



ASIAN ANTI-TRAFFICKING FORUM

SUMMARY

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

*What is the cost of a lost childhood?
What is the cost of a life in chains?
What is the cost of rape and life in the brothels?
What if it never happened?
What if we could stop it before it happened?*

In observance of World Day Against Trafficking In Persons on 30 July 2019, Operation Red Alert of My Choices Foundation organized the Asian Anti-Trafficking Forum in Hyderabad, India on the 29th and 30th of July 2019.

The Asian Anti-Trafficking Forum provided My Choices Foundation with the opportunity to bring together all our key stakeholders spread out across the country: our NGO partners, Strategic Partners, Government Officials and Law Enforcement Agencies.

In bringing our stakeholders together, it was our aim to provide them with the platform to analyze and discuss convergent strategies to combat sex trafficking through effective networking and insightful panel discussions.

The topics and objectives of the Asian Anti-Trafficking Forum were directed towards the prevention, rescue and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking, and as such, the forum was designed to be an invite-only event. My Choices Foundation is aware that multitudes of people around the world are passionate about doing their part to end human trafficking in India.

To ensure that everyone who is dedicated towards this effort is equipped with the latest research, learnings, findings and tools that were discussed/developed during the forum, we have shared this conference summary on our website. In the coming days, we will also be sharing videos of each session on a public platform for people to learn, deliberate upon and share with like-minded individuals and organizations who are dedicated to the cause.

We received a great response on social media to our live-updates of the Asian Anti-Trafficking Forum from our individual and organization followers and look forward to connecting further and working together to bring down human trafficking.



SPEAKERS

Dr. Sunitha Krishnan | Founder | Prajwala, India

Dr. Sunitha Krishnan works in the areas of anti-human trafficking, psychiatric rehabilitation and social policy. She has worked relentlessly to bring about a change in the attitude of India's government for victim-friendly policies as well as awareness regarding sex trafficking, through political, legal and media advocacy.

Her organization, Prajwala, has an international reputation and Sunitha Krishnan is regularly consulted by the Indian authorities as well as the United Nations and the US government. She has made it possible for the Indian Government and citizen's organizations to work together on a range of protective and rehabilitative services for women and children who have been trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation.

Rupa Chettri | Founder | Torrent, Nepal

Rupa is a highly qualified trauma counselor, life skills and leadership trainer having worked in direct anti-sex trafficking interventions and aftercare with the International Justice Mission (IJM) Kolkata Field Office. Rupa currently serves as Program Manager for the Justice Ventures International project of Torrent Consulting in Nepal.

She has provided insight and expertise for organizations such as Tear Fund and Love Justice (formerly Tiny Hands), The Nepalese Home, and others. Rupa is also presently teaching a course in the Masters in Psychology in Crisis Management program at Tribhuvan University.

Tariqul Islam | Founder | Justice and Care, Bangladesh

Tariqul Islam has over 10 years working experience in anti human trafficking sector. He led diverse team to implement several anti human trafficking projects involving national, regional and international platforms. He has been able to facilitate repatriation of hundreds of victims from destination countries whilst worked closely with governments to spark systemic changes in the bilateral repatriation process.

He has been working on to dismantle the criminal network operating across borders by bridging gaps between agencies at bilateral level. He envisions rescuing every victim and prosecuting every perpetrator.

Renita Menezes | Senior Advocate | International Justice Mission, India

Since the year 2007 Adv. Menezes has represented International Justice Mission (IJM) in legal cases at the Sessions Courts in Mumbai and Thane as well as in Bombay High Court. Through her career she has assisted public prosecutors in securing 28 convictions of perpetrators.



She has been a strong resource person for over 135 sessions through which she has reached out to more than 13,000 Judges, Magistrates, Public Prosecutors and Police personnel in procedures related to Sex Trafficking Legislation.

Melissa Walavalkar | Director of Justice Solutions | International Justice Mission, India

Melissa Walavalkar currently serves as the Director of Justice Solutions at IJM Mumbai. In her tenure over the last ten years, she has provided leadership to the Casework function particularly Aftercare. In her role as Director of Aftercare, more than 400 rescued survivors received aftercare rehabilitation services and more than 60 were successfully and sustainably restored to their communities.

