



MEDIA KIT



ABOUT MY CHOICES FOUNDATION

My Choices Foundation is a Hyderabad-based NGO dedicated to ending violence, abuse and exploitation against women and girls. We focus on tailoring prevention and intervention programmes to stop sex trafficking and end domestic violence.

Founded in 2012, My Choices Foundation aims to see the transformation of India into a safe, peaceful and encouraging place for women and girls by empowering them with awareness, education and support to become change agents in their own community.

We are currently active in eight states in India - Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana and West Bengal.

OUR MISSION

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

We work to fulfil 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 work aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 5 - Gender Equality, SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and SDG 17 - Partnerships for the goals.

OUR IMPACT UPTO 2020

End Sex Trafficking

- 4,607 Safe Village Programs conducted
- 24,98,587 People educated
- 12,32,830 Comic Books distributed
- 47,284 Anti-sex trafficking helpline calls received

Stop Domestic Violence

- 232 PeaceMakers trained
- 10,355 Families impacted through counselling
- 90,105 women educated
- 78,267 Young people educated

CAMPAIGN ON ANTI-CHILD TRAFFICKING IN WEST BENGAL

West Bengal is India's largest source for trafficked children. It also has the highest number of missing children in the country and well-established trafficking networks that prey on isolated communities. According to India's National Crime Records Bureau, West Bengal accounted for almost a quarter of the 34,908 cases of human trafficking reported in the country from 2010 to 2016, a staggeringly large share for a state that makes up about 7 percent of the country's population. In 2017 alone, 8,178 children were reported missing from West Bengal, nearly an eighth of India's total that year.

Poverty, job scarcity, violence and intimidation, and poor information combine to make children, especially girls, vulnerable to traffickers and sexual exploitation. Recruiters, matchmakers and traffickers target known spots in some of the worst-affected villages in West Bengal. Vulnerable populations are also known to be targeted on online platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. Research shows that children and their families make decisions about moving away from home with incomplete information and often unrealistic expectations.

We are running a campaign to inform children in three districts of West Bengal, namely Birbhum, Banker and Bardhaman, of the risk of becoming victims of child trafficking (CT) and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), and the parents/guardians/relatives/neighbours who are likely to unintentionally enable them.

The campaign provides 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 exploitation of children and the realities for children, particularly girls, moving away from home at an early age for employment or marriage.

Sources:

US Department of State. 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report: India. 2019.

ECPAT. Global monitoring status of action against commercial sexual exploitation of children. 2011.

Global Fund for Children and Toast Advisory. Scan of issue areas, trends and organisations working in the area of child trafficking in India. 2019.

SAFE VILLAGE PROGRAM (SUROKHITO GRAM KARYAKROM)

The Safe Village Program (Surokhito Gram Karyakrom) is aimed at building child trafficking awareness among rural communities across villages in India.

The programme adopts a holistic approach and focuses on sensitising at-risk community members about child trafficking, its causes, risk factors, creating awareness about ways to prevent child trafficking, sustaining the awareness and conducting vulnerability-reduction workshops. It aims to mobilise communities to keep their children safe from trafficking. With knowledge and collective action, we believe that we can end child trafficking together.

One of the interesting elements of the Safe Village Program is a comic book. The comic book is a storytelling tool for all age groups. It tells the story of heroes in a community who discover that a young girl has been sent away to a big city for work and maybe at risk of child trafficking and child sexual exploitation. It outlines positive behaviours for girls, boys, mothers and fathers. It drives action through pledges that girls and boys can sign up to.

NATIONAL ANTI-TRAFFICKING HELPLINE - 1800 419 8588

Sexual exploitation of children, child marriage and trafficking into labour are illegal activities. According to Dasra's Zero Traffick report, approximately 16 million women are victims of sex trafficking in India every year and 40% are children and adolescents. Every few minutes a girl in India is trafficked and forced to perform sexual acts with up to 20 men a day; her average age is only 12. Sadly, only 1 % of these girls will be rescued.

We launched the 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 is called for.

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.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS CHILD TRAFFICKING?

Child trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation. Child trafficking typically includes forced labour, such as for begging or servitude; sexual exploitation, such as prostitution or pornography; and removal of organs for sale.

- Child trafficking occurs when a child is taken away from safety and exploited.
- The child and/or their family may be tricked, forced or persuaded to leave their homes. Once they are moved or transported, they are forced to work, sold or sexually exploited.
- Child trafficking is linked to demand for cheap labour since they are easier than adults to control.
- Children who are trafficked for sex are forced to engage in commercial sex work.

WHAT IS COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

Commercial sexual exploitation of children is the exploitation by an adult with respect to a child, which is accompanied by a payment in money or in-kind to the child or a third party. It is a violation of human rights and a form of economic exploitation similar to slavery and forced labour. It is also a crime in India. CSEC is a broad term that can encompass child sex trafficking.

WHAT IS CHILD LABOUR?

Child labour is work that deprives a child of his/her childhood, his/her potential and his/her dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. In compliance with the 2016 Child Labour Amendment in India, children below the age of 14 are forbidden to work except as a child artist or in a family business.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS CHILD MARRIAGE?

Child marriage is any formal marriage or informal union between a child under 18 years old and an adult or another child.

WHO IS A RUNAWAY OR MISSING CHILD?

A runaway or missing child is anyone under 18 years old who is reported to or by the police as someone whose whereabouts are unknown, whatever the circumstances of their disappearance are considered missing until located.

WHAT IS MODERN SLAVERY?

Modern slavery is defined as the recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of children, women or men through the use of force, coercion, abuse of vulnerability, deception or other means for the purpose of exploitation.

WHAT ARE ANTI-TRAFFICKING LAWS UNDER CONSTITUTION OF INDIA?

- The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 prevents trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.
- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, protects children from sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013 provides measures to counter the menace of human trafficking.
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 prohibits solemnisation of child marriage and connected and incidental matters.
- Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 years old.

ABOUT OUR FOUNDER - ELCA GROBLER

Internationally recognised social entrepreneur, Elca Grobler founded My Choices Foundation in 2012. She left her career in investment banking and finance to follow the call she felt to serve women and girls in India by working for their empowerment.

Today, My Choices Foundation has grown and equipped more than 2.4 million individuals living in high-risk areas of trafficking. Under her leadership, the first national helpline exclusively for trafficking has been set up and she is leading the coalition effort to prevent sex trafficking.

Elca was honoured by UNSW for social Impact and Public Policy out of 290,000 graduates in 146 countries. Since then for three consecutive years in a row in 2018, 2019 and 2020, Elca was recognised as one of the 100 most impactful CSR Leaders, by the World CSR and World sustainability congress and the World Federation of CSR Professionals.

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