



STORIES FROM ASIA

SUCCESS STORIES FROM 2022



Terre des Hommes Netherlands is working towards a world where young people can feel safe today and better about tomorrow. Together with partner organisations, we fight against child exploitation in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Philippines and Thailand. We provide children with protection, education, and medical and psychosocial assistance. We educate families and children with campaigns.

This booklet documents 16 success stories from 2022. We thank our partner organisations, staff and donors for all the support that made these stories possible.

Content and design

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Acronyms and abbreviations



AHTJP	Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection (Cambodia)
APLE	Action Pour Les Enfants (Cambodia)
BCPC	Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (Philippines)
CoPE, Inc	Center for Empowerment and Development in Eastern Visayas, Inc. (Philippines)
CPTF	Child Protection Child Force
CRP	Center for Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (Bangladesh)
DYRF	Commercial Radio Station in the Philippines
EMG	Early Married Girl
IMAGE	Initiative for Married Adolescent Girls' Empowerment
MNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (India)
OCSE	Online Child Sexual Exploitation
PHYAP	Pag-Asa Youth Association of the Philippines
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WYESHR	Women Youth in Social Service and Human Rights (Nepal)

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Rao's Tremendous Effort in Supporting Migrants during the Pandemic

Migrants are often the most marginalised group of people in many countries. They often face discrimination and lack of access to basic services. In India, the caste system adds additional struggles to the daily life of people that are not even from abroad, but from other states within the country. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the already difficult daily life of a 'migrant' and their children in India could not even be imagined.

In the state of Andhra Pradesh, there are industrial districts where many migrant workers work in mills to process bricks, cotton, and other materials. These positions are often physically demanding and require long hours.

Though these workers get adequate remuneration from the mills, they were deprived of accessing the COVID-19 vaccine from the government as most of them lack the necessary documents or had left it in their hometowns. This documentation is essential for registering their data to the Government of India's vaccination reporting system. Adding to this, they neither had the time nor the resources to go back to their home state and get vaccinated.

For many migrant workers, the decision to stay and continue to work despite the risks of the virus was the obvious choice. They cannot afford to leave and also cannot take the vaccine. This issue became a focus of Bhaskar Rao, a social worker working for women's empowerment. He observed that the migrant people from other states living in industrial areas are not able to get free COVID vaccines. He felt that this was a violation of basic human rights.

Rao contacted Children of India Foundation volunteers, who were implementing Terre des Hommes Netherlands' vaccination project in the districts. Through Rao's courage and with the support of the volunteers, he convinced the local medical officer to organise vaccination camps inside the industry premises to help the migrants get the vaccines at ease.

Thanks to Rao's planning and ideas, the migrants were encouraged to call their relatives in their hometown who can access proof of their identification. Using photos taken of their identification cards, the health staff in the camps were able to get the details over mobile phones and enter their information into the government system. About 3000 migrants from different states received their vaccines which not only helped them to stay safe from the virus thanks to the tremendous effort of Rao's resourcefulness and coordination with volunteers and frontline health workers.

"I can now go out at least without fear as I am vaccinated. Thanks to those people who helped me" said Ranjana, a woman from the state of Odisha.

Rao was given recognition for his efforts in supporting marginalised communities with a certificate and a souvenir for his noble work in supporting local partners of Terre des Hommes Netherlands.



"I want to be a teacher which would allow me to share my knowledge with younger generations".

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cambodia, children had to adjust to a new way of learning through digital platforms and devices. For the 15-year-old Lina from Siem Reap, this was a difficult transition as lockdowns and social distancing became a norm. As Lina spent more time online to keep up with her studies, she also spent more time on using social media where she communicates with her friends. At times, she also makes friends with people she had never met in person. This put her safety and well-being at risk.

Her older sister rented a house to open a salon shop, which exposed her to a man that always visited the shop. The man and the girl added each other on Facebook where they started chatting and developed a relationship. Later on, they met each other very often, he also came to visit her at the coffee shop in her village. From day to day, their relationship became closer and they fell in love. Afterward, they started meeting and they had sexual intercourse in different occasions until the man began to groom her to send him naked pictures and videos.

The man promised Lina that he would get engaged with her, along with \$7,000 for dowry. Due to trust and love, the girl took her own naked photos, filmed her naked videos and shared them with the man. Every day, he asked her to make videos and take sexual images to send. When she rejected his request, he threatened to publish the sex videos on social media.

