



MY CHOICES
FOUNDATION

IMPACT REPORT #9

2020



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BE FEARLESS FOR ME

MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER, ELCA GROBLER

To be fearless for the women and girls was what drove our team at My Choices Foundation more than ever during COVID-19. Each one of us had to be fearless.

2020 was a deeply painful year. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed one of the deepest cracks in our society: our continued failure to protect women and girls. All crimes against women and girls showed a sharp rise, from domestic violence, child sexual exploitation, child labour, sexual harassment, to trafficking. These crimes are dramatically underreported.

COVID-19 created a pandemic within a pandemic. Women had to choose between going out on the streets and being killed by the virus or staying at home and being destroyed by abuse.

The unprecedented protective measures to contain the spread of pandemic has made home a dangerous place for thousands of women and children. They are fighting for their survival from their perpetrators in the prisons of their homes. In parallel, human traffickers got creative, tweaked their 'business models' and abused technology to recruit and exploit victims. School closures led to increased crimes against children such as cyber-trafficking, grooming and live streaming of child sexual abuse.

“
*True peace is not merely an
absence of tension and abuse.
It is the presence of justice.*
”

- MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

We understand that the stride towards ending violence against women and girls is a long-winding road with many stumbling blocks. Honouring the words of Dr. King, we continued to march on, armed with resilience and hope amidst all adversities. Along the way, COVID-19 has taught us many life-changing lessons as well.

We have learnt how to be stronger, wiser and kinder. More than ever our team had to see through the eyes of the women and girls we serve to understand how better to help in these challenging times.

As a team, we knew that the women were counting on us to continue our work and we were counting on them. Uplifting women and girls is the greatest gift we can give them, the gift of providing them with choices to live a life free from abuse.

2020 was a year of collective commitment and passion that has been so evident from our donors, partners and supporters. All our existing core donors concurred with our COVID-19 response plans. Overnight, we had to become a relief agency to the thousands of families we serve, not just focusing on our gender-based violence programmes but also providing food and hygiene relief supplies.

We distributed essential supplies to more than 13,000 people, charted out new digital strategies and harnessed the power of technology. We discovered new ways to reach vulnerable populations, we launched an additional domestic violence helpline, we strengthened our Implementing Partners (grassroots NGOs) that are based in eight states of India and we kept going.

To our partners, donors, supporters and volunteers, I would like to take a moment to thank each one of you for your generous contribution and continued support. Your acts of kindness gives us the courage and keeps us going. I hope you are inspired by the impact you have made on thousands of families and enabled transformation in their lives. We are honoured to work alongside each of you.

YOUR ACT OF KINDNESS GIVES US COURAGE AND KEEPS US GOING.

My sincere and deepest gratitude to the team at My Choices Foundation for the courage and passion you bring to your work each and everyday - regardless of the grief and pain you have to witness in so many lives.

WE HONOUR YOU AND THANK YOU FOR BEING BRAVE EVERYDAY.

I would like to end with this quote by C.S. Lewis: *"Do not dare not to dare"*

Thank you to each one out there who is part of the fight to end gender-based violence. May we never stop to be daring to bring about peace, respect and equality for all humankind.



FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR
MY CHOICES FOUNDATION





VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IS A GRAVE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION

Of all the depravities that afflict humankind, the most terrifying reality is the violence against women and girls. The COVID-19 pandemic has multiplied its effect. Official statistics show an upsurge in all types of violence against women and girls - from an alarming rise in domestic violence cases to harassment on the empty streets to cyberbullying and a high volume of sex trafficking.

On a global scale,

7 in 10 victims of modern-day slavery are female.

3 in 5 women that were killed in 2017, were killed by an intimate partner or family member.

71% of known victims of human trafficking were women and girls in 2014.

99% of reported victims of commercial sexual exploitation are women and girls.

84% of those estimated to be living in a forced marriage were female in 2016.

1 MILLION child victims of commercial sexual exploitation are girls under the age of 18.

650 MILLION girls and women alive today have been married before the age of 18.

Sources: Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, International Labour Organisation, Global Study on Homicide, Gender-related killing of women and girls, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, Why we must end child marriage, UNICEF.



SEX TRAFFICKING - SHATTERED DREAMS AND STOLEN LIVES

Every few minutes, a girl is trafficked in India and forced into sexual slavery. Only 1% of these girls are being rescued. Sex trafficking is mostly invisible and under-reported. With the coronavirus pandemic that has put the world on lockdown and people feeling uncertain about the future, traffickers have adjusted their business model to the 'new normal'. They capitalize the opportunity to target vulnerable populations ranging from out-of-school children to jobless people, especially by abusing modern technologies for grooming and trapping the victims.

1 in 130 women and girls globally are living in modern-day slavery.

99% of all trafficked victims of forced sexual exploitation are women and girls.

84% of all forced marriage victims are women and girls.

40% of all sex slaves in India are children.

It is estimated that of the 15 million women that are victims of sex trafficking in India each year, 40% are adolescents and children, some as young as nine years old. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), from the 15,379 humans trafficked in 2016 in India, 9,034 were children below the age of 18 years. Among these, 4,911 were girls and 4,123 were boys.

SEX TRAFFICKING

Sex trafficking is defined as modern slavery, in which victims are kidnapped, coerced, deceived, transported or detained for commercial sexual exploitation.



Traffickers are always on the look-out for people living in poverty, lacking employment opportunities, following age-old harmful cultural practices, and encountering greater socio-economic divides. It is exacerbated where the rule of law is weak.

Although boys and men are also victims, the majority of trafficked victims are women and girls. Held in captivity, women and girls are sexually abused, exploited and brutally raped everyday.

Over the years, the Indian government has adopted several important measures and have instituted stronger laws. But, significant efforts are needed to raise awareness about the legal aspects of sex trafficking and effective implementation is essential

when the situation calls for it. Sex trafficking is exploding globally and is now one of the most lucrative organised crime industries world-wide. It is widely underreported and the actual toll is unknown. Waking up to the reality and making the business of trafficking unprofitable is what we need to focus on.

Sources: Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, International Labour Organisation, 2016 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2020 The Freedom Fund Report, Zero Traffic: Eliminating Sex Trafficking in India, 2014 Dasra.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - AN UNSPOKEN REALITY WITH NO EASY ANSWERS

Beneath the surface of the coronavirus pandemic, lurks a grave human rights violation of women. Domestic violence is one of the cruellest blows to the dignity of women. It has always been an acute issue in India and the COVID-19 lockdown measures have exacerbated the situation. Experts have characterised it as a 'shadow pandemic', a 'ticking time bomb' or a 'perfect storm'.

40% of married Indian women face abuse and violence in their homes.

2 in 3 women who are abused will never speak about the abuse.

3 in 4 women who are abused will never seek help.

1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner violence in their lifetime.

We are confronted with the horrific reality that countless women and children are entrapped in the toxic home environment and fighting for their lives from the brutalities of the perpetrators. The pandemic and stay-at-home mandatory restrictions have created increased isolation for women with their violent partners and separates victims from people and resources that can best help them. It makes it harder for them to escape to safety - she has no choice.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is the most pervasive form of violence against women, but least reported or recognised. Family is considered the most secure place for women but domestic violence happens within the four walls of the home. It's normally committed by someone close to the victim - could be a father, brother, an uncle, a natal family, matrimonial or live-in partner. Domestic violence occurs in four forms: physical, verbal, sexual and economical.

The data is deeply troubling. The National Commission for Women (NCW) recorded a 100% rise in the cases of domestic violence within one week of the lockdown, that is, from March 23, 2020 to April 1, 2020. But the majority of cases are never reported and often hidden from view. Many victims don't report the violence because of feelings of shame, guilt, embarrassment or fear.

Children are the hidden victims of domestic violence and it severely scars them for the rest of their lives. They will exhibit violent behaviour, or suffer from depression or severe anxiety. Research shows that over half of the Indian men, women, boys and girls believe that a man hitting his wife is a justifiable expression of his masculinity.

Sources: 2017 Key facts on violence against women, World Health Organisation, UN Women, UN Commission on the Status of Women, 2/28/0, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241564625>, World Health Organisation, National Family Health Survey - 4



**VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN AND GIRLS IS
THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE
PANDEMIC IN THE
WORLD. IT TOUCHES ALL
OF US. IT TOUCHES
GENERATIONS OF
INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES
AND COMMUNITIES. IT'S
REACH IMPACTS ALL OF
US.**

OUR ORGANISATION

OUR MISSION

We aim to give women, children and families choices to live lives free from violence, abuse and sexual exploitation.



OUR STRATEGY

WE WORK TO FULFILL THE MISSION BY:

- Empowering women and girls to become change agents in their own families and communities.
- Educating at-risk women and girls, families and communities.
- Ensuring a supportive environment for victims and their families.



OUR APPROACH

Our four-pillar approach is grounded on the theory of change and guides on the transformation we want to see in India.

OPERATION PEACEMAKER - STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

PREVENT THROUGH
AWARENESS

PROTECT SURVIVOR'S
SAFETY

PROVIDE SUPPORT
THROUGH INTERVENTIONS

PREPARE
MEN TO BE ALLIES



OPERATION RED ALERT - END SEX TRAFFICKING

EXPOSE BY
MASS MEDIA

ERADICATE AT
GRASSROOTS LEVELS

EMPOWER BY
NATIONAL HELPLINE

EQUIP
VILLAGE CUSTODIANS



OUR VALUES

Our values are the foundation of our actions and decisions. It reflects our priorities, attitudes and perspectives we bring to work.



TRANSFORMATION

We believe that a better world is often just a choice away.



PASSION

We are kind, caring, brave and passionate.



