



# ADVOCACY INSPIRES ACTION

Children as agents of change

—GIRLS  
ADVOCACY  
ALLIANCE

terre des hommes   
stops child exploitation





**Advocacy Inspires Action - Children as Agents of Change** is the Youth Advocacy volume of a 4 book series highlighting the success of the Girl's Advocacy Alliance (GAA) project in India. Led by Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH-NL) with partners Shramika Vikas Kendram (SVK), FMMSSS, Scope RD, HELP, RAIDS, HANDS and Children of India Foundation (TdH-NL affiliate organisation) the project is operational in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

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"To speak up for  
the *rights of a  
girl* is to speak  
up for a better  
world "



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# ABOUT TERRE DES HOMMES NETHERLANDS



Terre des Hommes - Netherlands (TdH-NL) prevents child exploitation, removes children from exploitative situations and ensures these children can develop themselves in a safe environment.

Operational in 18 countries, TdH-NL works on combating Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL), Child Trafficking and Unsafe Migration (CTUM), Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), Child Abuse and promotes Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

In India, the organisation works in states of Jharkhand, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, addressing issues of child exploitation in the regions.





# ABOUT GIRLS' ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

The project Girls' Advocacy Alliance (GAA) focuses on **addressing and fighting the rising violence against adolescent girls and young women through lobby and advocacy**. We empower the girl child and the young woman by advocating for the prevention of child marriage and child trafficking along with the promotion of secondary education & job oriented vocational training.

We work in six districts across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana with six partner organisations implementing the project at the grassroots; HELP (lead partner in Andhra Pradesh) in Prakasam district and the state headquarters Vijayawada; RAIDS in Kadapa district, HANDS in Anantapur district; SVK (lead partner in Telangana) in the state headquarters, Hyderabad and Nagarkurnool district; SCOPE RD in the district of Khammam and FMMSS in Warangal.

We advocate with Community Religious Leaders, Civil Society Organisations, Government & Law Enforcement Agencies and the Private Sector. We also train young girls and boys as advocates.



# WHAT IS YOUTH ADVOCACY?

We have trained a total of 330 Youth Advocates (both boys and girls) to engage with stakeholders at various levels and stand up for the cause of women.

These youngsters raise their voice, sensitise officials and the general public on the prevailing issues faced by the girl child, thereby encouraging them to initiate positive action.

At such a young age, their ability to initiate innovative action for social well being and inspire change is beyond phenomenal. That's why we have also termed our Youth Advocacy action as '**Children as Agents of Change**'





# STORIES OF YOUTH ADVOCACY AND ACTION

Children as  
Agents of Change





## Are you bold enough to say NO?

This statement on placards held in public spaces was the leading theme to help bring awareness on the need to fight against all forms of girl child abuse.

In a world that is seemingly moving towards disharmony at an accelerated rate, it is important that as a community we stand up and fight for what is right and especially for those who cannot do so themselves.

Ms Bhargavi, a youth advocate and four other Youth Advocates from Warangal district, Telangana came up with the strategy of propagating the strong statement '**Be Bold Enough To Say No**'. This statement was the leading theme to help bring awareness to the public on the fight against child marriages, child trafficking, child abuse, child exploitation and gender discrimination with the help of youth advocates, agents of change and comic journalists on 11th December 2019.

Statements along these lines, such as, *be bold to say no to child marriages, no child trafficking, no drop out from secondary education, no child abuse, no child exploitation and no gender discrimination* were painted on to cardboard placards were held in public places such as busy roads, colleges and schools. This movement was also taken to multiple different stakeholders in the field of child protection to help make policy level changes on the matter. The efforts of the team succeeded in reaching over a thousand people including common people and government officials who could help make a difference in the status quo.

"Every little drop makes up the ocean", says Bhargavi, beaming with confidence that every little effort in the right direction will aid in the prevention of child exploitation. "I am bold enough to say no to child exploitation, are you?", she adds, leaving us with a strong question to reflect upon.

