

GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

EQUAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

QUARTER - 3



EDITORIAL

The United Nations this year on 'World Day Against Trafficking in Persons', had decided to honor the Frontline workers including CSOs, Police Personnel, Doctors, Informants, Law enforcement Officers, Psychologists and several others directly and indirectly invest efforts in saving women and children from being trafficked. A wonderful move to cheer their work. These are the people who work in different sectors - identifying, supporting, counseling and seeking justice for victims of trafficking and challenging the impunity of the traffickers.

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. Every year, thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers, in their own countries and abroad. During the Covid - 19 crisis, the essential role of first responders has become more important. Particularly as the restrictions imposed by the pandemic have made their work even more difficult. Still, their contribution is often overlooked and unrecognized. Mahita lauds all the unseen fighters helping the world a better place free of trafficking.

The Third Quarter of Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA) has organized several online meetings from arresting school drop outs to proposed new education policy. This News Letter presents a comprehensive coverage of various issues that have significant impact on girls and young women. Wishing you a Happy Reading!

Girls Advocacy Alliance - Mahita

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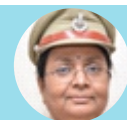
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With an aim to celebrate and mainstream young peoples' voices, actions and initiatives, as well as their meaningful, universal and equitable engagement, a webinar was organized on August 12, 2020. On the same lines, the meeting was telecasted live on Mahita Facebook page and was attended by 150 participants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana including dignitaries, CSOs and youth advocates who deliberated their perspectives around the theme, 'Youth Engagement for Global Action'.



Ms Pragna Parande,
Hon'ble Member,
NCPDR, Chief Guest

I hail the recent Supreme Court judgment that states a son may not be a son after marriage, but a daughter always is a daughter to parents lifelong. In my practice as an advocate, many parents after their daughter has been divorced always stress that she doesn't have any money. However, I told them to invest on her. So, it is important to know women rights on properties as it gives them the confidence. Woman should earn money in a right way and spend on herself and then later help others.



Mrs C Anasuya,
Dty Commissioner
Cyberabad Police
Commissionerate

"I was married at the age of 18. My parents always felt that getting their daughter married is their responsibility and not impart education. Can you see me today where I am with that attitude of my parents? So today they have realized that they have done a mistake instead of educating me. Everyone is recognizing them as parents of mine. So girls whenever you have adverse situation in life, you should never accept defeat. Yes, I should rise above this, this has to be the attitude. I should have my own individuality."



Mr Samarth Pathak
Communication
Officer - UNODC
Special Guest

Young people have lot of ideas and solutions and they give important views on social issues. It is important for youth to speak and connect with government, ngos and people. The youth should be aware of 17 Sustainable Development Goals that propagate peace and development and find their interest that matches with goals.



Dr Sucharitha,
President, Nalgonda
Obstetric Society

A girl with teenage pregnancy can become anaemic, have fits and die during child birth. Get married when you're physically, mentally and financially strong and have the ability to take independent decisions. Unsafe pregnancies, abortions, psychological issues, black mailing, being trapped and trafficked are some of the results of child marriages. Always keep good thoughts in mind.



Ms Alia Bandagi,
Associate - Inclusive
Development, ITPD

The point of facing fears is not to be fearless but to understand to live with those fears. How do we use those fears in a constructive way and make a difference to ourselves and the society is the need of hour. In 2012, when I heard Nirbhaya case, I stopped and started thinking if girls and women are fearful of accessing public spaces like schools and offices, then is it fair? Then I decided to study Gender Studies on building inclusive and safe parks, streets, roads for women.



Ms Mytreysi Kondapi
Co-Founder
Startoon Labs

You have to be prepared for any opportunity in life. Once you get it, be ready to grab it. Be flexible to do whatever you want to achieve in life. Once you are focused, people around you will start trusting and help you. All these things will shape your identity. You have to know for yourself what do you want and what you dream. Having dreams is fine, but there are lots of steps forward. You should be ready for any kind of situation that comes your way.