Presently, Melissa leads a state-wide initiative to enhance the functioning of the Justice Delivery system, with reference to Trafficking crimes in the State. She leads the Casework, Government relations and Training and Development team, in leveraging casework wins, enhancing training and capacity building of the Criminal Justice System and focusing on creating deterrence to end violence against the poor.

P. Umaphathi | IG Retired Andhra Pradesh | IPS, India

Mr. Sattaru Umaphathi has rescued victims, prosecuted traffickers, and worked extensively with local NGOs. After training in Britain, Mr. Umaphathi went to the Police Academy of Andhra Pradesh, where he organized a training workshop for over 5,000 other police officers in anti-human trafficking. Recognizing the need for relevant personnel to be educated on these issues, he has consistently made training others a priority, and gathered together a conference of judges from all around India to train them on how to treat victims of trafficking in the court system.

He diligently pursues rescue operations, vigorously prosecutes traffickers, and attempts to argue for stricter application of the laws against modern-day forms of slavery. He has implemented his own policy of providing an interim cash payment to rescued survivors in order to keep them from being immediately re-victimized. He has also engaged in rescues in other parts of the country, in partnership with other police departments who have recognized his expertise on this issue.

Hasina Kharbhih | Founder | Impulse NGO Network, India

For 30 years now, Hasina Kharbhih has been working to provide sustainable livelihood in a safe environment for women and children. Ms.Kharbhih created the nationally and internationally acknowledged Impulse Model (formerly known as The Meghalaya Model) a holistic method to address human trafficking.



On the basis of the Model, key stakeholders from the public and private sectors work in collaboration to combat human trafficking and strengthen each other's work by incorporating some fundamental components.

Elca Grobler | Founder | My Choices Foundation, India

My Choices Foundation was founded by Elca Grobler. Elca has a background in finance and investment banking. She holds a CFA and MBA. She has always had a heart for the plight of women and children and whilst completing her MBA in Sydney in 2006 she realized that she would never be able to go back to a 'normal' corporate job.

In 2011 Elca and her husband took a leap of faith and moved to India with their three young children. Soon after, My Choices Foundation was born and there was no looking back.



SESSIONS

For our NGO partners and key stakeholders, the Asian Anti-Trafficking Forum organized the following sessions:

SESSION	SPEAKER
Rakshaks	Operation Red Alert
Nodal Teachers	Operation Red Alert
Challenges To The Safe Village Program	Vivian Isaac and Reena Lal of ORA
Technology (SafeTracker, Finance System and Helpline)	Operation Red Alert
Founder's Speech	Elca Grobler
ORA's Efforts in Asia for the Prevention of Trafficking	Vivian Isaac of ORA
Trafficking Scenario in India	Dr. Sunitha Krishnan of Prajwala
Asian Human Trafficking Scenario in Nepal	Rupa Chettri of Torrent (Nepal)
Asian Human Trafficking Scenario in Bangladesh	Tariqul Islam of Justice and Care (Bangladesh)
The Role of Prevention in Sex Trafficking	Elca Grobler
Panel Discussion: The Role Of Prevention In Sex Trafficking	Chaired By Elca Grobler
Prosecution	Renita Menezes of International Justice Mission
Relationship with Stakeholders	Melissa Walavalkar of International Justice Mission
Anti Human Trafficking Unit and Cyber Crime	P. Umapathi - IPS (IG Retired)
Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration of Trafficked Victims	Melissa Walavalkar of International Justice Mission
Networking	Hasina Kharbhiih of Impulse
Home Investigation Report and Repatriation	Tariqul Islam of Justice and Care (Bangladesh)
Panel Discussion: Home Investigation Report and Repatriation	Chaired By Tariqul Islam of Justice and Care (Bangladesh)

In the following section, we provide you with a summary of each session of the Asian Anti-Trafficking Forum 2019.



SESSION SUMMARIES

RAKSHAKS AND NODAL TEACHERS

Sustainability is an important feature of the Safe Village Program and to ensure that the awareness-education disseminated during the two-day Safe Village Program still resonates in the minds of the community members of each village, we appoint volunteer Rakshaks and Nodal Teachers to safeguard the village.

The Rakshak is a member of the community who pledges to be watchful and report any suspicious activity back to Operation Red Alert, while a Nodal Teacher keeps a watch over the students in his or her classroom, ensuring always to follow up on any suspicious or irregular patterns in their students.