Lina tried to break up with him, but he seemed unhappy and started using the photos and videos he obtained to threaten her.

Without obtaining the amount he demanded for, the man shared Lina's videos on his Facebook story and in a Telegram group. Lina finally shared her situation with her older sister and her case is now being processed by the provincial police. The older sister submitted the complaint to the Siem Reap Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection (AHTJP) unit.

Seeking legal action, Lina's family explored hiring a lawyer. However, due to the high fees, they could not afford one. Thankfully, AHTJP police informed her about APLE's legal aid service, a partner organisation of Terre des Hommes Netherlands that focuses on providing victim care and legal support. Despite this, Lina was still frightened about the legal proceedings because she realised that the offender has many connections and has financial resources to pursue the court case. Apart from the legal aid service, the girl sought assistance in removing her naked photos and videos from social media platforms.

Lina is one of many children in Cambodia who are experiencing trauma from online sexual exploitation. As a child, dealing with a difficult situation can be hopeless. With the support of APLE and TdH NL, she was able to be represented in court, testify, and receive psycho-social counselling, and educational support. Lina stopped blaming herself for what had happened. Her family, especially her sister, also took good care of her to give her warmth and comfort during the rehabilitation. She feels less concerned about her court case because she is being supported by two organisations. Lina said, *"I want to continue my studies at University and to have a good job in the future."*



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*"All different members of the community
should work hand in hand to address this
situation."*



Youth Advocates As Prime Movers in Ending Online Child Sexual Exploitation

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions that followed, there was a dramatic rise in Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) cases. Even now as restrictions ease, it continues to be a great threat to the overall well-being of children and youth in communities.

Despite their vulnerability, children and youth can counteract the risk of becoming victims by participating and becoming active youth advocates in preventing OCSE. Shannen and Diane are youth scholars under the Terre des Hommes Netherlands Youth Scholarship Programme, and have become active youth advocates in their respective communities.

The programme offers economic support for under-resourced people (including some who have experienced trauma). There were 13 youth scholars that were selected from six different areas in Cebu Province. These advocates will have a key role in the prevention and response to online exploitation of children.

One of the major components of the programme is ensuring that communities will learn and report cases of online abuse. In the City of Talisay, Shannen and Diane had an active role in awareness raising activities.

Shannen said, *"I have realised that OCSE or any kind of abuse against children is everywhere. Just because there are no reported cases in a certain place, it doesn't mean that there is none since some witnesses could be paid and given incentives by the perpetrator. Also, the effect of these abuses would be hunting children forever especially if they are not guided."*

Despite the existing restrictions brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, Shannen and Diane continued teaching children and youth on how to protect themselves from online sexual exploitation in a series of events. This includes practising online safety, respecting the guidance of parents in their online use; being mindful of their presence on social media, and setting boundaries in using technology. With the support of the local government of Talisay through its Pag-Asa Youth Association of the Philippines (PYAP) organisation and Mercy in Action, the two young advocates were able to reach a total 2,413 children and youth from the different communities.

"I have learned that awareness is key and so is knowledge, as giving awareness without the aid of knowledge would not be effective. It is important that awareness should be aided with information relevant to the topic and also involving the people of concern.", Diane added.

The peer-to-peer facilitation approach of Terre des Hommes Netherlands for youth advocates was the main driver of success awareness raising in different communities.

This raises the confidence of many participants and the youth facilitators in discussing important issues to other people. It also creates a safe environment for children and youth which leads to more appreciation on the prevention and response to Online Child Sexual Exploitation in communities.



*"My learning with the TVET programme
inspires me to contribute to the
development of my society and country."*

Triumphing over Disability, Breadwinner for the Family

BANGLADESH

In the outskirts of Dhaka, opportunities for employment are lacking for many parents and youths. In the case of large families, children sometimes work to help their parents financially; as people resort to different ways of earning a living.

For 23-year-old Shomi, this was her reality. Her father had to work as a daily wage labourer, while her mother was a housewife - taking care of their large family of seven. Shomi particularly had more challenges growing up, compared to her neighbours as she had a speech disorder. For this reason she was bullied and neglected by her classmates.

Shomi said, *"My teacher even suggested to my father that I should work rather than be in school."* At only 12-years-old, she stopped going to school to cook and clean other houses. For years she was exploited had to work from dawn to dusk. However, Shomi always wished to learn the skills that are required to gain a decent job in the garment factory.