Youth Advocates, Change Agents or Young Leaders are Girls Advocacy Alliance's strongest asset to help bring about effective strategies into reality. Their voice is powerful and they help by coming up with innovating and effective ideas that strengthen advocacy and action.





## The 1 minute sensitisation

Youth Advocates sensitised passengers on a bus in the span of just a minute, talking to them on prevailing issues of child marriage and child trafficking along with elucidating their consequences.

The GAA network of CSOs and youth advocates constantly strive to come out with novel ways to reach out to people on girl child issues. Mr Shoban, Mr Rambabu and Mr Arjun Rao from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) worked together with youth advocates Vandana, Priya and Namitha to target passengers travelling in buses.

They came out with an innovative idea, labelling the programme JIT, which stands for '**Just InTime**', a one minute sensitisation programme. This idea came about because most people do not usually like to spend time in learning and discussing social issues. But, they certainly could spare a minute in which the issue can be highlighted, sparking an interest in them to pursue the matter willingly.

JIT consisted of presenting the issues of child marriage and child trafficking in the span of one minute on a bus. In this one minute, the youth advocates introduced themselves, explained the objectives of JIT – which were the consequences of child marriages and child trafficking along with the supportive mechanisms available for the rescue and security of the girl child.

To achieve this, they had to acquire permission from the bus depot manager as well as the drivers and conductors of each of the buses. They were able to cover 43 buses and over 1,800 passengers were sensitised. The success of the programme has led to the team deciding to repeat this practice on a monthly basis at different bus stands across the Khammam district.







## Boys for Gender Equality

Young Sagar emulates his sister and inspires other boys and young men to advocate for the issues of the girl child.

The best place to learn from is home, and we are glad that young Sagar has his sister to look upto.

Sagar A. is an active member of the National Service Scheme (NSS) in his college and has been making people aware of pressing matters such as the ill effects of Gender Based Violence including Child Marriages, Child Trafficking, Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation after spending time learning from his sister, Sarika. Sarika is one of Girls Advocacy Alliance's Youth Advocates for the Kadapa District, Andhra Pradesh. While she spends her time advocating against and spreading awareness on such pressing issues, she also motivates her community to send their girl children to get educated at the secondary level, as well as pushing young women towards job oriented vocational training programmes.

"I am inspired by my sister's dedicated work in advocacy actions and activities of the Girls Advocacy Alliance programme in our Kadapa district. I too wish to inspire other boys to support the mission of youth advocates against issues and ill effects of Gender Based Violence," said Sagar.

Sagar took it upon himself to carry his sister's work forward in his circles. He spread advocacy messages against the issues of child marriages and child trafficking through comics and disseminated them in his college. He proceeded to join the Youth Advocacy Network for the Kadapa District. "Kadapa is one of the districts where there is a high prevalence of child marriages and child trafficking. Here, there is a need for active engagement of the youth to help address these issues besides the action taken by the Government," said Sagar.

He then went on to orient the NSS in his college and began campaigning through their camps in villages of C.K. Dinne and Chennur Mandals which are one of the high-risk areas most vulnerable for child marriages and child trafficking in YSR Kadapa District.







## Dance for a Cause

The Youth Advocates' dance performance in malls gets the public's attention on issues of child marriage and child trafficking.

Youth advocates are encouraged to be proactive and organise activities to spread awareness in innovative ways to reach a wider audience. Under the leadership of Megahana, Samvashini, Namitha, Sana and Anjali, the youth advocates arranged awareness camps in various crowded places around Khammam district in Telangana.

They chose to conduct their camps at malls in the district to ensure high visibility. Dressed in GAA t-shirts and caps uniformly, they went to these malls and explained to the management about the work and services of GAA.

With the requisite permissions in place, they executed their plan of action. They began by dancing 'dandiya' and 'bathukamma' in the centre to capture the attention of the mall goers. With the attention on them, they discussed the consequences of child marriage and child trafficking. They continued by requesting people to support secondary education and Job Oriented Vocational Training (JOVT).