COURAGE

We act with courage, ask tough questions and challenge the status quo.



INNOVATION

We always strive to find new and innovative ways to solve society's tough problems.



ACCOUNTABILITY

We do the right thing and take responsibility for our actions.



EQUALITY

We treat all with respect, dignity and integrity.



PARTNERSHIPS

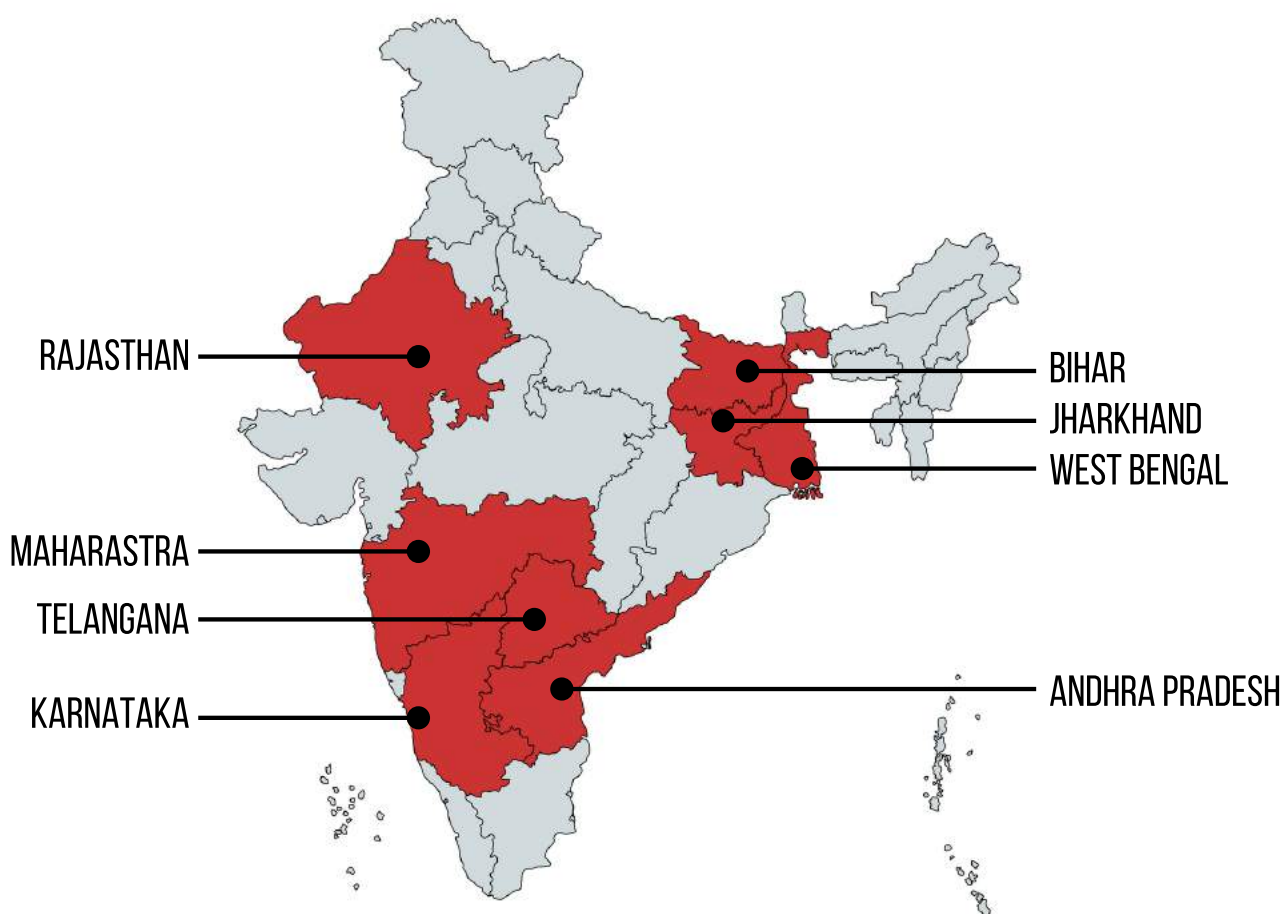
We trust the power of partnerships and collaboration.



WHERE WE WORK

INDIA

8 STATES AND 105 IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS





OUR IMPACT



STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



232

PeaceMakers
trained



10,385

Families
impacted
through
counselling



98,260

Women
educated



82,592

Young People
educated



END SEX TRAFFICKING



4,607

Safe Village
Programs
conducted



24,98,587

People
educated



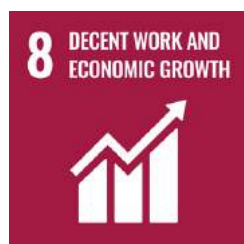
12,32,830

Comic
Books
distributed



47,284

Helpline
calls



**Through our work, we are addressing Sustainability Development Goals (SDG) - 5,8,16 and 17.*



HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020

JANUARY

330 CHILDREN RESCUED AND REUNITED WITH THEIR FAMILIES

Their faces said it all when they met their families. Rescuing and reuniting children with their families is a mammoth task in India, a country of 1.3 billion people. But we have been able to rescue more than 330 children and have safely reunited them through our partnership with CHILDLINE India Foundation.

FEBRUARY

GENDER SENSITISATION TRAINING FOR 2,000 POLICE PERSONNEL

We trained more than 2,000 police personnel at the Cyberabad Commissionerate to create systemic change about ideas and perceptions surrounding gender-based stereotypes and violence. It addressed the importance of empathy and sensitivity when dealing with female victims.

MARCH

ONLINE AND TELEPHONE COUNSELLING SESSIONS BEGAN

With the COVID-19 lockdown, Operation PeaceMaker began online and telephone counselling services and provided assistance to 1,080 domestic violence survivors. Using the PeaceTracker software (our in-house built data-system), we reached out to existing clients to make sure they were safe and available to provide any services for people in need.

APRIL

COVID-19 RESPONSE: RELIEF, AWARENESS AND REBUILDING

As COVID-19 brought unprecedented challenges, we adapted and stepped up.

We provided essential supplies to more than 13,000 people, impacting 5169 families. Following safety protocols, our anti-trafficking arm, Operation Red Alert conducted awareness programmes in over 400 villages.



MAY

'MOTHERS WITHOUT A CHOICE' DIGITAL CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

Drawing attention to the increasing cases of domestic violence during the COVID-19 lockdown, we launched a digital campaign 'Mothers without a choice' with Dentsu Aegis Network India. We aimed to make people aware of the fear with which women live and provide them with a choice to live life on their terms.

JUNE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE LAUNCHED

With all doors shut and homes becoming increasingly dangerous for women (as they were locked indoors with abusive partners with COVID-19 restrictions), it was essential to ramp up our counselling services. We launched an additional helpline number 1800 212 9131 for women to seek help or counselling and report domestic violence.

JULY

ASIAN ANTI-TRAFFICKING FORUM HELD

Marking the World Day against Trafficking of Persons on 20 July, we conducted our second annual Asian Anti-Trafficking Forum online due to the pandemic situation. The Forum created a platform for our Implementing Partners, government officials, law enforcement agencies, strategic partners and other stakeholders to discuss various issues around human trafficking.

AUGUST

RADIO AND VIDEO SERIES LAUNCHED TO COMBAT SEX TRAFFICKING

COVID-19 restricted our field programmes. Quickly adapting to the situation, we focused on mass media to educate the communities on the prevention of sex trafficking and child marriages. With 3,495 hours of programming time, we reached 10,55,466

people across 100 villages with our radio programmes. Our video series on YouTube garnered thousands of views.



SEPTEMBER

WE GREW AND EXPANDED OUR REACH

In response to the rise in domestic violence cases during the lockdown, Operation PeaceMaker recognised the need to expand its services beyond Telangana by leveraging the extensive Implementing Partner-base (105 Implementing Partners of Operation Red Alert) to provide free counselling services. Operation Red Alert introduced Nodal Teacher (volunteers of our Safe Village Program). The online training sessions were attended by more than 400 volunteers.

OCTOBER

MARKED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Aiming to create awareness about domestic violence and to drive positive attitudinal changes among youth, we organised 2 webinars that were attended by more than 100 participants. We have also conducted 20 awareness programmes across four states to help more than 400 women understand the signs of abuse and unhealthy relationships.



NOVEMBER

CHOTU'S CHILDHOOD FILM RELEASED

In partnership with Dentsu Aegis Network, we launched a powerful film #ChotuKaChildhood to initiate a powerful battle in the fight against child labour and abuse on Children's Day. It exposes the harsh truths of child labour in the country and encourages everyone to report the crime if they witness it. This film garnered more than 93,000 views on Instagram which is one of the many elements of our work to see the transformation of India into a safe place for children.

DECEMBER

650 SAFE VILLAGE PROGRAMS CONDUCTED

Our Safe Village Program, centred on prevention-focused and positive-messaging strategy aims to mobilise communities and support children, families and communities to recognise the risks of trafficking and resist the approaches of traffickers. More than 650 Safe Village Programs were conducted in high-risk vulnerable villages in 2020. With knowledge and collective action, we believe that we can end large scale sex trafficking in India by 2025.