Dr M Suneetha,
Program Manager
Sakhi - PMU

This is a good opportunity to interact online for the youth. In lockdown period, domestic violence and child marriages have increased. From March onwards, there is a spike in child marriages after 10th class exams, missing elopement cases – where girls are being trapped in the name of love and later being trafficked. Take time in choosing any decision in your life be it education, marriage and career.



Prof Seetharatnam,
Vishakapatnam

Girls should have higher goals, rather limiting to tiny achievements in life. Youth today are capable of doing anything with their intelligence, and with growing caliber in dimensional criteria. Being oneself jobless makes nothing, but acquiring wisdom of the world, especially in this pandemic situation, is a demanding factor that helps in future. Decisions, hopes, dreams would decide oneself further to have a better clarity of life.



Sis Sahaya Mary,
HOD-Stella Marris Col
Vijayawada

The first ever initiation in AP was establishing a student club, Anti Human Trafficking Club, to respond immediately to such incidents or cases in their best ways possible. The first respondents in trafficking cases play a vital role, and the victims have to raise their voices so as to alert the other girls who are vulnerable towards the



Prof Jonathan Wycliff
Youth Trainer,
Kurnool

Be useful to the society, by preparing oneself to be useful is only possible at young age. Many of the youth turn themselves into isolation and remain workless, not knowing their capacities and caliber. Such youth should focus more on their inner abilities, and then excel in area where they can master into. Youth need a proper guide, to mould themselves into the best.

trafficking.

FRONT LINE WORKERS ARE UNSUNG HEROES - WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Commemorating, 'World Day Against Trafficking in Persons', Mahita - Plan India under the aegis of Girls Advocacy Alliance to honor the front line workers including law enforcement officers, Police, health personnel, psychologists, government officials and several others who directly and indirectly invest efforts in saving women and children from being trafficked either for bonded labour or sexual exploitation, series of webinars with various stakeholders were organised on July 30.

The program was attended by 200 participants from six districts of Telangana and three districts of Andhra Pradesh including DCPOs, CDPU, Sakhi representatives, Bal Raksha Bhavan Coordinators, JJB Board members, CSOs, Child line coordinators, Religious leaders, Caste leaders, Community leaders, DCPU and Mahita staff.



Smt Rema Rajeshwari, IPS
Superintendent of Police
Mehbubnagar

The Sakhi centers in Mehbubnagar responded well to the Gender Based Violence issues and were involved in reporting and rehabilitation. The way they functioned was very professional in Covid situation. The mobile safety teams were available for the assistance and have done commendable work. Dealing with secondary victimization has to be institutionalised at all levels. Together, all our small efforts will lead to a big change.



Ms N Swetha Reddy, IPS
Superintendent of Police
Kamareddy

While we think child trafficking is a physical phenomena, Cyber space is a another challenge/threat. The open zoom forums, chat rooms are serious matters of concerns and we need to develop our capacities to address them. The only way is engaging with vulnerabilities. People say that they will wait for the lockdown to be over, but we cannot wait for the victim to give complaint of crime. We need to find new ways to reach victim and do justice.



Shri Goutham Sawang,
Director General of Police, AP, Guest of Honour

The United Nations decision on giving importance and identification to the front line workers, first respondents is very much needed. The Police will support the cases of trafficking and will go to any extent to save them.



Smt. Vasireddy Padma
Chairperson
AP State Women's Commission

The involvement of CSOs stands at the beginning of the rescuing point, perhaps not in the primary segment where the government officials take decisions on the case. However, the 2020 year's observation theme, 'Giving importance and identification to the first respondents' is a reliable decision that UN took. Rehabilitation centres should be encouraged and given financial aid to address low self-esteem, negative thinking and vulnerability among the victims after a rescue operation. The

government statutory bodies should use voluntary system to spread awareness.



