COMPRENDIUM OF BEST PRACTICES

ON ANTI HUMAN TRAFFICKING
BY NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

ATSEC JHARKHAND CHAPTER

BHARTIYA KISAN SANGH

BHARTIYA KISAN SANGH (BKS)
Shree Ram Nagar, Road No. 3, PO- Hahal (ITKI Road), Ranchi-834005.
Ph: 0651-2511000, e-mail : bksranchi@gmail.com, Visit us : www.atsecjharkhand.org
Acknowledgments

Ms. Ashita Mittal, Deputy Representative, UNODC, Regional Office for South Asia

The Working Group of Project IN/01/16:

Dr. Geeta Sekhon, Project Coordinator
Ms. Swasti Rana, Project Associate
Mr. Varghese John, Admin/ Finance Assistant

UNODC is grateful to the team of HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi for compiling this document:

Ms. Bharti Ali, Co-Director
Ms. Geeta Menon, Consultant

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Dr. P M Nair, IPS
Mr. K Koshy, Director General, Bureau of Police Research and Development
Ms. Manjula Krishnan, Economic Advisor, Ministry of Women and Child Development
Mr. NS Kalsi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs
Ms. Sumita Mukherjee, Director, Ministry of Home Affairs
All contributors whose names are mentioned in the list appended
Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC): a First Initiative in Networking among NGOs and International Agencies against Human Trafficking

If trafficking is an organized crime, it requires an equally organized counter-force to fight it. ATSEC or Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children is a case in point. ATSEC is the first network in South Asia to come up exclusively against trafficking. Today it is a formidable army of NGOs supported by several international agencies that fight human trafficking through extensive networking on prevention, prosecution and protection work. It is spread over five countries — Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India, with two more being added: Afghanistan and Mauritius.

The idea of ATSEC emerged at an international workshop that SLARTC (Socio-Legal Aid Research & Training Center) had organized in Kolkata on ‘Development Management of NGOs’, in 1998. Ten NGO representatives from Bangladesh were among the participants. After a session by the Child Protection Officer from UNICEF on networking, the participants came up with a suggestion: there should be a network on the issue of trafficking between Bangladesh and West Bengal, as a lot of cross-border trafficking takes place on this route. Statistics presented estimated that at least three to five thousand children and women were being trafficked from Bangladesh to West Bengal and from there to Pakistan and Middle East.

**Structure and function:** ATSEC India has a National Committee, the members of which are the coordinators of the ATSEC State chapters. They meet at least three to four times a year and develop a plan of action and activities from time to time and coordinate implementation of the same. Though they remain affiliated to the ATSEC National Chapter and are party to all decisions concerning National Policy and National Plan of Action of ATSEC, the State chapters are independent in their administration and finance.

**National**

ATSEC India has been able to impart training programs of International standard by developing training modules in collaboration with AED, American Education Development (Washington DC), SARI/Q Management System International (Washington DC), Advocacy Institute (Washington DC), USAID, UNDP, UNIFEM, UNODC and other organisations of repute.

ATSEC India has been recognized by the Govt. of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry has agreed to partner with ATSEC as a nodal agency to assist in:

1. Awareness creation on the need for training and capacity building.
2. Undertake advocacy and other preventive measures.
3. Assist in effective implementation of standardized procedures (minimum standards of care) for rescue, rehabilitation, re-integration and repatriation processes, etc. through monitoring and evaluation of the member NGOs.
4. Enthusing NGO partners to apply for and implement new schemes on prevention of trafficking.

In recognition of the initiatives and efforts by ATSEC India, UNODC Regional Office for South Asia, New Delhi has supported the efforts of ATSEC in several ways. This partnership has been of tremendous use in empowering law enforcement officials, including police, prosecutors, magistrates and judiciary as well as other Government officials in several states, as a part of the UNODC project on Anti Human Trafficking.
ATSEC Jharkhand was formed in 2001. It has 64 member NGOs spread over Districts. Bhartiya Kisan Sangh functions as its State Secretariat.