OUR PROGRAMMES



PREVENT THROUGH AWARENESS

-  Community awareness programmes
-  School and college programmes
-  SuperSmart Shakti Girls' Network



PROVIDE SUPPORT THROUGH INTERVENTIONS

-  Counselling and support centres
-  Legal aid
-  PeaceMaker support
-  Lotus Fund
-  PeaceCrafters

PROTECT SURVIVOR'S SAFETY



-  Lotus Safe Home

PREPARE MEN TO BE ALLIES

-  Asli Champions Boys' Safety Network
-  PeaceChampions





EXPOSE BY MASS MEDIA

-  Community radio programmes
-  Online digital learning modules




EMPOWER BY NATIONAL HELPLINE

-  Helpline
-  CHILDLINE 1098

ERADICATE AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL

-  Safe Village Program
-  Implementing Partners

EQUIP VILLAGE CUSTODIANS

-  Rakshaks
-  Nodal teachers
-  Gram Mithras

OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has made radical changes to our daily lives and the vulnerable population are the hardest hit. While health and economic situations have worsened at a rapid pace, the pandemic has heightened the dangers of gender-based violence and sharpened inequalities. The widespread stay-at-home orders force women to shelter in place with their abusers, often with tragic consequences. School closures coupled with access to smartphones have increased the vulnerability of children – girls and boys – to online sexual abuse and risks of being trafficked. Overall, COVID-19 is a multiplier of vulnerability, bringing new threats to already battered communities.

We worked tirelessly to keep pace with the changing COVID-19 guidance, and we acted with understanding and compassion to keep our teams safe while continuing our work. With critical support from our donors and in close co-operation with our on-ground Implementing Partners, we put measures in place to address immediate needs in vulnerable communities and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls.

Our interventions focused on four priorities:

- Ensure essential supplies – food and personal protective supplies
- Provide health and safety advice – educating communities on COVID-19 prevention
- Address domestic violence – awareness, prevention and helplines
- Fight sex trafficking – targeted and tailored behavioural change initiatives

ENSURE ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES

Millions of livelihoods have taken a hit with COVID-19 prevention measures – though it is essential to curb the spread, it restricted small traders and casual workers from earning a living. Seeking to reach people in critical need, we joined hands with our 105 Implementing Partners (community-based organisations) across eight states, covering 500 villages.

We reached 13,000 people, impacting more than 5,169 families. Each family received a monthly ration: 3 kg of rice, 3 kg of wheat flour, 3 kg of pulses, 2 litres of oil, 1 kg of potatoes, 1 kg of onions, 1 kg of sugar, 1 kg of salt, garlic, chilly powder, turmeric powder and other spices to cover a one month ration and detergent powder. The pack also included personal protective and medical supplies such as 3 bars of soap, masks and sanitation bottles.



PROVIDE HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVICE

Long-standing systematic health and social inequalities have put vulnerable rural communities at increased risk of getting COVID-19. So, we focused on positivity-induced prevention messages to reduce the risk of the pandemic community spread.

With creative advisors and subject matter experts, we prepared easy-to-understand creative guidance materials to communicate the advisories of COVID-19 prevention. Usage of cartoons, illustrations and infographics simplified the messaging for people of all backgrounds to understand the importance of precautions such as frequent handwashing, social distancing, wearing masks and other essential things to be followed to prevent the spread. The materials were distributed in six languages - English, Bengali, Hindi, Kannada, Marathi and Telugu. Communities received an in-depth briefing about the pandemic and preventive measures.

ADDRESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Most women are experiencing their worst nightmare - being locked in with their abusers, following the strict lockdown measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. With all doors shut, they had no place to receive help.

Our expert domestic violence counsellors acted proactively. They analysed the client base to identify every woman who was in need of assistance and reached out to existing and new clients via telephone using our custom-built PeaceTracker software. We began online counselling sessions for women and families. Simultaneously, our army of PeaceMakers - local women trained to be first responders to domestic violence - reached out to women in their communities and ensured that the impact of lockdown was minimal.

We ramped up our counselling services by launching an additional national helpline number 1800 212 9131 for women and girls to seek help or counselling and report domestic violence. In addition to Telegana, we expanded our work into four additional states - Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and West Bengal.



This photograph is for illustration purposes only.

As the pandemic restricted field activities, we moved our operations online. We conducted webinars to create awareness about gender-based violence, mental health, toxic masculinity and much more. Specific WhatsApp groups were created to continuously engage with our beneficiaries and provide access to information about gender-based violence and necessary services.

FIGHT SEX TRAFFICKING

Numbers clearly showed a surge in the number of people at-risk in addition to the thousands before the pandemic. Countless women and children continue to face threats. Online sexual exploitation is on the rise, with traffickers shifting their focus to children who attend school virtually.

Using community radio networks, we focused on sensitising local populations to the issue of child trafficking and exploitation with 'Listen and Act' radio spots, skits, features and interviews. We reached communities with digital campaigns, 'Knowledge Series' videos, webinars and social media. We increased access to essential services, including a national anti-sex trafficking helpline.

Marking the World Day against Trafficking of Persons on 20 July, we organised the first annual online Asian Anti-Forum. The Forum brought together experts from various fields, having a shared vision to end all forms of trafficking in India. It was a platform to discuss various issues around human trafficking and why it is all the more important during the pandemic. We shared evidence, provided perspectives and raised a collective voice for a trafficking-free nation.

Our community volunteers - Rakshaks (community members who keep a watchful eye in the village), Gram Mithras (Friends of the village) and Nodal

Teachers (Teachers in local schools) - were trained to adopt the reach using digital platforms. We conducted webinars, training programmes and panel discussions to continue the dialogue on prevention and positive messaging approach to end sex trafficking in India.





OPERATION PEACEMAKER

PILLAR 1: PREVENT THROUGH AWARENESS

COMMUNITY AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

We strive to reduce the suffering of women and children as a result of other societal ills such as domestic violence, child marriages, infanticide, selective foeticide, sexual abuse, poor female health and sex trafficking through multiple awareness programmes.

Our Basti meetings (community meetings) with women creates awareness about domestic violence, child sexual abuse, their legal rights, and mechanisms for help and supports them in protecting themselves as well as their children. Another arm of our community awareness programmes is PeaceMakers. PeaceMakers are women from the community who can be the facilitators of social change. We adopt a unique and innovative approach to raise an army of grassroots community women by providing professional counselling and training programs. We equip them to be at the forefront in challenging gender-based violence and creating meaningful change in the community. Owned by local community women, the initiative has proven to be effective in changing the perspective of violence and sustains long-term impact in the community.

The COVID-19 lockdown pushed us to go digital. Focused Whatsapp groups were created with our beneficiaries, where our team facilitated online sessions on domestic violence and child safety. We also conducted online sessions to help women understand the signs of abuse and educate them about the help available during the pandemic. These tailor-made messages were curated based on a specific demographic.

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE PROGRAMMES

The school and college programmes aim to end current abuse and prevent future exploitation of children and young people. We have created a tailor-made framework to raise awareness about various issues relating to gender-based violence. Our approach to promote gender equality includes easy-to-understand methods that focus on helping children and students break free from gender-based stereotypes.

These programmes are usually conducted in classrooms with constant interaction with students, but in 2020 we moved online complying with safety measures of the pandemic. We continued to raise awareness on how to keep themselves safe, where to reach out for help in times



of need, understanding the signs of violence and empowered them with tools for assistance and redressal mechanisms.

SUPERSMART SHAKTI GIRLS' NETWORK

The SuperSmart Shakti Girls' Safety Network prioritises the safety of girls through creating awareness about gender-based violence and connecting them to a strong peer network. We adopt

a multi-fold approach: connect girls to a peer network, equip them to recognise risks and resist pressures of early marriage, hazardous work and dropping

out of school. During the lockdown, we continued to support our Shakti girls by creating Whatsapp groups with consent and shared information regularly regarding child sexual abuse, identifying signs of abuse and various redressal mechanisms available for assistance.



PILLAR 2: PROVIDE SUPPORT THROUGH INTERVENTIONS

COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT CENTRES

To assist women in their journey of living a life free from violence and abuse, we run counselling and support centres in the state of Telangana to offer safety, security and life-changing resources to victims of domestic violence and their family members. These are the safe spaces where women and children receive intensive emotional and psychological support as soon as they arrive.

Women and girls come to us with problems ranging from their husband's (or father's) alcoholism to sexual abuse and dowry harassment. Our counsellors strive to make the clients learn to keep themselves safe, learn effective coping skills, rebuild their self-identities and mitigate trauma.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE



1800 212 9131



9333 40 4141



CHANDRA FINDS HER STRENGTH BECAUSE OF DONORS LIKE YOU!

"I feel much stronger and more confident now. I will no longer remain silent to abuse. All thanks to My Choices Foundation for helping me start a new life. It's a good feeling to know that someone is there to protect us and steer us in the right direction. To put it in a nutshell, My Choices Foundation has had an immense impact on my life and changed it for the best", said 30-year-old Chandra from the Southern part of India.

These are the words that keep us going in what we do.

Chandra lost her mother at a young age because of her father's abusive behaviour. Her father was abusive towards Chandra as well. But she studied hard so she can have a better life. She graduated successfully and was beginning to experience freedom. Her happiness didn't last long. The abuse continued in her marriage life too. She felt hopeless and helpless.

Over a period of time with piled-up abusive situations and environment, she began to accept that abuse is usual in our society. Though she got a good job, her husband didn't allow her to work. Years passed by and her family grew. She gave birth to two children in

a span of three years. She wanted a peaceful environment for her kids to grow up in, but her husband's abuse continued.

Keeping her children's well-being in mind, Chandra gathered courage and reported the abuse to the police. Though her husband stopped his violent behaviour, she felt empty inside her heart. She wanted to be a responsible mother and provide a good life for her children, but she had nowhere to turn. She lost touch with all her friends and shut herself in.

That's when she heard about My Choices Foundation from one of her acquaintances. Our expert team of counsellors helped her to recognise her strengths. It took hours of counselling for Chandra to open up. We encouraged her to socialise, breaking the stigma of abused women in society. She gathered herself, found the courage and became fiercely protective of her children and herself.

