

Project Aasara

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India in recent times has been identified as a source, transit, and a destination for women, men, and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation. Men and women are trafficked to countries in the Middle East and children are forced into beggary and in doing other menial work. Besides this, women and children especially from the neighbouring countries of Bangladesh and Nepal are trafficked to India or trafficked through India en route to different countries.

The Government of India does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The quality and magnitude of the government's anti-trafficking response, particularly in the law enforcement area, are insufficient compared to India's huge trafficking menace.

The state of Andhra Pradesh has emerged as the largest source for women and child sexual exploitation (NHRC report 2001). The trafficking, sale and prostitution of children has become a serious issue in Andhra Pradesh particularly in Coastal Andhra. Women and children are ferried across the coast by organised crime syndicates. Young women and children are sold off to neighbouring cities of Mumbai, Chennai and to states such as Goa and Orissa. About 85% of women in the prostitution racket across the cities of India belong to Andhra Pradesh. According to a survey 45 per cent of women in prostitution in New Delhi are from Andhra Pradesh as also 28 per cent in Mumbai, 14 per cent in Kolkata and 80 per cent in Goa. Andhra Pradesh is also the state which has the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS infected children in the country.

Objectives: Project Aasara was launched by the Nalgonda Police in Andhra Pradesh in the southern part of India. The objective of the project is to prevent organised human trafficking in general and immoral trafficking in particular. This project is based on a two prong strategy i.e. to prevent the crime and to institute rehabilitation.

LAUNCHING OF PROJECT AASARA IN NALGONDA DISTRICT



On 21 April 2005 a special drive was launched by Nalgonda Police in the town of Yadagirigutta to arrest organised traffickers. A total number of 15 organisers were arrested under the Sections 3, 4, 5, 7 of Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA) and about 35 sex workers were arrested under Section 8 of ITPA and Section 294 IPC.

Subsequently, 77 children were identified in Yadagirigutta who needed to be rehabilitated. Out of them, 21 were not going to any school and in all likelihood would have ended up joining the sex trade. The one positive aspect was that the parents of these children were supportive and were keen on having them educated. With a mission to fight crime and rehabilitate project AASARA was launched on 19 May 2005 in the town of Yadagirigutta.

Partners in this project are a coalition of several government departments such as the Revenue department, the Police, District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) and Velgu, Women and Child Welfare, Education, Health, Panchayati Raj, people's representatives like MLA's, MP's and others, State Bank of Hyderabad and the BC Corporation. Besides this several NGO's are also part of this project including Child & Police (CAP) SARIQUE project, Red Cross Organisation Nalgonda Unit and Prajwala Women Organisation, Hyderabad.

Project Activities:

1. **Law enforcement and prevention:** Immoral trafficking organisers and sex workers were identified in Nalgonda District.
2. **Women empowerment:** With the help of the DRDA, loans were provided to the sex workers for self employment and to initiate small scale production. Working in groups was also encouraged. A CAP programme has also been initiated for age groups between 18 to 30 for both men and women.

As part of rehabilitation and alternative source of livelihood, sex workers were provided training at Yadagirigutta under the CAP project with 100% employment guarantee. Training for 3 months commenced on 2 August 2005 in the areas of Customer Relation Sales (CRS), White Goods Servicing and I.T.E.S. The Velgu project trained four self help groups of 26 members for two months in production of incense sticks, plates, bowls, baskets & tailoring at Yadagirigutta.

3. **Social awareness:** was created by conducting camps on personality development through behaviorial training with the help of Red Cross Society and other voluntary organisations.
4. **Shelter:** The local MLA of Alair, Dr.Nagesh has assured that he would acquire 20 acres of land to construct houses as well as develop horticulture for sex workers, so that they could look for alternative means of employment.
5. **Education:** The identified 21 children in the age group of 7-15 who were uneducated joined a local Bridge school at Yadagirigutta under project Aasara. There is also a plan of opening drop in centres for siblings of sex workers.

6. **Health:** Health camps have been conducted with the help of medical and health departments and private organisations like the Red Cross and I.M.A. etc.

First step by district administration:

The District Administration has come out with a slew of measures under AASARA project to eradicate the menace from the town of Yadagirigutta. On 3 June 2005 the District Collector of Nalgonda, Mr. K.Vijayanand, informed that 20 acres of land for construction of pucca houses for the families who were involved in sex trade would be allocated and trainings would be imparted in various courses to adolescent girls particularly from the Dommara caste. He disbursed cheques worth Rs. 3.5 lakhs to four self-help groups. He also launched a training programme under the aegis of Indira Kranti Pathakam. On the same day, the State Bank of Hyderabad gave away a grant of Rs. 1.5 lakh to the women's group to purchase machinery to manufacture various products. Further, the District Collector announced the formation of a District Level Committee consisting of officials to monitor the progress of the rehabilitation programme. This project is aimed at confidence building measures to create trust with the government, the police and the victims. National daily Hindu carried news reports on the experiment dated 20 and 21 May 2005 and 4 June 2005.

Note: As per memo dated 29 August 2005, the Director General of Police, Andhra Pradesh Sri Swaranjit Sen has issued instructions to all SSP's, DIG's, IG's & the Commissioner of Police in AP to implement the Aasara project in the entire state of Andhra Pradesh. The DGP appreciated the initiative taken by the Nalgonda district police.