The highlights of ATSEC Jharkhand are:

- Close coordination, cooperation and advocacy with the Government.
- Running of efficient, safe and friendly shelter homes for survivors of trafficking.
- Close interaction with media.
- Inter Religious Priest Forum against trafficking.

ATSEC Jharkhand works closely with the Social Welfare Department, Labour Department and Education Project Council. It has been successful in sensitizing the Police Department on issues of trafficking. The Social Welfare Department and the Labour Department, Jharkhand provides support for assistance in rescuing girls, who are then given shelter at the transit home “Kishori Niketan”. The Jharkhand Education Project Council has nominated ATSEC as member NGO for HARD TO REACH CHILDREN, particularly “MIGRATING CHILDREN”. As far as sensitizing the police is concerned, to date, 543 police personnel at different levels of the hierarchy have been trained. The result is seen in the increased number of rescue by the police. Where the police officers earlier hesitated to register FIRs, they now readily register an FIR on a complaint of a missing person.

The shelter home ‘Kishori Niketan’ was started in 2003, with the sole aim of providing care and protection to survivors of trafficking. Now ATSEC Jharkhand has two such shelter homes in Ranchi Districts — in Bijnupa, Chanho Block and Burmu.

A Media Forum has been started in which important media representatives are members. This has helped ATSEC in advocacy with the media on trafficking issues. In turn, both the electronic and print media have started playing active roles in changing the mind set of the people of Jharkhand towards the issue of trafficking. The media coverage has meant that the Government has taken notice of the severity of trafficking in the State. The media has also changed the attitude of the common people towards trafficked survivors – they are slowly turning empathetic towards the victims.

The Jharkhand Inter Religious Priest Forum (IRPF) was formed in 2005. The main logic for its foundation was that religion plays a key role in society and religious ethics promote basic human values and shape an individual’s personal and organizational behavior, including her/his expression of gender sensitivity. All religions share the desire to work for the well being of humanity. Religious leaders representing all religions that are part of the IRPF are helping in awareness generation in their own community and village.
Success story of a girl showing transition due to education

Seventeen year old R was rescued from the railway station by an ATSEC Jharkhand partner working in Rania Block of Ranchi District. She had been trafficked to Jamshedpur on the pretext of providing her a lucrative job. Her employers turned out to be extremely cruel and R managed to flee from their house. She was found wandering at the railway station in Jamshedpur and brought to the ‘Kishori Niketan’ run by an ATSEC partner.

Initially unwilling to return home, R kept giving wrong addresses. After a series of regular counseling sessions she revealed that she didn’t wanted to go home because of her step mother’s atrocities on her. She was then introduced to a Bridge Course for learning functional academics. She successfully cleared the Jharkhand State Board Class X examination. Subsequent assessment of interest and aptitude ensured her enrolment in embroidery and tailoring classes. She successfully completed both vocational courses and was awarded certificate of merit for her outstanding performance. Additionally she received many certificates of appreciation in competitions of painting/ essay on different occasions. After completion of her tenth standard, she was shifted to Pakur, where she is working as an Office Assistant for Bhartiya Kisan Sangh and is also preparing for her Intermediate examinations (Class XII). Her income is deposited into her bank account for her future growth and development. She stayed in the ATSEC shelter home for 6 years.
Two or three decades ago, adivasi girls from Jharkhand began to migrate to big cities in search of work. Some of them were literate but unable to find jobs locally. Many belonged to poor families that lacked the opportunity to improve their standard of living. Shrinking of forests, degradation of other resources, diversification and disintegration of land, takeover of land for infrastructure building and mining are among the factors responsible for their impoverishment. There were also those who were merely lured by the attractions of the city – the standard of living, markets, modern clothes etc.