Now, Chandra is ready to start afresh. She wouldn't have found her strength without the support of donors like you. We are grateful and humbled for your support to help many women like Chandra.



This photograph is for illustration purposes only.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced many women to be locked in with their abusers and to help these women and families, we started remote counselling sessions online and via telephone. We launched a domestic violence national helpline number 1800 212 9131 and expanded our services beyond Telangana and into Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and West Bengal, recognising the need for domestic violence awareness and prevention during the lockdown.

LEGAL AID

Operation PeaceMaker believes in the power of the justice system to help improve the lives of people in need. Every day, our legal team of experts use their experience, knowledge and understanding to ensure our clients receive the best legal guidance.

Our legal team comprises of three advocates, who serve three districts – Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy and Warangal – Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, with a total of seven courts – Warangal,

Nampally, Kukatpally, Rajendra Nagar, Medchal, L.B.Nagar and Malkajgiri.

We provide free legal advice for domestic violence and child sexual abuse cases, divorce proceedings filed by the spouse, eviction notices of elderly people, child custody and others. We help our clients at every stage of the process, giving specialist advice on the strength of cases, and guiding them through the proceedings at court and final judgement. In the case of Muslim women clients, laws allow for extrajudicial remedies for seeking a divorce. Our legal team supports in drawing out Matrimonial Settlement Agreements to protect them from favoured agreements.

Since the inception of My Choices Foundation, we equip women with knowledge and courage to be change agents and make a choice on their own to live violence and abuse-free lives. Once they decide to speak up and break the chains of abuse, we provide them with complete legal support through our Operation PeaceMaker program.



This photograph is for illustration purposes only.

SARITA'S WALK TOWARDS FREEDOM

Sarita was married at 21. She didn't know that her husband was an alcoholic when they got married. 11 years have passed with sleepless nights, broken bones and dried tears because of high levels of violence, harassment and abuse. When she was pregnant, she was badly beaten up by her husband and in-laws. Her mobile phone and money were snatched and she was pushed out of her home in the middle of the night. With no money, she stayed by the door all night.

Hearing about the situation from neighbours, her parents arrived and took her to their place. After the delivery, the two families met and counselled Sarita's husband. He assured both families that he wouldn't be violent anymore. But it didn't even last for two weeks. Sarita felt helpless and suicidal but accepted it as her fate. The situation worsened and she attempted suicide, but she was saved at the hospital. She moved to her parents' home and found a job at a supermarket. Since her husband's harassment continued, she

approached a lawyer for help. But the lawyer took her money and disappeared. She was completely shattered and had no idea what to do next.

That's when she came into contact with one of the PeaceMakers in the community. After hours and days of counselling, she understood the negative impacts of domestic violence – it was a journey of discovery as well as a ray of hope for her.

Sarita gathered courage and with the help of OPM's legal team, filed a case of domestic violence and felt empowered enough to want to put an end to the relationship. She has taken steps to settle the matter amicably through mutual consent and is all set to start a new life free from violence, abuse and exploitation.

Now, she lives peacefully with her lovely two daughters. She inspires women in her community to speak up against violence and shows that women can lead a peaceful life once we stand up for ourselves.

PEACEMAKER SUPPORT

To create sustainable support for the survivors, our PeaceMakers go on field follow-ups, accompanying survivors to the police stations, hospitals or shelter homes. They keep a close eye on every survivor's situation and implement the follow-up plans to ensure the client is safe and live a violence-free life. Every day, our PeaceMakers engage in hundreds of conversations with women and children who need our help. During this process, they listen to the client in confidence without making judgments. They help the clients understand themselves better and come to terms with what has happened, and gather the courage to seek help from

counsellors and the legal team. At our centres, clients get all required support to end abuse and live the lives of their own choices. PeaceMakers are instrumental in the client's empowerment journey.

During the lockdown, many of the women who were seeking assistance from us faced a financial crisis due to the loss of jobs in the families. They were in desperate need for food and other essential items. Our PeaceMakers went above and beyond in the role within the community to identify families in distress and supported them by providing essentials through the distribution drive organised by us.

SRIDEVI AND SUMALATHA STOOD UP FOR SHARADA

Today, Sharada lives peacefully and cherishes every moment with her children because our PeaceMaker Sumalatha made a telephone call during the lockdown, as part of our COVID-19 response plan.

Sharada's life turned upside down after a few years of marriage. Her husband's behaviour began to change violently. It started as verbal abuse and progressed rapidly to physical and emotional abuse. One day, he stopped providing for her and their three children. No one knew what happened within the four walls of that home. It was the scariest time for Sharada and her children.

She filed a police complaint, but it wasn't taken seriously. They worked out things again and she trusted him. Within no time, he began to harass her and stripped away all her money. She moved out and worked as domestic help to provide for her children. But her husband continued to threaten her life as well as her children's lives.

That's when our PeaceMakers stepped in to help her. Sharada received the much-needed counselling and discovered her identity again. Our Legal Team explained all legal procedures and supported her to file a

maintenance case (financial support for her and her children).

When everything seemed to be going well, the COVID-19 pandemic hit her hard. She lost her job and experienced a terrible fall and injured her leg. With no money and lock-down restrictions, she couldn't make a trip to a doctor. As part of our COVID-19 response plan and follow-up process, our PeaceMakers called her.

Braving the lockdown and with full support from police personnel, our PeaceMakers were at Sharada's doorstep the next day with monthly rations. Thanks to the help of our donors to the Lotus fund (Domestic violence survivor fund), we were able to provide financial support to Sharada to restart her life. Her husband's continuous harassment during the lockdown was stopped by our PeaceMaker's intervention.

Sharada is determined to fight her abuse every step of the way with the help of Operation PeaceMaker and our legal team. Our PeaceMakers like Sridevi and Sumalatha are breaking the chains of abuse and helping hundreds of women live violence-free everyday with their commitment, passion and dedication.



LOTUS FUND - A FUND TO START OVER FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

The Lotus Fund is a start-up fund for women who have chosen to start a new life free from an abusive relationship. We provide financial support for essential items, advances on rental, and skill and vocational development. Equipping women to stand on their own feet is essential to ensure that they can support themselves and their children going forward. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lotus Fund helped us to support women and children with medical supplies and essential items for day-to-day living. It encourages women to breathe freedom in times of despair.

PEACECRAFTERS - THE PATH TO RESTORATION AND A PURPOSE

The PeaceCrafter Programme empowers women by providing them with full-time employment as tailors at our support centres. A group of highly skilled women creates beautiful silk apparel from recycled sarees to support the work of My Choices Foundation in the community. These women work from our support centres based in Hyderabad.

Each piece is 100% unique and tells a beautiful story of restoration. Each silk thread shredded from the saree and is sewn into splendid pieces - the process truly resembles the lives of the women that were once abused and hurt and have now found restoration and a purpose.

The sale of these products help in paying honorariums to makers and sustains the work of our PeaceMakers in the communities. Throughout this year, we honoured PeaceMakers and PeaceCrafters with their monthly honorariums even though the centres were closed for a duration of time thanks to the generous support from our donors and partners.





PILLAR 3: PROTECT SURVIVOR'S SAFETY

LOTUS SAFE HOME - A PLACE FOR NEW BEGINNINGS WITH HOPE AND COURAGE

Having a safe space for reflection is one of the most valuable assurances a survivor of domestic abuse can have and that is exactly what our Lotus Safe Home offers to our clients. The most important function of the Lotus Safe Home is to provide immediate safety for women and children who escape from the abuse and have no place to go.

While residing in the Safe Home, the survivors have regular appointments with counsellors who help them to specify their needs and explore possible solutions through building emotional strength and a concrete plan of action. Clients take part in art therapy, as well as vocational training that allows them to develop a skill once they depart the safe home.

The Lotus Safe Home encourages victims of abuse to contemplate their road ahead with courage and strength. It is their decision and there are no other voices

that determine their decisions. The reassurance that the victims of abuse gather from the other clients doubles up their courage and hope.

We constantly remind our caretakers of the importance of empathy while working with domestic violence survivors. Thanks to our continuous donors and supporters, we were able to help many domestic violence survivors since we opened our doors in 2018.

The Safe Home has been a light in the lives of women as many government-shelters were closed due to the coronavirus, while we were fully operational during this time. We hope that when the survivor departs from the Safe Home, she would recover from the scars left by the abuse and would take charge of her life and stand up to the choices that she makes.



This photograph is for illustration purposes only.

HIRAL'S JOURNEY TO SAFETY

Hiral lost her father when she was young. She was brought up by her maternal grandmother as her mother remarried. As days passed by, her mother cut ties with Hiral and she was left alone when her grandmother passed away. Looking for a better life, she moved to the city, began working as domestic help and lived in her employer's home.

She liked living in the city and worked hard. But all of a sudden, her employers moved abroad and Hiral lost her income. That's when Viren* who worked as a driver in the same apartment complex helped her get a new job. She fell in love and got married in a traditional way. Their marriage wasn't registered legally.

Hiral was happy with her husband and she loved every moment of it. Everything was going well until one day she found that Viren was already married. Hiral was shattered and was forced to live alone. But Viren's first wife brought her home and also helped her in finding a new job. This made him unhappy and he began to physically abuse Hiral.