They went on to describe the supportive mechanisms available to rescue and rehabilitate trafficked children, women and survivors of abuse along with mentioning additional supportive mechanisms for girl children. IEC materials were distributed to the customers and pasted on mall's most frequently visited locations.

This activity ensured nearly 2,800 people received information on girl child issues and the available supportive mechanisms for children's protection. Activities such as this take place on a monthly basis in different areas in the district.



# The One Day Collector

The International Day of the Girl was observed by giving GAA Youth Advocates an opportunity to be government officials for a day

Mr. Gandham Chandrudu, IAS, District Collector, Anantapur district decided to start an initiative called Balike Bhavishyattu (Girl is the Future) where he issued orders to all the departmental heads across the district to allow the identified active girl children (GAA Youth Advocates) between the age group of 14 to 16 years to act as the Head of the Departments at both mandal and district levels on the occasion of International Day of the Girl.

This unique initiative caught the exuberant Ms. Sravani by a pleasant surprise. "I was so excited and enthused as I never thought I would control an entire district, all under my command. I'm inspired to make my dreams come true", she exclaimed. Ms. Sravani is a 16-year-old Youth Advocate with Girls Advocacy Alliance from Anantapur district, and on this special day she was bestowed with this great opportunity to be a District Collector for a day. Her mother, Mrs. Ratnamma and father, Mr. Pamuleti are daily wage workers from Kanumpalli village, Garladinne Mandal who only make a very meagre income where they struggle to even meet their regular family expenses.

During her day playing the District Collector, Sravani was already bestowed with some heavy responsibilities such as signing off on Rs. 25,000 as a compensation for a victim girl in an SC/ST atrocity case and issued an order not to disturb female employees over phone calls about official duties before 8 AM and after 8 PM. Day one and she was already pulling out the big guns!

After her day as a collector, Mr Chandrudu, District Collector visited Sravani's home in Kanumpalli Village and spoke to her parents on helping her future studies as well.

"I would like to extend my cordial thanks to GAA- TdH-NL and HANDS for equipping me with knowledge on the issues of girl children, ill effects of Gender Based Violence including its legal provisions, advocacy and communication skills and so on. This has brought a courage and confidence in me", said Sravani filled with gratitude.







## Youth Advocates form Child Clubs

Child clubs formed in high schools by a group of students protect children at risk and bring to light child-related issues in their village

With children developing their knowledge on their rights and issues, they should be given the opportunity to be at the forefront engaging a wider community to address girl child vulnerability. Youth advocates Akhila, Chandana and Patrisha, in the Khammam district of Telangana, did just so by devising and launching the concept of '**Child Clubs**'.

Child clubs are formed in high schools by a group of students to protect child rights and bring to light child-related issues in their village. Children in these Child Clubs play an active role in identifying their peers who are at risk of child marriage, child trafficking or dropping out of schools, being a support system among themselves. They came up with plans to address these issues along with other rights violations, preparing a plan of action to resolve these issues with the help of the Youth Advocates Association Hub (YAAH) and the GAA team.

With the formation of nearly 30 child clubs in 21 different villages in the district, some of the foremost outcomes include: orientations conducted by the GAA team and youth advocates on child rights, issues faced by girls and reporting the issues, laws relating to children, and where and how to access supportive mechanisms available in the district for the protection and promotion of girl child rights.

Apart from the above, 32 awareness programmes and orientations were conducted at schools. 46 child marriages and 4 child trafficking cases were prevented directly or indirectly by the clubs. 43 school dropouts were re-enrolled in schools. 12 girls were enrolled in Job Oriented Vocational Training. Reports including these statistics were given to block and district level officials requesting necessary action to which they responded affirmatively. The officials are continually striving to achieve similar objectives as GAA.



## Defence against society's dark truths

GAA Youth Advocate trains young girls in martial arts as a form of self defence to ensure child protection

Really kicking gender issues where it hurts is Ms. Mounika, who is pursuing a bachelor degree from Arts college, Anantapuramu. Her innate interest in Karrasamu, a type of traditional martial arts from India using a long stick has been around for a long time and she has a rich expertise in the field.