As the tempo of migration increased, placement agencies began to spring up to help the girls find a safe home for work and a contact address in times of distress. Looking at the demand and supply situation and knowing well that migration is not likely to stem in the near future, spurious organizations too began to spring up offering lucrative jobs but actually putting the girls (and occasionally young boys) in unsafe work environment. Under the guise of providing domestic work, trafficking for sexual exploitation too began. At present both genuine and spurious organizations are flourishing in cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata.

In the year 2005 ATSEC Jharkhand conducted a sample survey to study the trend. The survey was done both with migrants who had returned in the village and family members of those who were on migration. The study showed that 77 per cent of the sample population migrating out of Jharkhand came under the category of Scheduled Tribes, 12 percent under Scheduled Caste, 8 percent under Other Backward Classes and 3 per cent under the General category. Significantly, 70 per cent of out migrants were female and 30 per cent male. Girls moved out predominantly for domestic work while boys went for casual work, such as work in hotels and shops and even domestic work. 67 per cent were below 20 years of age, 15 per cent between 20 and 25 and 18 per cent above 25 years of age. 65 percent were illiterate, 17 percent educated up to the primary level, 16 percent below matriculation (Class X) and 2 per cent matriculation and above. While a vast majority moved out with relatives or other villagers, a significant 9 per cent went with unknown persons and 3 per cent were taken by force.

The survey showed that 69 per cent had moved out because of lack of opportunities back home, while 23 percent believed that better opportunities awaited them at the place of destination.

Delhi was the preferred destination for a vast majority of migrants.
Predominant among migrants to Delhi are girls who go in for domestic work, as the city is said to pay the most for such work. While a significant proportion of migrants maintained some contact with their family members, the whereabouts of 10 per cent were not known to their family members.

While 59.4 percent claimed to receive less than INR 1000.00 per month as payment, 38.4 percent said they received INR 1000.00 to 2000.00 and 2.2 percent more than INR 2000.00.

The pace of out migration as well as human trafficking under its guise is ever increasing. This presents a disturbing trend which calls for immediate action.

ATSEC Jharkhand has taken several actions based on this analysis.

**Prevention**

- Alternative small scale women cooperative industries are being planned at different levels so that the potential migrant is provided with an alternative source of income if her family is dependent on her for a living. NGOs too are being encouraged to absorb them in any suitable capacity so as to prevent out migration.

- People who have migrated are main agents in luring others to follow suit. ATSEC attempts to stem such peer pressure. Also, pressure is exercised on placement agencies so that they strictly adhere to rules regarding age of the individual — the person should not be a child (i.e. below 14 yrs). Violation of such conditions if found is to be strictly dealt with.

- Placement agencies are being pressurized to ensure appropriate placement in a protective and secure workplace by way of being selective in the choice of house for placement and if necessary, coordinating with the police on this.

**Rescue**

- Toll free numbers are being made available for people in distress, so that they may be traced out easily and rescued. ATSEC – Jharkhand has one such number 1800 180 1000. Victims of violence and cheating have been benefiting from this number.

- A rescued adult is provided with an alternative income opportunity. Traumatized victims are rehabilitated effectively within the larger society.

- Coordination with the Government at the Police, Judiciary and Executive level is being encouraged. Apart from this the issue is also being taken up at the NGO level through workshops, meetings and at diverse platforms whenever possible.

**Building Pressure**

A clear plan of action is being formulated by the Department of Social Welfare, Jharkhand to address this issue.

- Coordination and advocacy at different platforms are set in motion.

- Raids at some of the suspected homes and areas have been done so as to reduce and finally eradicate the problem of child domestic labor.
Kishori Niketans set up by ATSEC Jharkhand facilitate and ensure rehabilitation and social re-integration of trafficked victims

Delhi returned’, as the girls who come back to Jharkhand after a stint in a large city are called, are not a well accepted lot. In fact, ‘Delhi returned’ has become a derogatory term as such girls are perceived to be of loose morals, fashion-conscious and not able to fit into community life anymore. Finding a match for these girls is considered a very difficult task, as the general belief is that they cannot adjust to the hard life in the villages and will not be able to respect their husbands or in-laws. This is despite the fact that a large number of girls who migrate for domestic work send back the crucial remuneration that helps the family have a better life.