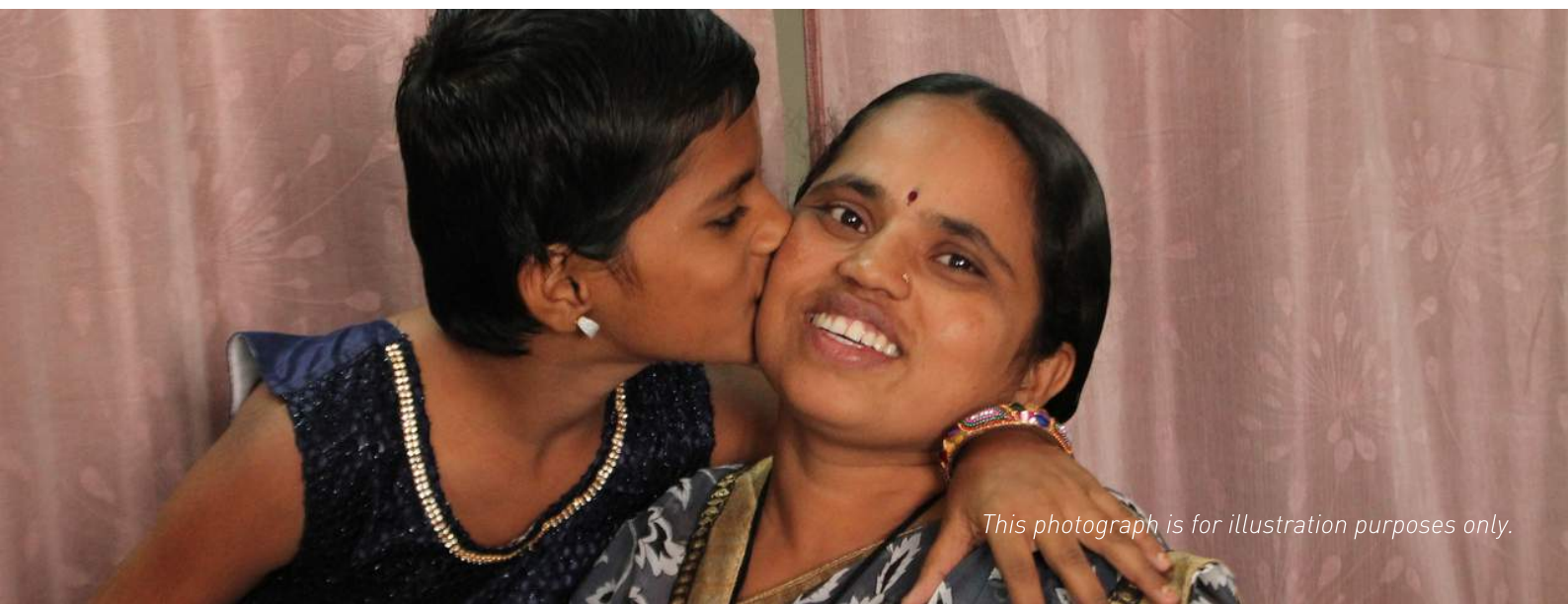
Her colleagues saw her condition and referred her to My Choices Foundation. She received extensive counselling by our expert team of counsellors and was encouraged to file a complaint

against her husband. But the counselling session didn't last long since her husband found out about it and threatened her life. She was hesitant to leave her husband.

Our counsellors and PeaceMakers continued to encourage Hiral. Finally, she gathered the courage and walked out of the abusive home. She stayed at our Lotus Safe home. Though her husband tried hard to pressurise her, Hiral stood strong with the help of My Choices Foundation. She refused to return.

With the help of MCF's legal team, a case was filed. She was counselled regularly to improve her sense of self-worth and she has the right to lead an abuse-free life. She felt a sense of belonging at Lotus safe home and learnt how to maintain healthy relationships. Through various activities, our counsellors worked on the client's self-confidence and self-esteem. She finally got a job of her own and is now living an abuse-free life with her 1-year-old girl child.

Hiral's healing process was long and tough, but our counsellors stood with her. The strength and courage Hiral received at our Lotus Safe home empowered her to redefine the choices for her and her child.



This photograph is for illustration purposes only.

PILLAR 4: PREPARE MEN TO BE ALLIES

ASLI CHAMPIONS BOYS' NETWORK

Asli Champions Boys' Safety Network prioritises the safety of adolescent boys. Boys are educated and informed about gender equality, healthy ideas of masculinity and child protection laws for child labour and those rescued from hazardous work. They are trained to negotiate themselves and serve as a support system that helps them articulate their dreams. Being connected with a peer network provides a safe place to talk about their lives, problems and dreams.

We adopted online means to interact with our Asli Champion Boys during the pandemic. We created WhatsApp groups to share relevant information about toxic masculinity and child labour. We also kept them constantly engaged with activities which helped them understand gender-based stereotypes and break free from them.



PEACECHAMPIONS

Through our PeaceChampion programme, we help men to redefine masculinities and expand their roles to create a transformative impact in the lives of the women and girls, and also in the lives of men and boys. Trusting the research that stated men are receptive to positive messaging, we developed a framework to engage men and boys to change their attitudes and perception about society.

Our explorational and interactive sessions aim to cultivate a mindset that respects women and challenges toxic masculinity. The PeaceChampion programme is a safe space to discuss, discover and rediscover their feelings, opinions and behaviours. Our efforts are further strengthened with our partnership with Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA). Evidence shows that the PeaceChampion programme has led men and boys to become powerful allies and influencers for violence-free society.

Our PeaceChampions were engaged online and via WhatsApp groups during the lockdown. Staying at home many of them were able to identify the gender-based division of labour in housework. Extensive discussions were held online by these young change-makers about gender, patriarchy and the impact of gender-based stereotypes.

We have partnered with Aangan Trust to launch The BoyTalk Project in Hyderabad. Through this project, we will appoint Youth Hosts (only men/boys) to engage in conversations with boys about toxic masculinity, how it impacts their lives and healthy ideas of masculinity. This project is set to launch in February 2021.



OPERATION RED ALERT

PILLAR 1: EXPOSE BY MASS MEDIA

LISTEN AND ACT - USING COMMUNITY RADIO TO ENGAGE WITH REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Understanding the fact that community radio plays a vital role in reaching vulnerable groups, we conceptualised, developed and broadcasted 'Listen and Act' radio spots, skits, features and interviews in partnership with the US Consulate in Hyderabad, India.

We focused on sensitising the local population to the issue of child trafficking during COVID-19 times, educating people about the true nature of the crime with an engaging storytelling approach. 'Listen and Act' messages centred on creating awareness and instilling a deeper understanding on issues of trafficking. It aimed to empower the community to seek help and change attitudes towards the crime.

With 3,495 hours of programming time, we reached 10,55,466 people across 100 villages with our radio programmes. Our listenership surveys indicated the messages increased the target group's awareness, commitment to act as well as actual actions taken to combat child trafficking. Additionally, it led to a greater willingness to open up and approach others or us for help when the need arises.

We have also witnessed that the local community is ready to commit to working as field workers of Operation Red Alert's anti-trafficking initiatives and increased participation and engagement in the production of 'Listen and Act' programs. Given the fact these programmes have

proven to be highly impactful, we have plans to scale across India to benefit a larger number of people.

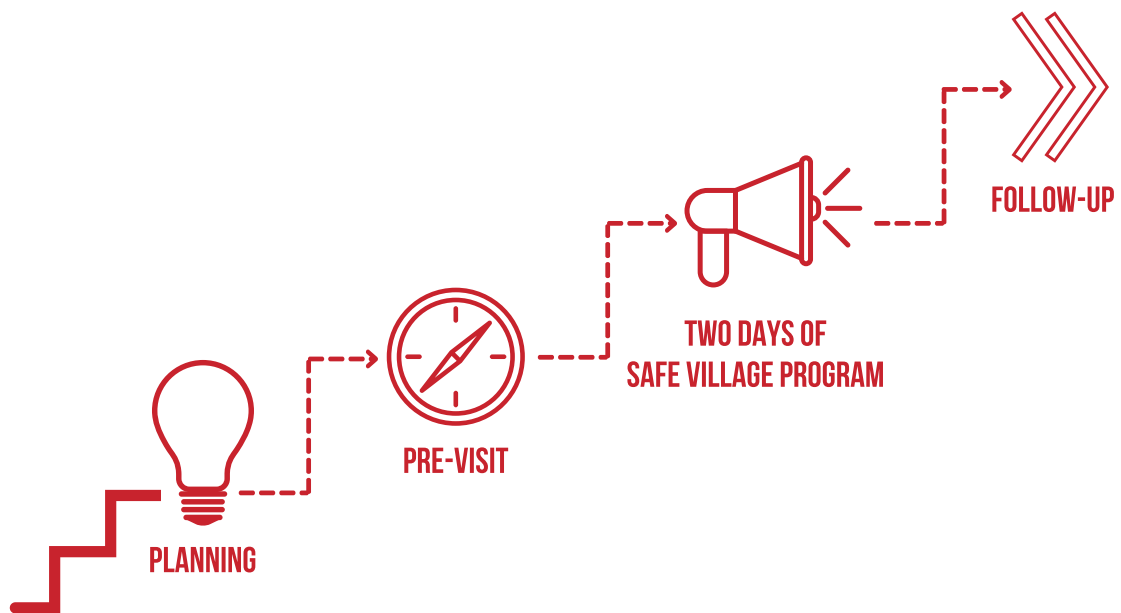
ONLINE DIGITAL LEARNING MODULES - AMPLIFYING THE IMPACT VIRTUALLY

Human trafficking is a crime with deep roots, and education has an important role to play in combating the practice, including raising awareness on the vulnerabilities and risks linked to it. So, we conceptualised and produced educational and informative digital learning modules to critically engage people in understanding the meaning and impact of human trafficking.

Three modules - Human Trafficking 101, Allied Laws and Safe Village Program (our initiative that aims to keep villages and communities safe and unviable for traffickers) - comprises 26 videos were released on YouTube. We are in the process of making it available on various e-learning platforms as a comprehensive course supported by reading materials and integrated assessment for anyone who wants to learn about human trafficking and play their part in the fight against one of the gravest crimes in the modern world, human trafficking.