Ms Shalini Prabhata, Manager
Girls Advocacy Alliance
Plan India

Every one in five are prone to violence and risk, say studies. Telangana state stands among top 5 in the country with respect to trafficking. All the government departments are working; however Covid 19 has increased the vulnerability of getting trafficked. Since children are at home, the rate of child marriages and child labour is rising, which are also various forms of trafficking. So we need to intensify efforts during Covid especially in prevention and protection.



Mr David Raj
Senior Program Manager
UNICEF

AHTU (Anti Human Trafficking Unit) is one of the important stakeholders after government had passed new laws with Nirbhaya incident to ensure each district to have a budget of 100 crore being separately allocated for its functioning. It is important that it should have a victim-centric approach and create awareness about human trafficking.

WHAT DOES STATS SAY?

- People are trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced begging, forced marriage, for selling children and as child soldiers as well for removal of organs.
- Women make up 49% and girls 23% of all victims of trafficking
- Sexual Exploitation is the most common form of exploitation (59% share) followed by forced labour (34% share)
- Most victims are trafficked within their countries' borders - those trafficked abroad are moved to the richest countries
- **INDIA** stands 5TH among various countries across the world in terms of trafficking especially trafficking for sexual exploitation and we need to work on this.
- **TELANGANA** state stands among top 5 in the country with respect to trafficking



Dr M Suneetha,
Program Manager
Sakhi - PMU

Advance planning is required to address the issues, especially during emergency situations, and as first respondents we have a lot of responsibility.



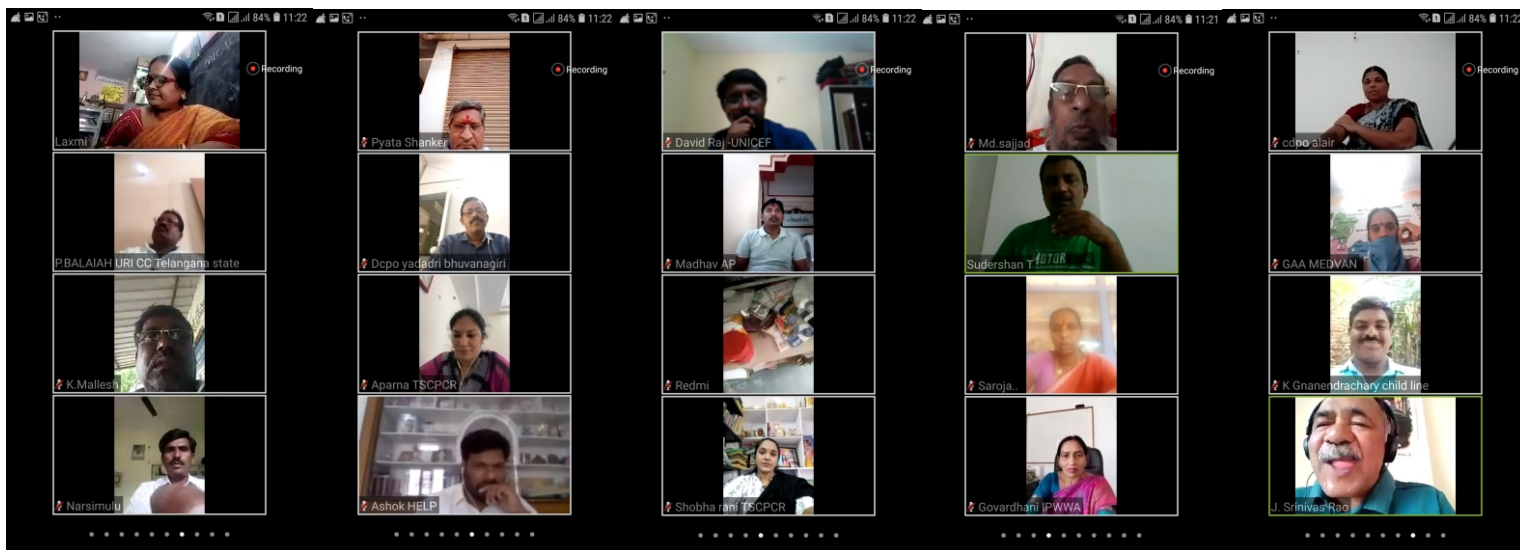
Mr Ramesh Sekhar Reddy
Program Director
Mahita NGO

All the frontline workers are unsung heroes who respond to trafficking problems. I request Sakhi centers to allocate Space for Youth Advocates who play a key role.