Among the ‘Delhi returned’ are also those who were trafficked for domestic work and/or sexual exploitation. Instead of being treated as victims, they are treated as offenders, reinforcing the community’s convictions about the bad morals of the Delhi-returned girls. Very often such girls are not accepted back in the community and in cases where they are, they face day to day derision and suspicion. Already traumatized, victims of abuse are most often not prepared to face such a situation and provide false addresses to prevent restoration.

ATSEC-Jharkhand is clear as to where their priority lies – the girls should be restored to their family and community and be able to live with dignity. To this end, a victim, once rescued is continuously counseled and simultaneous counseling sessions are conducted with her family and as much as possible, motivation sessions are conducted among the entire community by the partner NGO working in the village.

S, aged 18 years has been staying at the Kishori Niketan for the past one year. At the age of 14 years, she had been lured by a placement agency with promises of a better future and more comfortable life. She was given a job at a house that turned out to be virtual hell for her – she had to work for more than 16 hours a day and was tortured as well as sexually abused. She managed to escape one night and her plight came to the notice of ATSEC-Delhi. In a joint effort with ATSEC Jharkhand, S was brought to Jharkhand and put up at the ‘Kishori Niketan’, Ranchi.
Already traumatized and bitter, the discovery that she was pregnant hit S very hard. She became violent and aggressive, demanded tobacco and used abusive language when her demands were not met. She wanted to escape and spend her life on the streets. She gave false addresses of her village. A series of intensive counseling sessions later, S gradually opened up and shared her experiences. She gave birth to a beautiful baby girl at the center, who was named ‘Purnima’. Presently efforts are on to contact S’s parents.

The Kishori Niketan rehabilitation home for girls/young women supported by the network is the place where the transition takes place. ATSEC – Jharkhand has two Kishori Niketans at Ranchi which can house around 200 girls. A total of 179 girls have been mainstreamed since the setting-up of these centers. The centers provide services of continued and intensive counseling to rescued girls, aimed at slowly drawing them out from the shell that they have formed around themselves. Simultaneous counseling is done at the level of the parents to motivate them to accept the girls back and restore their lost sense of dignity. Parents meetings are held with this objective.

The girls are also provided the opportunity to join schools and jobs as much as possible. Girls thus mainstreamed by ATSEC – Jharkhand have performed well at the school level and in the Board level examinations. Where necessary, vocational training is provided to help the girls find a source of regular income. As an added aid in social rehabilitation, the girls are encouraged to join singing and dancing sessions. Most often the girls recover completely and once contact is established by the partner NGO with their family and community and their acceptance confirmed, they willingly return to their families. The partner NGO follows up with regular contact.

Building capacities to be self-reliant is one of the main objectives of Kishori Niketan. Where requisite skills have been developed, the girls are even absorbed at the Kishori Niketan itself as teachers or at various positions in partner organizations. Non-partner NGOs too provide them with jobs, on request.

R is today an independent and confident girl of 19 years. In fact, she looks so relaxed, smiling most of the time, that it is difficult to believe the trauma she has gone through as a domestic worker in Delhi. R had lost her parents at the tender age of 10 years and became dependent on her brother and sister-in-law. Looking at the income opportunity, they sent her to Delhi with a middleman, for domestic work. She was placed in a family where she had to do tiresome work throughout the day and was not allowed sufficient sleep. She was also abused physically, verbally and sexually. Unable to bear it any longer, she escaped the ‘cage’ as she calls it and reached the New Delhi Railway Station. A policeman noticed and rescued her and took her to a nearby shelter home. From here she was transferred to the Kishori Niketan.

Counseling and the atmosphere at the Niketan helped her so much that today she is happy to stay at the center. She is a pillar of courage and determination and as such, an example of what they can be, for other victims.