The modules helped our Field Trainers (from grassroots organisations) gain in-depth knowledge about the crime and understand the importance of their role in Safe Village Programs. The format of the

SAFE VILLAGE PROGRAM



digital learning modules is built to be scalable, replicable and sustainable. We are currently working on expanding our thematic areas of modules to include domestic violence, abuse against women and girls and allied laws.

CONTINUED CONVERSATIONS VIA WHATSAPP AND SMS

Short and simple texts are incredibly effective to educate and empower people about trafficking and COVID-19. We pioneered the movement to create text message experiences using simple usage of SMS technology. We have close to 10,000 mobile numbers listed on our database and used SMS to disseminate safety awareness messages on trafficking. It has proven hugely valuable to reach younger children, with school closures. Messaging has been working in a positive way while allowing the user to become involved in the message.

We have created Whatsapp groups for our Field Trainers and NGO partners for continuous dialogue and to receive regular updates about the status of

communities. Through text, videos, photos and voice notes, we kept them informed and engaged during the lockdown. SafeTracker, our in-house digital tool helps us to collect data from 105 implementing partners across the country about our interventions in the communities. It helps us to geographically map distress calls and facilitate quick response mechanisms.

The inclusion of multiple media formats has paved the way for informative and engaging conversations to keep villages safe across India.

PILLAR 2: EMPOWER BY NATIONAL HELPLINE

CHILDLINE 1098

In January 2020, we marked the one-year anniversary of our partnership with CHILDLINE India Foundation. My Choices Foundation was chosen to run the 24-hour operational help desk at Nampally Railway Station in Hyderabad through our anti-trafficking arm, Operation Red Alert. The CHILDLINE helpdesk is a joint initiative of the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Indian Railways.

The purpose of the CHILDLINE helpdesk 1098 is to provide emergency assistance for children in need, found at Nampally Railway station. We respond to children's emergency needs and link them to relevant services for their long-term care and rehabilitation. Through the helpdesk, we were able to rescue more than 330 children and have them safely reunited with their families.

AAROHI FINDS HERSELF AND HER FUTURE

Aarohi couldn't bring herself to talk about what happened to her when our Lotus Safe Home social worker met her. She was dressed as a boy and refused to identify herself as a girl due to the constant fear of abuse.

Her eyes were filled with fear and her scars ran deep – she was constantly sexually abused and molested by her family members. She was too young to understand the complexity of the kind of violence when she experienced it for the first time. She felt utterly powerless and the constant abuse forced her to run away from home. Police found her at Hyderabad (in South India) railway station one early morning and approached My Choices Foundation for help.

Her journey of recovery at our Safe Home was long and challenging. After concerted efforts from our counsellors, she opened up. Coping mechanisms taught during the counselling sessions helped her to come out of the garb as a boy – she felt liberated to be called herself a young girl. We continued to work with her through intensive counselling sessions and one day, she

cried relentlessly and began to talk. She started to express herself through art.

But the deep-rooted cultural, societal and gender norms made her feel unclean. We adopted positive interventions to build her self-worth and self-esteem.

- Guidance worksheets to understand self-worth
- Healthy emotional expressions
- Sessions on safe and unsafe touch
- Laws against child abuse
- Overcoming trauma and strengthening mental health
- Currency notes activity (INR 100 note doesn't lose its value though it is crushed and similarly, her value hasn't changed or diminished because of the abuse)

Aarohi boldly testified against her family to get the justice she deserves.

She continues to outpour her emotions through creative expression – but with bold and bright colours. She still receives counselling and finds our Safe Home as a safe space where she is heard.

SAVING LIVES WITH A NATIONAL ANTI-TRAFFICKING HELPLINE

Each year, some two million women and children, many younger than 10 years old are bought and sold around the globe, with an estimated one million children, mostly girls entering the sex trade each year. In India, every three minutes a girl is trafficked.

According to a joint report released by the Indian Cellular and Electronics Association and KPMG, rural India witnessed a year-on-year growth of 35% in 2018 as opposed to a 7% growth in urban India in the same year. India's smartphone users are estimated to reach 820 million in 2022. This is an opportunity to put the power to take action in the hands of those who need it the most.

We launched India's first National Human Trafficking Helpline in 2015. It is a national, toll-free hotline available as a missed call IVR system. As soon as the caller records the message, our specialists receive an SMS and make a call to the caller. We immediately alert the local authorities if the situation calls for this.

The Helpline is based on a coalition of My Choices Foundation and various NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations), covering various geographic zones of India. The Helpline is promoted in the community during the Safe Village Program.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING HELPLINE



1800 419 8588



EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD

"I have seen many situations where girls were taken away mysteriously from my village over the years" - the words of a Mother who attended our Safe Village Program in one of the eastern states in India.

Vivian Isaac, Program Director of our anti-trafficking arm, Operation Red Alert was shaken up as well as moved to hear those words. It was a remarkable moment for Vivian and My Choices Foundation team. It helped us to realise the importance of raising awareness, guidance and offer help to millions of girls who are in a pressing need across India.

This was a stark reminder of the importance of the Safe Village Program and this is why the Safe Village Program exists - to prevent any girl from disappearing from her home, but so many women are afraid to raise their voice in instances like these.

Reflecting on the experience, Vivian shared:

"As I narrated an awareness play using our communicative tool, a flipchart, to a group of women during the Safe Village Program, I noticed that one of the women broke into tears. I fought back the urge to ask her the reason to avoid any discomfort to her. After we completed our session, she invited us to her house

for a cup of tea. I was happy and it was an opportunity for me to start a dialogue.

There weren't too many people around us and so I took the opportunity to ask her the reason - why was she crying during the narration of the play. Her response was quite disheartening. She said that she has seen many situations where girls were taken away mysteriously from her village over the years."

More often than not, women like the one Vivian encountered are saddened by what happens to their community girls who are trafficked. But they neither have the tools nor the knowledge to reach out for help. In addition to this, they are terrified and frightened of the possible consequences for their families and their own lives. This incident highlights the importance of the work done by Operation Red Alert of My Choices Foundation. Lack of awareness about the issue of sex trafficking and redressal mechanisms leads to people being trapped in vulnerable situations. Through our work in communities that have high rates of trafficking or are at the risk of being trafficked, we empower people by creating awareness about sex trafficking providing tools like the Helpline to access to report instances of trafficking.





This photograph is for illustration purposes only.

PILLAR 3: ERADICATE AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL

SAFE VILLAGE PROGRAM - A GROUNDBREAKING APPROACH TO END SEX TRAFFICKING IN INDIA

At My Choices Foundation, we constantly challenge ourselves to find new ways to reach more people and make a difference in their lives. Our innovative solutions draw on the best evidence of what works with the targeted population.

Thanks to our partners and two years of in-depth research:

- We designed and adopted an effective targeted anti-trafficking intervention initiative – Safe Village Program (SVP).
- We built a data analytics tool, the Vulnerability Mapping Tool, to map villages highly prone to trafficking in eight states in India: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, West Bengal and Rajasthan.

Our Safe Village Program is a flagship intervention initiative of Operation Red Alert. It is designed to help people of all literacy levels understand human trafficking and collectively prevent it from ever occurring in their villages and communities.

CAPTURED ATTENTION WITH CREATIVE FLIP CHARTS

In 2020, with the rapid outbreak of COVID-19 imposing restrictions on travel movements and mass gatherings, we found new ways to reach vulnerable communities.

Drawing from our messaging design framework – connecting insights about the target population with the key information they need to know, we developed a visually

appealing instructional tool for our field trainers. The purpose of flip charts is to convey the sense of being responsible and understand the aggravated impact of child trafficking during the pandemic.

The 68-page flip chart was created with powerful illustrations and images to spread the messages in a simple and memorable way. It was translated into five regional languages – Bengali, Hindi, Kannada, Marathi and Telugu. We ensured that it was easily understood, culturally appropriate and meaningful to the target population.

Flip charts made it easier to set the agenda on what's important and how to go about it among the communities. The interactive approach helped to reach large groups of people, build behavioral skills and increased intention to act.



BEHAVIOUR CHANGING COMIC BOOKS

Based on the behavioral research findings, the 'Light of a Safe Village' comic book was developed in 2015. After an in-depth discussion, the comic book has been revised in 2020 with relevant updates to the changing needs of the targeted population.

The comic book is an effort to initiate discussions on trafficking amongst children. It tells the story of an inspiring young girl who fights human trafficking challenges in her community with positivity. It carries an empowering message that every child is a vehicle of hope and has the ability to act towards stopping child trafficking.

The main characters of the book are:

The Good Father (Vijay) – He cares for his family and takes every step to protect them.

The Informed Mother (Jaya) – She knows that knowledge and information is a pathway to a safe life.

The Guardian Girl (Rani) – She is on a mission to stay alert and be the voice keeping girls safe.

The Smart Boy (Rahul) – He respects girls and always fights for the right things.

The Comic book has been translated into five languages. During each Safe Village Program, the Comic Book is distributed to everyone who attends the program. Having their own copy leads them to continue the conversations around trafficking with their friends, family and community.



SHOBHA'S DECISION FOR A BETTER FUTURE

15-year old Shobha loves to study and says, *"It makes me so happy and a way for a better life"*. She works hard to ace her board exams now. Without your help, she would have resorted to prostitution out of desperation to support her family.

Born in a poor background, Shobha's parents struggled hard to put food on the table. They made INR 100 (\$1.37 USD) per day as daily labourers, taking up random jobs that came their way. It didn't deter Shobha. She was determined to go to school, study hard and become a respected professional in the future.