Within a few years she has participated in many competitions at the district, state and national level in this martial art.

"It means nothing to just protect ourselves in this society but we must also build confidence among girls and young women to protect themselves too while we do so". Mounika said. She added that her goal is to make girl children strong and brave enough to face any situation by learning self-defence and martial arts to cope up with current challenges in society. In line with this, she has started a self-defence training program in Anantapuramu.

"I have learnt to protect myself. Coming from a rural background, I was inclined towards the traditional martial art. However, I realised that it should not limit me; rather it should protect many such girls like me", says Ms. B. Mounika. She has been actively participating in Girls Advocacy Alliance activities since 2018 and playing an instrumental role in motivating other youth club members and youth networks. She trains her peer community girls on Karrasamu. She mainly focuses on younger women and engage them in advocacy action to prevent and address the issues of child marriages and child trafficking. She has developed a healthy rapport with the GAA team and the officials of concerned line departments as well as representatives seeking support for the cause of addressing gender based violence against girls and young women.

"GAA has built courage and confidence in me to act as its Youth Advocate with skills to communicate, advocate and capacitate my peers access equal rights and opportunities", she said expressing gratitude to GAA-HANDS-TdH-NL.





## GAA changes Harshitha's life

From facing the risk of being a school dropout, today Harshitha conducts child collective meetings in her school, spreading awareness on girl child rights and the importance of education

From nearly having to give up her education to becoming a Youth Advocate in GAA, Harshitha's life has gone through twists and turns to come to being able to make choices for herself. Currently in 10th grade, she has been a Youth Advocate in SVK-GAA for 2 years.

She hails from a poor family in Peddakothapally in Telangana and has two younger sisters. Her father, Ravindra Chary who works as a car painter, was not keen on her continuing her education. However, fate had other plans.

After an interaction with GAA, Harshitha joined as a child collective member in her village. YA facilitator Prasanna met with Harshitha and her family and counselled them on the importance of Harshitha's education, after which she strongly made up her mind to continue her education. She became a Youth Advocate in her village.

"I have been working as a Youth Advocate for 2 years. I know about GAA through child collective meetings in my school. I was selected as a Youth Advocate from a child collective. I got to know of child rights after being part of GAA. If I hear about any child marriage or child abuse, I will call 1098 or 100 to report the case. I have participated in many workshops and interface meetings through the GAA programme. I have gained a lot of knowledge on women and girl child-related Acts, Schemes and Rights. Now I am conducting peer group meetings and community meetings on social issues," says Harshitha.

She advocates for gender equality and conducts meetings using IEC materials. Her school teachers and parents are also supportive of GAA programmes and most importantly, they support and encourage Harshitha.

She has recently started advocacy with mandal level officers on girl child issues.







## Awareness in a Flash

The Youth Advocates mobilised 40 peers and organised a flash mob in public places to sensitise different stakeholders on the importance of child protection.

Nothing catches people's attention like a group of people bursting into song and dance, celebrating a cause they believe in. That's exactly what the Youth Advocates of Girls Advocacy Alliance did to raise their voice against child marriages, child trafficking and support the promotion of secondary education and job oriented vocational training for young women.

Our vibrant youth advocates Mansa, Ravali, Ramya, Sreeja, Gayathri and Vijaya Lakshmi, from Warangal Urban District mobilised 40 peers to engage in a flash mob in public places to influence the public and different stakeholders on the importance of child protection. The group perfected their skills by practicing their dance with a message on protection of children from exploitation.

They rose to the challenge by dancing in public places like educational institutions, government offices, people plazas and gram panchayats. The concept of flash mobs served to disseminate a message into society with effective music and dance, grabbing the attention of the public towards their message. They enhanced their whole performance by using effective posters (IEC material) on thematic subjects such as girl child protection and empowerment to catch the audiences' eye.