This session introduced the idea of the Rakshak and the Nodal Teacher to those in attendance and provided all of our NGO partners with updates and encouraging news on both of these important volunteer positions, in each of the states we are currently working in.

CHALLENGES TO THE SAFE VILLAGE PROGRAM

During this session, the Operation Red Alert leadership discussed the challenges to the Safe Village Program, across different states. Bringing together our NGO partners gives each organization the opportunity to share their challenges with their counterparts in other states as well as with Operation Red Alert. During this exchange, our NGO partners were able to share their best practices, important lessons learned and examples of cases gone well.

Operation Red Alert listed and provided practical ways to resolve issues and will continue to work with our NGO partners to ensure effective work.

TECHNOLOGY (SAFE TRACKER, FINANCE SYSTEM, AND HELPLINE)

Operation Red Alert was honoured to host Mr. Ram Kumar Executive Head of Quantum, a data-analytics company that My Choices Foundation has worked with for multiple programs. This session discussed the role of data in our work including our Village Mapping Tool and SafeTracker, developed by Quantum, to aid the team in identifying vulnerable and at-risk villages as well as reporting.

Working hand in hand with Quantum enables us to both examine the crime of human trafficking - especially its use of technology - and in turn use technology to stem the practices of traffickers.



FOUNDER'S SPEECH BY ELCA GROBLER

The founder of My Choices Foundation, Elca Grobler, took each of those in attendance on a journey of Operation Red Alert. Beginning with the award-winning research that served as the foundation for Operation Red Alert, Elca Grobler highlighted the growth and development of the Safe Village Program as a prevention-based initiative that has now reached 3,000 villages throughout India.

When My Choices Foundation started its work in India in 2012 by tackling the domestic violence epidemic, the organization began receiving calls for help in cases where girls were missing - and trafficked. We asked the question - *can we not find a way to prevent more girls from being trafficked?* This is how we decided to focus on prevention as the core of what became the Safe Village Program - the two-day prevention program that we conduct in villages throughout India where we speak to each stakeholder about their specific role in keeping their children safe.

"We will not win the war by killing what we hate, only by saving what we love."

THE TRAFFICKING SCENARIO IN INDIA BY DR. SUNITHA KRISHNAN

"Any investment made in prevention - is the right investment."

Dr. Sunitha Krishnan's session on the trafficking scenario in India focused on new trends that are increasingly being used by traffickers; trends that have become challenges in the anti-trafficking movement. These trends include the increasing incidents of kidnapping and using technology to exploit people in both urban and rural India.

Traffickers' use of technology poses a challenge. It translates into a more clandestine process that creates more difficulty in identifying the trafficker or where/who they will target next. In a country with a 4% conviction rate, the anti-trafficking movement needs to focus on protecting victims, giving them the confidence to testify, and ensuring that we reposition our strategies, grow more cohesive in our thoughts, words and actions and meet head-on the challenges posed by traffickers' changing methods.

THE TRAFFICKING SCENARIO IN NEPAL BY RUPA CHETRI

In addition to the many aspects of Nepal that people discuss, trafficking is one of the foremost issues dominating conversation about this Asian country. The age range of its victims is alarmingly low and the anti-trafficking movement in the country is continually studying the constantly changing behaviour patterns of traffickers to ensure that we are likewise developing effective counter-trafficking measures.



Through different methods, victims of trafficking are exploited and lured into a life of slavery from which it is very difficult to escape. As in India, traffickers are increasingly adopting different strategies that include technology and “purchasing” victims, oftentimes before they are even born.

Focusing on the importance of partnership, Rupa Chetri spoke to the partners at the conference: *“No one person can do everything. But if we come together, we can break this crime.”*

THE TRAFFICKING SCENARIO IN BANGLADESH BY TARIQUL ISLAM

In his session on the trafficking scenario in Bangladesh, Tariqul Islam highlighted the issue of cross-border trafficking between India and Bangladesh focusing on the three Ps: prevention, punishment and protection.

The need to find work often takes “potential-victims” away from their families thereby creating an opportunity for traffickers to exploit the vulnerability of people who find themselves in different geographical locations. For this and other reasons, there should be greater cooperation between countries that are fighting human trafficking.