At this crucial time, she learned about Terre des Hommes Netherlands' TVET Programme, which selects youngsters to receive technical and vocational education and training. While cross-checking the preliminary information of the youngsters in the areas and seeking consent from their family members/guardians, Shomi's mother provided full consent indicating that, "If the centre would manage her speech disorder, she can receive TVET training."

Afterward, Shomi played a role as a community volunteer. With the help of the programme, she visited the Polli Garment Training Centre and was admitted to receive training for one month. She received assistance from the Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) to overcome her speech disorder. Shomi showed a quick learner attitude while learning skills such as controlling sewing machines, making collars, and front pockets with different fabrics. She also informs other youths about the TVET programme so that they receive training and employment in the garment sector.

"I realised that TVET can help us obtain decent jobs, which leads to a dignified life for vulnerable youngsters from marginalised families including those with disabilities such as myself. I regained my dream and proved myself", said Shomi.

Shomi is the breadwinner for her family now. Despite her indomitable dream to obtain a decent job, she could not find the way to make her dream true due to her disability and lack of skills. As a trainee through the TVET Programme, Shomi rigidly improved her speech disorder and realised what skills are actually needed for a gainful job. She stood at the same position on the ladder while she was a child labourer. Completing her TVET placement, she proved herself that her dreams can be achieved.

"Skills are important. With the right knowledge and skills, any youth can succeed. If anybody has a disability and gets special needs and care, s/he can make a change", Shomi concluded.



*"I feel I am lucky because I have my
mom with me and she is spending more
time with me"*



Protected from Online Child Sexual Exploitation: Preeti's Story

18-year-old Preeti lives with her mother and her younger sister in a single room. Preeti's mother had her when she was only 16, so she is now in her early twenties. She works as a waitress in Dohori, and she has also had to turn to sex work to feed Preeti and her sister.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, sex work was risky and underpaid, which made their situation more precarious. Preeti's family had to ration food and at some point they were almost starving. This made Preeti's mother call her clients for help, which led to phone and online sex work. She tried to do it while Preeti and her sister were asleep, but inevitably, Preeti saw and heard what her mother was doing, which was probably confusing for her.

As a desperate measure to keep her distracted, Preeti's mother gave her a phone. Preeti started playing games on this phone all the time, and would get a glimpse of the messages her mother received on this phone. Preeti would ignore these messages, but eventually her mother's clients started trying to talk to her as well.

When the lockdown was lifted, Preeti's mother started working in person again, which meant she would spend most of the day away. She gave Preeti her old phone so that she could play games when she was alone. Preeti then started chatting with her mother's clients, who started grooming her. To be sure, grooming is when someone builds a relationship with a child so that they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them.

One day, Preeti's mother found videos and photos of Preeti on a client's phone, and she was very alarmed. Luckily, Women Youth in Social Service and Human Rights (WYESHR), Terre des Hommes Netherlands' partner in Nepal, identified Preeti by talking to her mother. They reached out to Preeti to learn more about her situation and her activities online. They provided counselling and explained to her mother the consequences of such a young child being online: they advised her not to give Preeti a phone. They also made sure the local doctor checked Preeti's health condition and provided medical treatment if necessary.

The WYESHR team supported Preeti with educational materials and enrolled her in school. They also gave her some toys so that she could entertain herself when home alone. In addition, the family received food for three months as rehabilitation support. Preeti's mother also received a tailoring machine. This allowed her to engage less in sex work, which in turn meant she could spend more time at home with Preeti and her sister.

Preeti still receives support from the WYESHR team on a daily basis, to safeguard her physical and mental health. They are also in constant dialogue, so the team will know if anyone approaches Preeti online or offline. ***"Now I go to school and once I [get] back from school, I play with my toys and friends. Then in the evening I also study a bit,"*** said Preeti. Preeti's mother says that it was thanks to the support of the WYESHR project that Preeti was safeguarded in the proper way.

"The TVET project made me a success.

I recovered my strengths physiologically and gained the strengths enormously," said Sonia. With Sonia's wage, she and her husband managed to rent a modest room with an attached bath and separate kitchen."



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How the Young Sonia Acquired the Skills to Succeed

When her father died of tuberculosis in 2019, 15-year-old Sonia was forced to leave school even though she was good at science and maths. Her mother and older siblings then married her off to a 21-year-old from the same village.

Afterwards, she and her husband had to move to another village in Bangladesh to seek better opportunities. Sonia's husband first started working at an informal shoe factory, and later at the formal factory Al-Muslim Group as a laundry man, where he earned a monthly wage of 7500 BDT (76 euros).