This resulted in grabbing the attention of a large audience who lent their glance at posters held by youth advocates which portrayed messages of reducing child exploitation and child vulnerability. The single flash mob reached out to over 3000 people in a day. These girls are championing the responsibility of influencing the community at large - the common man, government officials, law enforcement authorities among others to help decrease the rate of child marriages and child trafficking.

So the next time you want to make a difference, what are you waiting for, just put on your dancing shoes!



## The backbone of Youth Advocacy

The Youth Advocates through GAA began building parental support to help sustain their advocacy action.

To advocate against pressing social issues, 50 Girls Advocacy Alliance Youth Advocates and Change Agents from Warangal Urban and Rural districts of Telangana state, India, joined hands to advocate with the Government, CSOs and religious leaders for the prevention of Child Marriage and Child Trafficking. They also influenced different actors to promote secondary education for adolescent girls and job oriented vocational courses to young women to combat gender-based violence and economic exclusion of girls.

As part of their advocacy journey, a movement was organized for advocates' parents to observe their children's passion towards social well being, thereby extending their support and cooperation in the continuation of their advocacy to ensure the sustainability of the initiative. So, the Youth Advocates, with the support of Girls Advocacy Alliance started building the parental support for their youth advocacy action. The process started from 15th Sep, 2020. The response from parents has made the advocates more enthusiastic to continue their advocacy action.

"I lost one of my two daughters when she was a child. Since then I have taken utmost care in bringing up my only daughter, in keeping her safe and providing her with the best of opportunities. Today, I am proud of my daughter standing as a responsible Youth Advocate who is working towards bringing a change in society", said Smt. Rani, parent of Madhumathi (name changed), one of the Youth Advocates of Warangal.

It is the parents who help transform Youth Advocates from heroes to superheroes.







## GAA on Train Wheels

The aim of the campaign was to interact with passengers on trains, sensitising & engaging them through discussions on child related issues.

GAA Youth Advocates are enterprising adolescents not only participating in programmes but also coming out with new activities to spread awareness and educate people.

Namitha, Asma and Shivani along with GAA CSOs network Memunnamu, CRADO, SHIKA and Nenunnanu initiated an awareness campaign named '**GAA on Train Wheels**'.

The aim of this programme was to interact with train passengers, engage them in a discussion about child rights issues and take note of their opinions. The activity started on 19 November 2019 at the main railway stations of Khammam, Bonakal, Chinthakaani and Madhira. Three trains were selected for the first awareness campaign.

Once on the trains, they began to interact with the passengers, executing their conversational plan in action. First, they asked the opinion of the passengers on child marriage and child trafficking to which the passengers against it mostly said, "We all have the responsibility to prevent child marriages and child trafficking". For the passengers who did not agree with that statement, the team clearly explained to them about the consequences of child marriage, child trafficking and ways in which trafficking takes place. The team announced the supportive mechanisms available (contact numbers of NGOs, police and helpline numbers) to protect the girl children through a sound system that they carried. They distributed IEC material to the passengers and pasted them in all the coaches of the trains.

With this innovative activity, nearly 13,500 people were made aware about girl child issues. The huge reach and response resulted in the decision to continue this practice on a monthly basis.





# The story of Ramya

From wallowing in self pity about being born as a girl, today Ramya stands up for women and works towards their development.

This is the story of one of Girls Advocacy Alliance's Youth Advocate, Ramya from Warangal District. A Graduate who constantly encourages her peers to remove gender disparities among them, Ramya is well known for her brave thinking and innovative advocacy approaches. She stands as an inspiration with her stellar performance in the field of academics and extracurricular activities along with being a change agent in society.

Although Ramya has shone through her life, she did so with little aid while growing up. She was born into a very poor family, where they hardly found enough money to continue her education. She is the third of four daughters in her family and since her childhood, she was taught to build boundaries around her from the odd social evils. Her father brought her up by fending the fear of freedom and all her siblings were educated by confronting major struggles, all through the Government Scholarships.

