sensitization.

MAIN ISSUES DISCUSSED DURING THE WORKSHOPS:

Manali:

- Chronology of typical anti-trafficking measures that involve recovery and repatriation efforts
- Importance of preventative strategies that are rooted in the building of strong coalitions
- Complexities of socio-economic reasons that contribute to the various vulnerabilities related to trafficking, such as the search for better and more secure livelihoods and job opportunities
- The ramifications of worsening sex ratios that lead to trafficking for marriage
- Child marriages, lack of preventative measures and inadequate follow up by local law enforcement bodies, which are compounded by societal hurdles such as a tacit

acceptance of such practices by local governance bodies such as the village panchayats

- Dangers of “Re-trafficking” that occur when government bodies like panchayats and Women’s Commission members stop intervening without having set up a robust monitoring mechanism

Solan:

- STOP’s track record of working on anti-trafficking measures
- Links between RTI (Right to Information) and cybercrime
- Efforts led by the Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University in tackling cybercrimes
- Instances of “Dulhan (Wife) Trafficking”
- Importance of community resilience and monitoring networks that can alert authorities to case of missing children

FEEDBACK RECEIVED FROM WORKSHOPS IN SOLAN AND MANALI:

1. Network proactively to keep in constant contact and increase joint preparedness for all the complexities that are related to anti-trafficking measures.
2. Empowering the Mahila Mandals and educating school children and increasing community awareness about human trafficking.
3. Involve AHTU (Anti Human Trafficking Unit) and other police officers to implement relevant laws.
4. Better use of social media to increase awareness.
5. Discuss this issue more strategically at NGO and village level meetings, and at district/region-wide workshops.

OUTCOMES:

The outcomes of this workshop were intended to empower the participant organisations in multiple ways:

- A WhatsApp group was created by connecting all the members who had attended the STOP workshop, to allow for a mutually supportive network that facilitates regular and responsive communication.
- Training manuals were sent to the respective organizations via email.
- A resource directory is currently being created based on the information gathered about the work of the various member organizations.

WAY FORWARD:

STOP organized a short “Special Session”, regarding the ways in which the learnings from these workshops can be applied to benefit local communities. Two issues were highlighted:

1. A strong Prevention Strategy was proposed by both the audience and the panellists as a structured way for dealing with crimes specific to trafficking of all types and genders.
2. Some of the respondents requested direct funding from STOP, with which to start small projects centred on trafficking. While that wasn’t immediately feasible, it was proposed that small public gatherings be held within impacted communities on a regular basis to spread the anti-trafficking discourse widely.

IDENTIFICATION OF MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:

STOP first researched the work and outreach of the member organizations online, and then contacted them via phone and WhatsApp. A plan was formulated to conduct the workshops on the 13th and 15th of March 2023 for Manali and Solan respectively.

LIST OF PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATIONS:

Manali:

1. PARAYAS Society
2. DRIVES NGO
3. CARE NGO
4. Manav Seva Sansthan
5. Parvatiya Jan Shiksha Avam Vikas Sangathan
6. SAHYOG
7. Himproductive Society
8. SATHI (Social Awareness Through Human involvement)
9. Sarav Shakti Sagam Ramshar
10. Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan
11. Himachal Jan Vikas Sahyog Sansthan
12. SNS Foundation
13. ARTI
14. SHW
15. Youth Club
16. SARDHA
17. Sarva Shakti Sangam
18. Samajik Kalyan Avam Vikas Mandal
19. ARUSHI GRAMIN SANSTHAN

Solan:

1. Human Welfare society
2. Uthan NGO
3. Layul Tribal's Welfare Association
4. Samarpan Association
5. Handimachal Therapy Centre
6. Pratibha Women Welfare Society
7. Child Welfare Committee Kullu
8. Saath organization
9. Lok Chetna Manch Ranikhet
10. Chetna Samiti Kullu
11. CASP
12. Lahari Sangam Kala Agam Rojgar Srijan Manch
13. Shira NGO Kullu
14. PVKS NGO

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

Forty-five grassroots organizations attended this workshop.

VENUES:

Himani Resorts in Solan and Manali Resorts in Manali were chosen as two different venues to conduct the workshop.

REPORT PREPARED AND EDITED BY:

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