Unexpectedly, one day her father fell ill and couldn't go to work any longer. Her mother's earnings were barely enough to get through a day and her father's medical expenses began to mount up. Village leaders and religious practitioners advised Shobha to be dedicated to the temple – the prevalence of the ancient Devadasi system still exists in some parts of India. It is an oppressive practice of young girls and women being regarded as temple property and sexually exploited. With no knowledge about the consequences, Shobha agreed.

During 2019, we organised the Safe

Village Program, a two-day program for educating and empowering communities about sex trafficking. Our Implementing Partner on the ground heard about Shobha's situation from one of the villagers. He reported this to Operation Red Alert (the Anti-trafficking arm of My Choices Foundation) and immediately intervened.

We partner with grassroots-level NGOs and community-based organizations to empower the vulnerable population through various awareness programs on sex trafficking, child abuse, child marriage, child sexual slavery and gender-based violence.

We met with Shobha's family and explained the brutal effects of prostitution and the age-old harmful practices of the temple prostitution. Though they were reluctant initially, our persistent efforts made them realize their mistakes.

Thanks to our partners and supporters, Shobha has been saved from one of the acute degenerative practices for suppressing young girls and women. She is happy and confident and equipped to lead her life based on her own choices.



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS - STRONG PARTNERSHIP MODEL ACTIVATED AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL

We believe in the collective power of partnerships. It is essential to our work. Our long-term and trusted partnerships are built with people and organisations with shared visions and values. Through the generosity and support of our large Implementing Partner network across India, Nepal and Bangladesh we can move the cards in the right direction to end sex trafficking. They are driving the change from the ground up.

With 105 implementing partners across eight states in India, and Nepal and Bangladesh, we are able to reach the most vulnerable and high-risk villages. We contextualise the messaging framework to cater to the local population and deliver it in their native languages. We help them with effective communication strategies and train them to improve their communications capabilities to inspire active involvement for change in their communities.

The core architecture of social change is to strengthen partnerships with strategic alliances and strong allies. Our second annual Asian Anti-Trafficking Forum further strengthened our work, with representation from over 100 NGOs, government officials, law enforcement agencies, strategic partners and other stakeholders.

When people work together to improve the lives in the communities, it creates the sustained momentum to make a difference. We are harnessing the power of collective conviction to push for a different outcome - the nation of India that is safe and peaceful for women and girls.



PILLAR 4: EQUIP VILLAGE CUSTODIANS

RAKSHAKS - THE WATCHFUL EYE OF THE VILLAGE

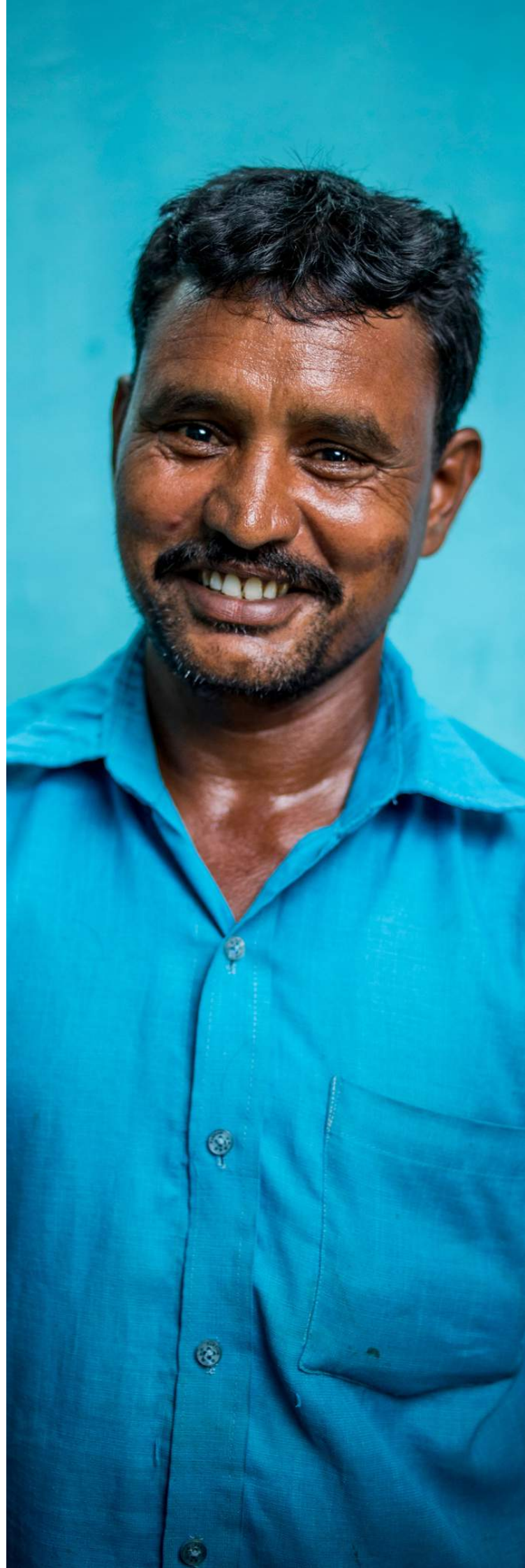
Rakshaks live within the community and have the potential to spot suspicious events that could lead to trafficking and child abuse. They provide crucial information about suspicious cases such as missing children, school dropouts, child marriage, fake marriage or things that can lead to trafficking.

With extensive knowledge about various government schemes, they encourage the community to stay healthy and live peacefully. All suspicious activities are reported to Operation Red Alert and the region's Implementing Partner (Grassroot NGOs) for further action.

NODAL TEACHERS - PASSIONATE AND DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

Nodal Teachers are determined and dedicated volunteers, who are passionate about safeguarding the children within their community. They play an instrumental role in forming the peer groups, adolescent groups, vigilance committees and other units to ensure the village is safe.

Our Field Trainers encourage teachers to sign up as Nodal Teachers during the pre-visit of the Safe Village Program. They ensure that the children remain in school, counsel the needy children and speak to Good Fathers and Informed Mothers to make sure the children do not drop out of school.





GRAM MITHRAS - FRIENDS OF A SAFE VILLAGE

Gram Mithras share My Choices Foundation's passion and values to keep their village safe. They continue the messaging of the Safe Village Program and promote the National Trafficking Helpline number in the community. They are committed volunteers and are a grass-root contact for Operation Red Alert in sustaining the impact of the Safe Village Program.

They are enlisted during the Pre-Visit or during the Safe Village Program. They help in home investigation reports and rehabilitation of survivors of trafficking. They help in identifying and preventing domestic violence in the community.

**All beneficiaries names have been changed to protect their identity*



WE ARE HUMBLLED AND GRATEFUL

OUR HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS, DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

Nothing would have been possible without your generous support. Our heartfelt thanks to our donors, partners and supporters - because of your help, we were able to touch millions of girls and women who are now living their lives free of abuse, violence and exploitation. We are humbled and deeply grateful.



My Choices Foundation has partnered with Alliance 8.7, a global partnership committed to achieving Target 8.7 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals: take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of all forms of child labour to achieve decent work for all and sustained economic growth.



We are grateful to receive the support of Amsure, (a US based insurance firm) for one of our counselling centres and the Lotus Safe Home, that helps domestic violence survivors.



Australian Aid is an international aid organisation of the Australian Government that aims to promote prosperity and enhance stability around the world. We are thankful for their generous support to various programmes of Operation PeaceMaker and Operation Red Alert.



Breakthrough's 'Bell Bajao!' launched in India in 2008. It is a cultural and media campaign that calls on men and boys to take a stand against domestic violence. We have partnered with Breakthrough to translate the advertisements into 17 different Indian languages and distribute them across the country through our grassroots programmes, social media and television.



Operation PeaceMaker of My Choices Foundation is a training partner for Bharosa, the Hyderabad Police support centre for women and children who are affected by violence in the family, community and the workplace.



My Choices Foundation has partnered with CHILDLINE 1098 to run the 24-hour operational help desk at Nampally Railway Station in Hyderabad through our

Anti-trafficking arm, Operation Red Alert. The CHILDLINE helpdesk is a joint initiative of the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Indian Railways.



The Freedom Collaborative is a platform for and by the global anti-trafficking community to connect partners, provide information and share knowledge. My Choices Foundation is proud to be a regional partner, supporting Freedom Collaborative to connect Indian NGOs with the platform and all the resources it offers.



Genpact drives digital-led innovation and digitally-enabled intelligent operations to solve problems with data and analytics. We are happy to partner with Genpact to build the Train the Trainer model to facilitate the entire training lifecycle - from selection to deployment and continuous monitoring and upskilling.



GHR Foundation aims to create lasting change with partners around the world through early action and learning, paired with collaboration on every level to provide the greatest opportunity for adjustment and impact. GHR Foundation provides support to one of the counselling centres of My Choices Foundation.



Global Fund for Children has been a great supporter of the Safe Village Program. With their help and support, we activated Safe Village Programs in West Bengal through four implementing partners. GFC has always been available with bridge funds for additional requirements. We are grateful for their adaptability and generosity to sponsor the COVID-19 relief initiative, organisational development and wellness programmes.



Our Safe Village Program, developed based on the behavioural research findings to educate and empower rural communities has been awarded a prestigious grant by the Global Fund to End Slavery. The fund helps us to build anti-trafficking behavioural change communications campaigns in 28 villages across three locations in the state of West Bengal.

Surokhito Gram Karyakrom (Safe Village Program in Bengali) aims to mobilise communities to inform children in three districts of West Bengal, namely Birbhum, Bankura and Bardhaman about the risk of becoming victims of child trafficking and commercial sex exploitation of children. The programmes also inform the parents, guardian, relatives and neighbours who are likely unintentionally enabling traffickers.