They lived in a small rented room in a slum; in an area where most people are employed in the informal sector as garment workers and day labourers (meaning they are hired and paid on a daily basis, with no promise of work in the future). They spent 4000 BDT on rent each month, which meant they did not have enough left to meet the rest of their needs.

In order to support her husband, Sonia tried to get a job at a garment factory. However, they would ask her specific questions about sewing that she did not know the answer to, as she had never done it before. She then started working at an embroidery shop where she was unfortunately exploited: she had no contract, received no pay, and was given only a mid-day meal throughout 12-hour shifts. During this time, she longed to learn the necessary skills to get a better job in the garment industry.

One day, near the Polli Garments Training Centre, Sonia met a staff member of the TVET project (Technical and Vocational Education and Training).

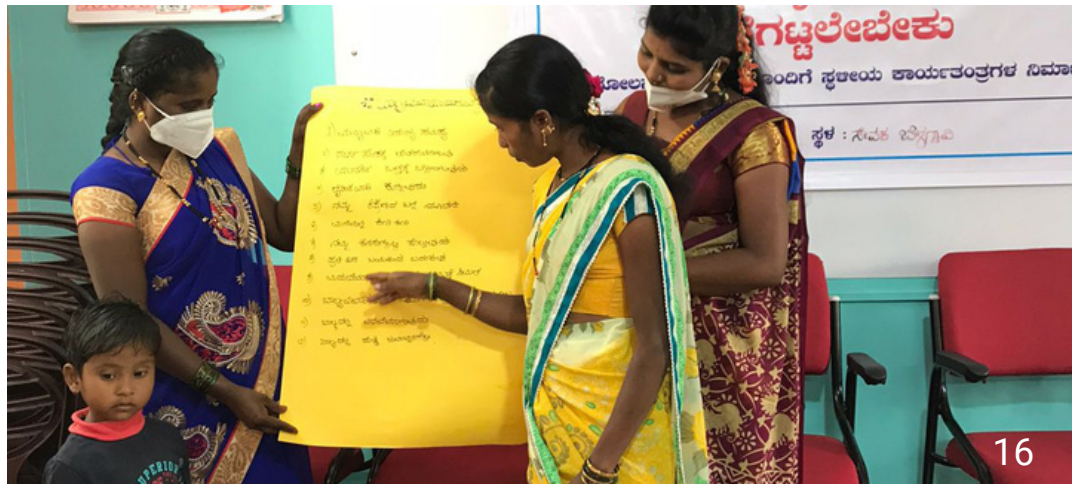
They were advocating for TVET and employment, and Sonia became motivated to join. She communicated to the project staff how she wished to take a Sewing Machine Operator (SMO) course from Polli Garments Training Centre. After an assessment, the project staff concluded that it was the right choice to make Sonia a beneficiary of the TVET project.

The project staff also sought consent from her husband, who provided full consent. Sonia then became a community volunteer and was admitted to the Polli Garment Training Center to take the SMO course. At the Center, she learned sewing techniques and attended life skills training. She also learned about occupational safety and health, labour rights and laws, minimum wage, maternity benefits, and more. Sonia proved to be a quick learner, and during the course she stayed in close contact with the TVET personnel.

After the course, Sonia joined the same factory as her husband (a renowned garment factory that complies with the legal minimum wage of BDT 9347 per month) as a sewing machine operator. She also motivates other young people around her to join TVET, as she thinks that this project was key to her new life. She is hopeful that other vulnerable young people from marginalised families can have their aspirations fulfilled with the help of TVET. They can now make ends meet and they are saving for retirement.

Working in the same factory, she and her husband receive a mid-day meal and spend time together after work. They also split household chores more equally, and they intend to have a baby next year. Sonia is now a confident woman with experience: with the help of the training, she can now plan her own future.

"Now I know the struggles the girls could be facing after child marriage. I realised my responsibility which is why we formed a group of movement members and discussed how we can contribute to stopping child marriage in our village."



Nisha's Inspiring Journey: from Distraught Child Bride to Movement Leader

INDIA

At 13, Nisha was forced to marry an 18-year-old from a nearby village, as her parents did not earn enough to raise her and her three siblings. She was then sent to live with her husband and in-laws. Nisha's husband and father-in-law are the main breadwinners, and they work as agricultural labourers. Nisha's husband also provides for his sister's family (which includes her children). When she moved in with her husband, Nisha had all of the household chores put on her shoulders. At 18, she has a 5-year-old daughter and a 2-year-old son.