THE ROLE OF PREVENTION IN SEX TRAFFICKING - PANEL DISCUSSION CHAIRED BY ELCA GROBLER

Human trafficking has become the largest organized crime. The reality is that the average age of a victim of trafficking is only 12 years old and only 1% of the girls trafficked, get rescued. A prevention-based approach asks the question - *why can't we prevent them from getting trafficked in the first place?*

Education is a core tool in prevention. By educating different groups of people (community leaders, parents, teachers, siblings, friends, etc.), we ensure that each person is equipped with the knowledge to keep themselves and the people around them safe from traffickers. This need for community participation is important to ensure that each person works together to prevent traffickers from every operating in their neighbourhood.

PROSECUTION BY RENITA MENEZES

According to the law, prosecution is necessary to ensure that traffickers do not act with impunity; prosecution needs to take place to prevent further victimization and exploitation.

Senior advocate of International Justice Mission Renita Menezes spent this session discussing prosecution and introduced to the gathering the question (and answer) on why it is important to pay attention to *all* aspects of a case.



In every step of the case, it is important to protect and increase the level of sensitivity shown to the victim to ensure they are not living their trauma once again. Short sentences and the option of bail leads to many criminals going free without getting punished for their crimes so to ensure a water-tight case, recording data, having credible witnesses and following up with dedication and passion is imperative to follow up thoroughly on all aspects of a case.

"Somewhere, we need to break that cycle of a victim who turns into the aggressor. That is why prosecution is needed."

RELATIONSHIP WITH STAKEHOLDERS BY MELISSA WALAVALKAR

The police, the courts, and social services are the three pillars to ensure that the criminal justice system functions properly. For the victim of trafficking, one of the key missing aspects is the coordination, communication and convergence of the three pillars.

It has been highlighted in other session at the Asian Anti-Trafficking Forum that technology has changed the way traffickers operate. Human trafficking has become more of an organized crime due to its increased use of technology.

A strong focus of this session was efficient policing, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and accountability mechanisms.

ANTI HUMAN TRAFFICKING UNIT AND CYBER CRIME BY P. UMAPATHI

"Earlier, we thought that only the poor and vulnerable are victims of trafficking. Now we know, that is not the case."

The fear of the law is required to stop this crime. Former IG of Andhra Pradesh P. Umapathi's session was informative and interactive, covering different aspects of the law and the methods one is required to make to achieve the objectives of upholding the law and ensuring that justice is served to the victim and punishment is meted out to the perpetrator(s) of the crime.

To stop this crime - speedy justice, the severity of the punishment, and determination is required to fight this crime.



REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF TRAFFICKED VICTIMS BY MELISSA WALAVAKLAR

Traffickers act upon the vulnerabilities of the victim. Knowing how to identify the signs of trauma are vital: physical, cognitive, mental and emotional. The second step is to look at the manifestation of these symptoms in victims, upon which, after-care is given.

Restoration is a lifelong process, shared Melissa Walavalkar. To bring a victim back to her original self, is a long process and therefore an individual care plan is required to bring holistic care to the victim. In this, it is important to coordinate with the proper authorities, strengthen case-work documents, and follow up.

One has to be innovative and diligent when pushing for outcomes. Improve the quality of services offered to victims and stay connected with the victim as she is getting her life back on track. That is our responsibility.

NETWORKING BY HASINA KHARBHIH

Hasina Kharbhih, the founder of Impulse NGO Network, opened her session by asking the following question: *"when we walk out of the conference room, do we really collaborate, or do we compete?"*

This question invited reflection and came to the consensus that networking is really about partnership. As partners, we are always searching for effective resources to help us be innovative and take the initiative to fight trafficking.

Partnership is about collectiveness, collectiveness is about leadership, and leadership is about a very simple question: are we here for a project or to end human trafficking? If we are here to end human trafficking, then we require collective resource engagement, skills, and partnership.

HOME INVESTIGATION REPORT AND REPATRIATION: PANEL DISCUSSION CHAIRED BY TARIQUL ISLAM

In this important processes to combat human trafficking and its devastating effect upon its victims, HIR began to prevent the re-trafficking of victims and to determine whether the condition of the surroundings (both the home and the neighbourhood) was suitable or not.

In every situation and circumstance it is highly important to ensure that expediting this process leads to the well being of the victim. HIR is an integral part of repatriation, and we still have a long way to go to have a victim-sensitive and victim-centric repatriation process.