

BTC Level Consultation

On

Role of Law Enforcement Agencies on Crime against Children

Dated: 27th December, 2016

Venue: SP Office Conference Hall, Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam



NEDAN Foundation

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Trafficking in persons is a disgrace upon the face of humanity and strict laws are the dire need of the hour to eradicate this nefarious trade. In India, several domestic laws have been enacted over the years in order to address this issue. The seriousness of the problem in the context of Bodoland Territorial Council districts and Assam as a whole can be gauged from the fact that there is a rapid increase in number of missing children in the State. Children are trafficked to other States in the pretext of providing education and other lucrative jobs despite of existing free and compulsory education for the children below 14 years of age under Right to Education Act, 2009. The State daily newspapers publish reports on missing cases frequently among which most of the cases are from BTC. In addition to this other crimes like rape, sexual assault, child labour, child marriage has been occurring in BTC especially in Kokrajhar district unreported.

Looking at these issues and the alarming rise of crime against children a daylong BTC Level Consultation on the Role of Law Enforcing Agencies on Crime against Children was held on 27th December 2016 at the conference hall of the SP's office, Kokrajhar.

Dr LR Bishnoi, IGP, BTAD and the Additional DGP, Assam, Kokrajhar SP Rajen Singh, top ranking officials from the SSB, Senior police officers from Chirang, Udalguri, Baksa and Kokrajhar districts, Women Police Constables, Ms. Lalita Deka, State representative of Consultant State Child Protection Society UNICEF, Dr. T N Sharma Director of Health Service Kokrajhar, Mr. Hemanta Kalita Labour Officer CHD, Mr. Raju Narzary Executive Director NERSWN, representatives from the Civil Society Organization as well as media group were present in the consultation programme.

The Consultation Programme started sharp at 11:00 am in the SP office conference hall of Kokrajhar district. The programme begun with felicitation of the guest with traditional Bodo Aronai along with the NEDAN Foundation batch followed by lighting of the lamp. After opening the programme the guests and participants were welcomed in the consultation programme by Project Coordinator of Child Trafficking, NEDAN Foundation.

The Chairperson of NEDAN Foundation Mr. Digambar Narzari introduced the objective of the one day consultation programme through which he shared the points and views with Law Enforcement Agencies to protect children from various vulnerabilities like child labour, child marriage and child trafficking. He presented on "Child Protection Situation in Assam" in which he showed the Child Infant Mortality rate of Kokrajhar district and various issues on crime against children. He shared the Journey of NEDAN in the introduction of CHILDLINE 1098 in Kokrajhar which was started by



NEDAN Foundation in 2015. He also shared cases dealt by NEDAN Foundation and challenges faced while solving the cases. Through his presentation it was highlighted that as per a report published by NCRB, Assam had the highest number of child trafficking cases in the country last year, contributing 21.7 per cent of the trafficking cases at the all India level. Last year, a total of 1494 cases of child trafficking were reported in Assam, he said. He also said that the all India level of human trafficking cases was 6877 and the country has recorded an increase of 25.8 per cent under crimes against child trafficking. Assam is closely followed by Bengal, where 1255 cases were reported last year. The CID branch of the Assam Police had last year reported that at least 4754 children have gone missing in the past three years in the State, he said adding that the trend revealed in the report is worrying as the number of girls missing in the recorded time frame is almost double that of boys. Those missing in the past three years include 2753 girls and 2001 boys.

Dr LR Bishnoi, IGP, BTAD and ADGP, Assam conveyed his gratitude towards NEDAN and its work for organizing the one day consultation programme on crime against children. He said anybody under the age of 18 years is considered as a child and to protect children from trafficking and exploitation government has implemented various laws. He shared his point of view that trafficking in North East region is more because of the higher sex ratio compared to the other states of India like Haryana, Gujarat and South India has a lower sex ratio. Assam with a high sex ratio and a state where there are many poor people with less job opportunities and also low economic status in many sectors like road, electricity and education as compared to the other states of India. Secondly, since 1992 to 2016 total 12 round of ethnic conflict violence has struck in Assam. Due to which gangsters and traffickers target this area for trafficking. He added today's discussion is to bring solution for this problem regarding crime against children. When it comes to the housing infrastructure of these people is very low now and government has taken initiative in improvising the houses and has been working on it. There are variety of problems engulf in BTC like ethnic conflict, illiteracy, poverty that compel children to migrate to other States. Every category or say department has unique problems that need to be addressed accordingly. There are Acts enacted for children but only few are effectively implemented. He thanked NEDAN team for working in spreading awareness and most importantly by informing them and working along with the police officials. At last he added that in Assam there are 59 police officials among which only one of them is from BTC. He stated NEDAN meaning "open space" and we should work together to stop crime and give space for children to develop.