After coming across such practical challenges at an early age in her life, she never wanted to see any child working below the age of 14. She dreamt of a society with gender equality, and personally prevented four boys and two girls from working as child labourers and supported them in getting admission into a social welfare school, where she happened to complete her school education.

She met with the District Administration, the Education Department and the District Rural Development Agency on imparting skill trainings for women. She put a request on the bench to strengthen skill development opportunities for girls and women in remote areas. She set a target of educating at least 1,000 people on achieving gender equality.

"Many times I cried for not being born as a boy," she said, feeling upset as she grew up watching her family receive pity for the number of girl children they had. "What is wrong with having a girl child in the family?" she rightfully questioned. "Never dream by sitting idle, rather work hard to reach the goal", says Ramya, in a powerful statement.

GAA lauds our Youth Advocates, who inspire us to continue our advocacy action with as much gusto, dedication and belief.





## A stroke of change

Rajiv sensitised his village members through his paintings which were displayed in the area's prominent places.

Sometimes little children have the strength to speak up on issues that even adults no longer feel empathetic towards. That is where Mr. Rajiv Kiran Arnold, an adolescent belonging to a family that is below the poverty line, came into the picture. When he was growing up he witnessed a lot of child marriages in his community. After he got to know of Girls Advocacy Alliance and their efforts in the field of women and girl child empowerment, Rajiv decided to take a step forward and help affect change himself in the Kadapa District for the prevention of gender-based violence and girl child exploitation.

He used the painting skills learnt from his father to campaign on the ill effects of child marriages and child trafficking. He also highlighted the need for the promotion of secondary education for girls and skill training for young women through his cartoons with effective messaging.

"I wish to contribute my services and extend my support for a great cause in the best way in which I can. I want to see a change in my own community first," said Rajiv.

He wants to bring about a change at the community level. He started sensitizing the parents, boys, girls, community elders and leaders, mothers and the Self-Help Group (SHG) members of his community through his paintings which were displayed in the *grama sachivalayam* (village secretariat) of their community. "In fact, it's a great pleasure for me as my paintings are helping spread awareness to many illiterate people too who can't read and write", he added.

Rajiv also extended his gratitude towards GAA-TdH-NL and RAIDS for giving him the opportunity as a Youth Advocate to work for a great cause.







## Sravanthi transforms into a leader

The journey of Sravanthi, a dynamic and enthusiastic girl, who now tackles problems of her village.

Sravanthi, a class 10 student is an active youth advocate from Telangana's Nagarkurnool district. She joined the GAA team in 2018 and has since grabbed every opportunity to participate in district level and city level workshops.

A dynamic and enthusiastic girl, she noticed problems in her village but had no knowledge on how to tackle them. The GAA team identified her in school and she joined the youth advocacy initiative.

She shares her experience with GAA, saying, "When I was studying at Telkapally (village name), I didn't know about GAA and SVK. I learned about their work when I came to Peddakothapally (village name) for my class 7. I am very proud to say that I am a Youth Advocate in GAA. Earlier, I noticed a few problems, but I didn't know at that time how to solve these problems."

She continues, "After some time, I went to Hyderabad and Bangalore for training. In that training I learned how local problems can be solved. My friends and family members have also supported me tremendously. We have changed and influenced some community members. In the ZPHS Peddakothapally School, we conducted meetings with schoolgirls. We arranged one complaint box. Even if the GAA programme stops in Nagarkurnool district, I will still continue my advocacy with government officials on girl child issues."

She participates in interface meetings with religious leaders and government officials and conducts meetings in her school and her village.

GAA has given her a platform which has built her confidence, instilled problem solving skills in her and nurtured her passion for change. Her dedication is evident from the fact that she plans to continue her advocacy even after GAA. Sravanthi has transformed into a true leader.





## The kinship of GAA

When a Youth Advocate was diagnosed with cancer, the other advocates got together and collected funds for her treatment.