The 10-month campaign will provide factual information that addresses the individual motivations of potential victims and parents/guardians. The information focuses on the warning signs of child

trafficking and commercial sex exploitation of children and the realities for children, particularly girls, moving away from home at an early age for employment or marriage.

It aims to support children, families and communities to recognise the risks and resist approaches of traffickers, making recruitment unviable in target areas. It will also incorporate referrals for victims of commercial sex exploitation of children to organisations that specialise in victim support.

Surokhito Gram Karyakrom is funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the UK Government, through the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and Seefar.



International Justice Mission (IJM) is a global organisation that protects the most vulnerable from violence and oppression irrespective of their gender, community, caste, race and ethnicity. IJM is a strategic partner of Operation Red Alert of My Choices Foundation.



Invisible Scars is a collaborative venture of two NGOs - SAMVAD Advocacy (Samvad Society for Advocacy & Development) and Good Universe. We have partnered with Invisible Scars to help women and men facing abuse.



With the support and contributions of the Netherlands Embassy, we worked to deal

with vulnerability and misinformation during the COVID-19 lockdown. The three types of interventions are providing essential food supplies to vulnerable communities, providing assistance and support for domestic and sexual abuse victims and raising awareness on COVID-19 safety.

We provided essential food supplies for two months to high-risk and vulnerable villages and communities during the lockdown. Recognising the importance of continuous messaging in the communities, we used auto-rickshaws/three-wheelers to play awareness audio messages on COVID-19, human trafficking and domestic violence. Our helpline number has been constantly reinforced. Focused Whatsapp groups have been created to spread authentic messages approved by the Government and provided counselling through our helpline.



NILA is committed to providing underserved women and children with expert legal aid, counsel and action at rates affordable to each client. Operation PeaceMaker partners with NILA to provide professional legal support to Operation PeaceMaker cases with specialised needs. NILA helps Operation PeaceMakers allocate lawyers on a basis to specific cases, utilising their network of pro-bono lawyers.



We worked with Oculus to create a Virtual Reality film on human trafficking in India. The film was showcased at the Sundance

Film Festival in 2017 and became an official selection at the SXSW Film Festival where it made its world premiere.



Opportunity International Australia gives families in developing countries the tools they need to work their way out of poverty so they can live safe, healthy lives, send their children to school and create a new future for generations to come. We are truly grateful and honoured to Opportunity International Australia for their continued support of the selected programmes of My Choices Foundation.



Quantium is a data analytics company based in Australia, that delivers breakthrough solutions in data and technology to power the possibilities for individuals, organisations and societal transformations. We have partnered with Quantum to build a data analytics tool, the Vulnerability Mapping Tool, to map villages highly prone to trafficking in rural parts of India where girls and young women are most at risk. Quantum also helped us with a custom-built management system, SafeTracker which enabled core workers in the field to instantly upload data via mobile phone app. We are humbled to receive the help of Quantum to use data in the fight against sex trafficking.





Safa introduces urban women who have not received formal education to sustainable livelihoods and supports them in the education of their children through an area-based community model. We have partnered with SAFA to operate an Operation PeaceMaker training centre in their community which is marginalized.



The Sall Family Foundation, through Namati, supports My Choices Foundation initiatives to address the issue of child sexual abuse in India through intervention and prevention by training and capacity building of legal assistants who deal with child sexual abuse issues.



We have partnered with the Hyderabad Police to serve as counsellors in domestic violence cases. The impact made by our counsellors involves informing women on

all the options available to them to ensure the best decision for their specific situation. The Hyderabad Police also refers cases to us which require legal assistance and our legal team follows up on these cases.



Tharuni is a non-governmental organisation that works for the development of adolescent girls, women and elderly people. We have partnered with Tharuni to expand our SuperSmart Shakti Girls' Safety Network and Asli Champions Boys' Safety Network programmes for adolescent girls and boys.

THE
WILLIAM H. DONNER
FOUNDATION, INC.

The William H. Donner Foundation, Inc. supports the Lotus Safe Home which provides shelter to victims of domestic violence. My Choices Foundation opened the Lotus Safe Home in 2018 to help transform victims of domestic violence into survivors of domestic violence.





The Macquarie Group Foundation is the philanthropic arm of the Macquarie Group and provides support to hundreds of community organisations globally each year through financial support, volunteering and skills sharing. Macquarie provides specific support to two counselling centres of My Choices Foundation.



In partnership with the US Consulate, we aim to raise awareness on human trafficking in the South Indian states, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, using community radio stations. We conceptualise and produce radio programmes in different formats such as short clips, interviews and skits/dramas. The themes include human trafficking risks, ways traffickers approach and how they exploit the vulnerabilities of families and where to reach for help - regular announcement of our exclusive national toll-free helpline for trafficking (1800 419 8588).

Short clips are informative messages produced in an engaging way along with the helpline while the interviews are conducted with experts in law, anti-human trafficking and crime prevention. It also provides information on the support system for the victims and the punishment for the perpetrator. Dramas/skits cover the dramatized representation of 'what happens' in case of trafficking. Each episode concludes by asking listeners to reflect and share their own experiences or incidents. This enables us to understand the local condition and focal points to be addressed in the future.



Vihaan works at the grassroots to fight human trafficking and provides survivors access to legal support leading to justice. My Choices Foundation refers survivors of trafficking, violence and exploitation to Vihaan to start the legal procedure of fighting the injustice they endured.



Women's Education Project equips young and vulnerable women with skills to discover their voice and thrive in rewarding careers. My Choices Foundation with the Women's Education Project since 2016 to expand our Shakti and Asli programs to empower adolescent girls and boys.



Xilinx, a semiconductor manufacturing company provides support to our anti-trafficking arm, Operation Red Alert of My Choices Foundation. Through their continuous support, we are able to conduct Safe Village Programs in the state of Telangana, India.



Zariya is a free service that addresses survivors' legal and counselling needs. With their secure website and reputable partners, Zariya provides women with access to such provisions where they can relatively anonymously file a report and connect with an appropriate advisor in a time-sensitive manner. Operation PeaceMaker currently handles and makes referrals on all cases that come through the Zariya system.



ONLINE EVENTS AND SEMINARS

- The rise of domestic violence during COVID-19
- Domestic violence and the COVID-19 lockdown
- Domestic violence helplines: What can a survivor expect
- Women's safety with the Cyberabad Police
- An in-depth look: The importance of domestic violence counselling
- A peek into the mind of the abuser
- Emotional well-being in times of uncertainty: Project Pankhi
- The importance of emotional well-being during COVID-19 - Saajha NGO
- When you leave the life you love behind for a bigger cause - Founder, Elca Grobler
- Gender concerns in times of pandemic: Safeguarding our well-being - St. Mary's Centenary College
- Building perspectives and equipping with skills, Cyberabad Police and Rachakonda Commissionerate
- Bell Bajao: How to assist survivors of domestic violence
- Cybercrime awareness
- Gender and Patriarchy - Govt. Degree College, Sangareddy and Nehru Memorial College
- Suicide Prevention - Hussaini Alam College
- National webinar on domestic violence awareness - St. Mary's Centenary College
- Impact of domestic violence on youth
- Healthy relationship - Power and Control Wheel vs. Equality - Gandhi Fellowships
- Second annual Asian Anti-Trafficking Forum



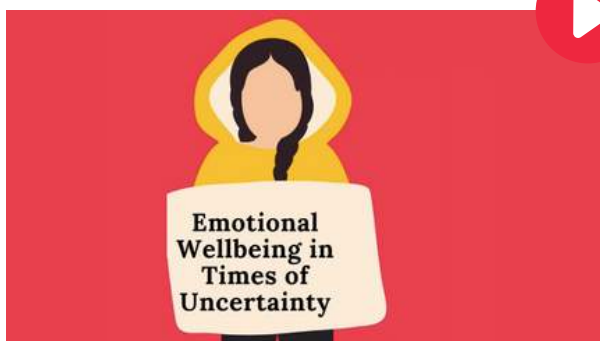
When you leave the life you love behind for a bigger cause - Founder, Elca Grobler



Domestic violence and the COVID-19 lockdown



Domestic violence helplines: What can a survivor expect



Emotional well-being in times of uncertainty: Project Pankhi



An in-depth look: The importance of domestic violence counselling



WELCOME TO THE WEBINAR

A PEEK INTO THE MIND OF AN ABUSER

Reach Us

<https://invisiblescars.in/info@invisiblescars.in>
<https://mychoicesfoundation.org/info@mychoicesfoundation.org>

A peek into the mind of the abuser



Second annual Asian Anti-Trafficking Forum

- Safe Village Program: Rakshaks empowerment
- Safe Village Program: Training for Field Trainers and volunteers
- How to conduct Safe Village Program: Implementing Partners in Karnataka, Jharkhand, North Bengal, West Bengal, West Bihar, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana
- Operation Red Alert Employee Model
- SafeTracker: Upskilling implementing partners in Jharkhand, Bihar and Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana
- SafeTracker reorientation for the state coordinators and ORA core team
- How to use flip chart: Implementing Partners in Andhra Pradesh
- How to use flip chart: Implementing Partners in Telangana
- Learning and sharing: Implementing Partners in Karnataka
- Maharashtra State plan of Action to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking for Commercial Sexual exploitation of children and Women
- Role of Media in Prevention of Trafficking: Webinar for Implementing Partners in Telangana
- Social media and how can we minimise its threats in human trafficking: Webinar for Implementing Partners in Bihar
- Way forward for the Safe Village Program
- Field Worker online training: Implementing Partners in Maharashtra, South Bengal, Rajasthan, Karnataka, North Bengal, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Bihar

OUR TEAM

Our team comprises of 150 passionate people, committed to redefine the choices for women and girls in India.



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