"I agreed to get married as I thought after my sacrifice at least my siblings would get a good education and three meals a day. But, we are so unlucky. My father passed away within a couple of days after my marriage which broke me down to pieces. Due to this, my two younger sisters were also made to marry before they even turned 16 years old. We are all now victims of child marriages. None of us got a chance to complete our education," explained Nisha.

Nisha lives in Thirthkunde, a remote village in Khanapur Taluk of Belgaum district, India. Bound to the walls of her home, Nisha used to wake up to fetch water, wash clothes, clean and cook for the family members. After a short nap, she would go on cleaning, cooking and taking care of her children during the afternoon and evening. She had dreamt of completing her studies, marrying and having kids so young took that dream away from her.

In 2018, when Nisha enrolled on the IMAGE project, she had a baby in her arms and her health was not in a good condition.

After enrolling, she received Rs. 1000 in health assistance and learned about Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights. In 2019, when the second phase of the programme, IMAGE Next, was implemented in her village, she became a movement leader.

"As a movement leader I feel very charged and I have gained great knowledge after cross-learning with other movement leaders. I have also found a way to balance my work in the movement and my personal life," said Nisha.

Currently, Nisha takes care of her children and mobilises girls in her village. She also wants to make sure her children receive an education: *"As my eldest daughter is 5 years old, I will take care of her and fulfil her dreams. I will not commit the same mistake as my parents."*

Nisha's journey is very inspiring to other EMGs. Earlier distraught with life, burdened with household work and raising her two children, Nisha has found a more fulfilling purpose. She has taken it upon herself to improve the lives of other early married girls and at the same time prevent more child marriages from happening.



"I felt like committing suicide."



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"The support I received is the biggest support of my life as I am now free from fear and sadness. Also I am aware of this issue and will tell everyone, especially the girls, how to be careful online," explained Bulbul. "I will also join as a change maker in the programme to raise awareness against this issue."

From Suicidal to Change Maker: the Importance of Supporting Victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation

Bulbul had only finished class 10 when she had to leave school to look for work – her mother was struggling to provide for her and her two sisters as the only breadwinner of the family. Bulbul searched for jobs in her village but couldn't find any, so she moved to Kathmandu in 2019 to seek better opportunities.

After a while, she took a job as a bar dancer. She thought that she had no other choice as she hadn't been able to find anything else. This job already put her at risk of abuse, violence and exploitation. Then the COVID-19 pandemic came.

During the pandemic, the dance bars had to close, so Bulbul lost her job. She could not go back to her village as the situation there was worse: her father (a violent alcoholic) was ill and they still struggled to make ends meet. Then, one of her friends came up with an idea: she and Bulbul would record themselves dancing and share the videos. She told Bulbul that she knew a man who could help them make money with the videos.

Bulbul and her friend trusted this man, but he soon tried to convince them to make videos wearing less clothes. Since she was in dire need of money, Bulbul agreed to this.

In late 2021, as the dance bars gradually opened again, Bulbul got her job back, and stopped sharing both pictures and videos. However, the man that Bulbul thought was her friend asked for new content, and when Bulbul refused to provide it, he threatened to share the videos and pictures he already had.

He then blackmailed her and asked her to either pay him 50000 NPR (about 400 USD) or entertain a group of customers for him. Luckily, she was identified by the partner of Terre des Hommes Netherlands in Nepal, Women Youth in Social Service and Human Rights, who work with women employed in the entertainment sector. In April 2022, they helped her go to the police and file a complaint against the man that was threatening her.

Bulbul's father died during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, so Bulbul returned to her village to live with her mother and younger sisters. The WYESHR team (through the Building Back Better programme) provided Bulbul's family emergency support so that they could purchase food and education materials. Bulbul also received counselling, and after leaving her job as a bar dancer, she was able to open a grocery shop in her village – with the help from the WYESHR team. Although Bulbul does not wish to continue her studies anymore, she wants to help her sisters stay in school.

The youth change makers still meet up with Bulbul and her younger sisters to provide them counselling. The team is also still checking up on the case against the man who threatened her. The case is still in progress: as of June 2022, the police was still looking for this man, who reportedly fled Kathmandu. Bulbul has been able to recover emotionally and currently spends a lot of time with her mother. She now also knows how to identify and report online abuse.