Cancer is a silent killer that comes swiftly and changes lives beyond no return. It was heartbreaking to us at Girls Advocacy Alliance when one of our Youth Advocates, Swapna, was diagnosed with bone cancer. She was an active advocate from Anantapuramu district and participated in training sessions, workshops and also events on observational days like International Youth Day, National Girl Child Day and World Women's Day.

"I am not only losing my education but also staying away from the activities of educating and empowering our friends to advocate against gender-based violence", said a bold Swapna when she found out about her diagnosis. Our community is nothing if not compassionate and the GAA Youth Advocates often visited her house to give her moral support and courage. Unfortunately, due to her struggling financial background, she couldn't treat her cancer and had to give up her education.

Realizing the gravity of the situation, GAA Youth Advocates Nandini and Hima Varsha started collecting donations for Swapna's treatment through print and electronic media. The information was spread far and wide and it reached one of the famous movie heroes of Tollywood, Mr. Balakrishna, who came forward and helped in funding Swapna's treatment in a Hyderabad hospital. After surgery and necessary treatment, Swapna's health improved gradually and she recovered a good rate. She is now free of cancer.

"I would not have overcome this malignant disease if not for the committed and courageous steps taken by our GAA Youth Advocates. They brought me back my life.", she said filled with gratitude.

Swapna has now rejoined college for her further studies. We at GAA are extremely proud of our Youth Advocates for their familial love and kinship towards the team, reminding us that advocacy is not just about a better world for the community but for family too.





## Pragna's creativity gives wings to her compassion

Youth Advocate Pragna utilises her creative skills to spread awareness and is hailed as a champion by district officials.

Unhappy with the rising cases of exploitation against the girl child during COVID-19, Ms. Pragna, an active 19-year-old Youth Advocate of Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA) from Warangal Urban, Telangana, decided to take a step towards changing it.

Her compassion to protect children from exploitation made her explore her strengths to prevent it. With the support of GAA, she was able to build her capacities in raising the awareness and advocate for girl child related issues.

Endowed with creative skills, she started to sensitise her community on the prevention of COVID and its impact on girl children by pasting posters on the importance of education for girls in her village.

She also created a video on the 'Elimination of Gender Discrimination and Promotion of Women Empowerment' where she describes the status of women from ancient times to the present and the changes and hurdles women have overcome. She also harnessed the power of social media in spreading the message. She reached out to people across different regions and spread the word on the need for the protection and development of the girl child.

She is now being hailed as a champion for the cause of girls by officials from her district.

"Tears rolled down in happiness when I received such honor from great people. My enthusiasm and interest to advocate against gender discrimination is now doubled", said Pragna.





## The fight for equality begins at home

Growing up witnessing discrimination against the girl child in her own family, Saniya vows to fight for girls' education.

If you ask an adolescent girl from any generation, there will always be one moment where she can categorically remember calling out her family and standing up for herself. One such girl who stood up for herself is Saniya who asked her mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, uncle and aunty, "Why are there such restrictions for girls?"

This uproar came through as she saw a bitter experience in her own family where one of her girl cousins dropped out from secondary education, as her father was not interested in sending his daughter out of the house. This led Saniya to find out a list of reasons as to why girls drop out from education such as lack of proper facilities in schools, no separate toilets for girls, no sanitary pads available in schools, no high schools in the villages, no proper transport facilities, disparities between boys and girls and the list goes on.

Saniya is a young adolescent girl undergoing her secondary education in Warangal Rural, Telangana and is one of the most energetic Youth Advocates of Girls Advocacy Alliance. She built her capacities on developing cartoons and drawings through Girls Advocacy Alliance and has been moulded into a perfect change maker. She is now adept at skills to develop comics, cartoons, short films, videos and drawings to express her views and advocate on the promotion of secondary education for girls.

Using her skills, she drew very innovative drawings, cartoons and comics to trigger policy makers, law enforcement agencies and the community to extend their responsibility in promoting the secondary education of girls. She also met with religious leaders to help spread the message against social evils through their preaching. She met with Child Safe Organisations and responsible government departments to increase the facilities in schools for girls to continue their education with utmost ease, without any concern.