INCREASING LEGAL AGE OF MARRIAGE FOR WOMEN FROM 18 TO 21 YEARS

Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman during her Budget Speech 2020-21, announced to revise the legal age of marriage for women from 18 years to 21 years. In February 2020, it was announced to constitute a task force that will present its recommendations over this in 6 months' time period. The high-level committee constituted by the Central Government will submit its recommendations into the matter by July 31, 2020. The task force will look into matters related to motherhood and marriage at an early age.

With an aim of understanding perspectives of different stakeholders at district level on increasing the marriage age, Girls Advocacy Alliance has organized a series of meetings with Religious leaders, Child Welfare Officers, Caste leaders and government officials.



Mr J Srinivas Rao – Chairman, Telangana State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (TSCPCR) said as per World Health Organisation (WHO), 18 years is still a formative phase and not the right age for a woman to bear a child. Once a girl gets married, practically it is very difficult to continue education except in situations where there is a understanding Mother in Law at home, he added.



Views of Youth advocates:

- At the age of 21 girls are capable to take their own decisions.
- At the age of 18, they are not mentally matured and are not completely educated.
- Some youth advocates ask to increase boys' age from 21 to 24.
- If govt increase age from 18 to 21, then they should provide education and skill development centres in nearby places.
- They have expressed their willingness to counsel parents and school dropouts.

STRATEGIES TO ARREST DROPOUTS AMONG GIRLS

A district level meeting with community leaders on addressing the issues of girls dropping out of school and plans to mitigate the situation was held in Vishakapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The zoom meeting was attended by 14 members.

Community Leaders have agreed to put their efforts to minimize the dropouts especially girl child. Covid-19 , Migration from work place to Home village , children education problems (Like Transfer certificates, study and conduct certificates, Aadhar Links etc.), status of Govt .implementation schemes in the schools. (Ammavodi, Vidya devena, Vasati devena , Nadu Nedu etc.), problems faced by rural children due to online education, forced Child marriages and child labor were some of the issues discussed.

BUILDING CHILD MARRIAGE FREE GRAM PANCHAYATS IN THE STATE

District level zoom meetings with PRI members, AWTs, Supervisors, CDPOs and representatives on making Child Marriage Free Gram Panchayats were held in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

“Child Marriages are the first barrier for the development of young girls”, said Ms Vijaya Laxmi, Child District Protection Officer (CDPO), Bela during the zoom meetings. She further shared that the Anganwadi teachers are meeting all the households and explaining about Covid 19, health, hygiene, nutrition and the effects of child marriage.

The AWTs and supervisors responded very positively and ensured that there are no child marriages taking place in their villages. Community leaders opined that parents are taking steps to get their child get married early due to Covid situation as there is low monitoring by government in rural areas. The non-functioning of schools in villages and lack of access to Digital Learning applications by poor families are forcing children to turn victims of child marriage and child labour, they shared.

TEACHERS UNION MEETINGS ON 'NEW EDUCATION POLICY'

With an aim of orienting Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on the proposal of New Education Policy of India, district level zoom meetings were held in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Teacher representatives shared that the new education policy was good, but it is not discussed widely in the parliament. They opined that it concentrates on students skills development. It also changes curriculum and 3+3+5+4 system, research courses are deleted and teacher education is now extended to 4 years.

Mr Kiran Kola, Teacher from Adilabad said that it is imperative to create attractive environments in schools by including toys, games which inspires children to come schools. He opined that Teacher education should be a professional course and training exams held in Bit type exam format is not scientific. “We understand the Teacher's caliber by demonstration method only hence it has to be made compulsory while recruitments”, he said. Incorporating Vocational Training in education system is a welcome step by the government, he further added.