Mr. Rajen Singh, SP, Kokrajhar spoke about National and International trafficking of girls from



North Eastern States for forced prostitutions. Many minor girls from NE are trafficked to Bangkok for prostitution where such activity is legalized. On investigation it is found that ways through which these girls are taken to Bangkok, first they are taken to the Myanmar and from Myanmar to Bangkok, Thailand. Huge numbers of girls are being trafficked through containers and small vehicles. While dealing with the trafficking cases biggest problem or can say challenge faced by the police officials are in understanding trafficking because there is a very thin line between

kidnapping and trafficking where anybody can be easily get confused. The only difference between trafficking and kidnapping is that the victim knows that he has been kidnapped in case of kidnapping but in case of trafficking the victim is unaware that he or she has been trafficked. He shared many cases relating to such illegitimate activities. He concluded his speech with a token of gratitude towards NEDAN team for organizing the consultation and suggested the police officials to investigate the cases more closely to make the locality better and safer place.



Mr. Raju Narzary, Executive Director, NERSWN, thanked police personals for their cooperation and support in preventing child marriage, trafficking from Kokrajhar and entire BTAD districts. He said our country is run by constitution of India not by religion and caste and therefore the Acts and Laws enacted should be implemented by respective duty bearers by their esteemed interest complying with their duty. He mentioned introduction of mobile technology, poor

parenting and displacement the causes of child marriage and child trafficking. He also shared the challenges faced while dealing with these cases.

Ms. Lalita Deka, Consultant of State Child Protection, UNICEF, Guwahati, spoke about



convergence mechanism on protecting children. She highlighted various existing data of child marriage and missing children from Assam. She said that children are the future of this nation. Children who need immediate care and protection due to internal displacement are the most vulnerable children. These children need care and protection or else they will be exploited and misused. She added India is a democratic country and it is not our moral duty but statutory

duty to protect these children from exploitation. There are still many children involved with child labour in Assam or in India about which no clear data is available because it is not reported due to fear and lack of awareness. As per the recent data collected child sexual abuse cases has been increasing because people are now aware and people are coming forward and reporting. She enhanced her speech by proverbs “mature bamboo breaks when it is bend but tender bamboo does not break when it is bend” so there is a chance for the tender bamboo to grow straight again. Human mind can be same like the bamboo where mind of the old man cannot be changed whereas the mind of the children can be changed. She suggested the police officials that if a child is rescued then child should never be kept in the police station for long instead inform the CHILDLINE team and handover the child. The JJ Act, 2015 was briefly explained regarding the structures and provisions of the Act which is for children in need of immediate care and support. She also stressed the role and responsibilities of law enforcement agencies as per JJ Act, 2015 for protecting children. At the end she thanked NEDAN team and the chairperson of Nedan Foundation for taking initiative towards child protection and assured to help whenever needed.

Dr. T N Sharma from Health Department conveyed his gratitude towards NEDAN Foundation for inviting him in the consultation event. He shared his experience saying that convergence is a huge problem while dealing with child marriage. He added that early child marriage is a big challenge faced by the health department and this early marriage impact on the young girls which may lead to her death. Child marriage cannot be stopped by the health department but can be minimized through awareness programme at the ground level.

The other dignitaries present in the consultation also spoke valuable words of their cooperation in preventing crime against children. It was followed by open discussion in which participants from different police stations of BTC shared their experience of related cases of crime against children and their hardships in dealing with it because of insufficient resources with them. The police officials claimed that they sometimes need to spend from their pocket for travelling to rescue children from crimes. The spirit of discussion was strengthen as many police officials participated in it considering lack of men power and insufficient fund as their obstacle in abiding to their duty while dealing with crimes with determination to their best effort. The programme concluded by taking resolution and recommendation in working collectively in the coming years.

The few Action Plan forwarded are:

1. Conduct Missing Children Caravan
2. Training of District AHTU (Anti Human Trafficking Unit)
3. Convergence with ICPS, Judicial system
4. Register all unregistered Children Homes under JJ Act.
5. State Level intervention from Health Department for Medical Examination and age determination
6. Involvement of Health department for Child Protection.