"My cousin has been brought back into mainstream education and she is very happy; and I am twice as happy," she said with joy.





## Swaying her way to empowerment

Ravali breaks traditional norms by spreading awareness through Zumba, a trending dance and exercise form.

"In the middle of every difficulty, lies opportunity", said Albert Einstein and Ravali went on to live by it. And opportunity takes many shapes and forms. The form Ravali chose was, dance!

Ravali, a Youth Advocate with Girls Advocacy Alliance which is being implemented by FMM Social Service Society at Warangal with the financial aegis of Terre Des Hommes Netherlands, is the youngest of three daughters and a son in her family. While growing up, she came across the story of one of her cousins getting into a child marriage, only to lead a life filled with struggle.

This life event and the general societal inequities that deprive the girl child made her take a bold decision to face the reality head on. She dared to beat the odds by making use of her dancing skills to help convey her message to decision makers in society who have held back the empowerment of the girl child. Through the strategy of mass dance, she amassed 50 youth volunteers to come forth, participate in and spread awareness through Zumba, a trending dance form which combines exercise and dance.

She is also one of GAA's most admired comic journalists. Apart from spreading awareness through dance, she spends her time developing many comics on child protection, girl child empowerment and women empowerment.

"I will make my nation proud, where every child is taken care of with utmost care and protection", said Ravali.



# THANK YOU GAA

## A note from Terre des Hommes Netherlands

Dear Religious Leaders, GAA Network CSO Representatives, Youth Advocates, respected partners and our beloved project team members in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana State,

From the bottom of our hearts, we extend our gratitude and convey our regards to one and all of you for extending your unstinted efforts in substantiating the marvelous mission of our GAA programme in India. We would not have achieved such splendid success and noteworthy progress without your sincere support and fierce commitment. We would like to reiterate that, there is your presence either directly or indirectly in every bit of our achievement during the programme tenure. Your auspicious association has made our journey memorable and fun. The contribution made by each and every one of you is invaluable and any amount of praise would be an understatement. Every moment that we have worked with you is a milestone towards a more secure, protected and nurturing world for the girl child.

We hope our association continues for further great assignments towards the gracious cause of providing equal rights and opportunities to girls and young women

**Mr. Thangaperumal Ponpandi**  
Country Manager, India  
Terre des Hommes Netherlands

**Mr. Subrat Kumar Panda**  
GAA India Project Coordinator  
Terre des Hommes Netherlands



# OUR PARTNERS



**Shramika Vikasa Kendram (SVK)** works to eradicate child labour, universalise elementary education and empower women socially.



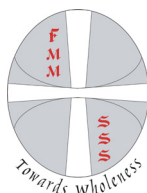
**HELP** works for the rescue and rehabilitation of victims, especially children, who are trafficked for sexual exploitation in Andhra Pradesh.



**Society for Community Participation and Education in Rural Development (SCOPE-RD)** registered in the year of 1992, works towards the welfare of children at risk.



**HANDS** in Anantapur district works towards addressing child trafficking and child marriage in the state of Andhra Pradesh through awareness and advocacy.



**FMMSSS (Fransican Missionaries of Mary Social Service Society)** promotes the development of women, youth and children through awareness activities on various socio-economic development interventions.



**Children of India**, a non profit organisation registered in Coimbatore engages in work related to education, health, livelihoods and emergency response.



**RAIDS** works for the alleviation of child abuse and exploitation in Kadapa district, Andhra Pradesh. It also works to prevent child marriage.











### **Advocacy Inspires Action - Children as Agents of Change**

is the Youth Advocacy volume of a 4 book series highlighting the success of the Girl's Advocacy Alliance (GAA) project in India. Led by Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH-NL) with partners Shramika Vikas Kendram (SVK), FMMSSS, Scope RD, HELP, RAIDS, HANDS and Children of India Foundation (TdH-NL affiliate organisation) the project is operational in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.



**GIRLS  
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