"I thank Terre des Hommes for organising the Child Protection Task Force in our barangay," said Alejandra Montaclar, the co-chair of the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children in Babag.

"The existence of the Child Protection Task Force in our barangay is of great help to us in the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children because they are a force multiplier in protecting the rights of the children, and we absolutely need their services in the barangay."

The Positive Impact of the Child Protection Task Force in Reporting Abuse Cases

Before the implementation of the programme Down to Zero – Building Back Better in Lapu-Lapu City, in the Philippines, it was rare for a community member to report cases of child abuse, because of the idea that it may create unnecessary troubles to the person who is reporting the case.

However, in late 2021, the project team oriented 20 volunteers in the barangay (neighbourhood) of Babag to be a part of the Child Protection Task Force (CPTF). This is a grassroot group that supports the government in their community. The members were committed to help the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC, whose main task is to create programmes for the welfare of all the children in the barangay, and to encourage the community to participate) by reporting child abuse cases.

On 10 February, 2022, a 14-year-old girl was sexually abused by her own father in her own home. A few days later, she told her mother. Luckily, on 14 February, the mother of the abuse victim approached Fe Asingua and Judith Cabrera, members of the CPTF and informed them about the incident. Asingua and Cabrera immediately had a hands-on approach to the case. Upon realising the sensitivity of the issue, Fe Asingua interviewed the child privately to obtain more details, and helped the victim get a medical examination at the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Centre. Then, both Asingua and Cabrera reported the case to the BCPC and proceeded to the Gender and Development Office.

In addition, they went to the office of the Lapu-Lapu City Social Welfare to seek legal assistance. The 14-year-old girl was provided counselling by the Gender and Development Office and members of the CPTF. She is also scheduled to receive counselling by a social worker from the City Social Welfare Office.

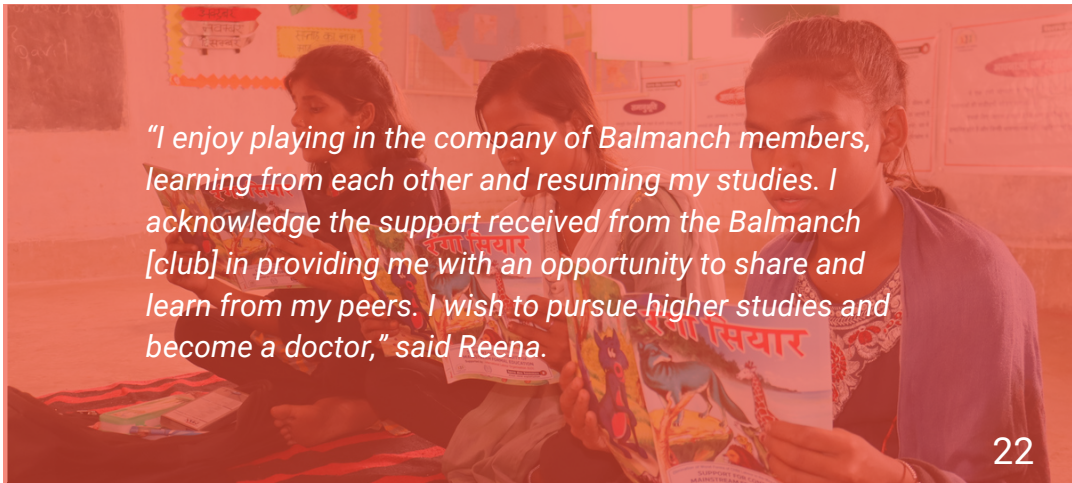
Presently, Asingua and Cabrera are still monitoring the situation of the girl, along with the legal action in progress, and they make reports about it to the Gender and Development Office. Unfortunately, a criminal case has not yet been filed against the perpetrator, who is still at large.

The CPTF has a good impact because of the perception it creates: contrasting the idea that reporting abuse will cause more harm, the children and their communities slowly get used to the idea that there are certain community members who are concerned and willing to offer help to any victim of abuse.

The initiative is an example of child rights' advocacy at a grassroots level, and it is effective since it directly engages with the possible victim(s). Because of that, the partnership between the BCPC and the CPTF is a clear necessity at this time – especially if some of the violators of children's rights are the parents. Hopefully, other partners can replicate the organisation and practices of the CPTF, and reinforce the current effort of the local government units to secure children's safety.



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"I enjoy playing in the company of Balmanch members, learning from each other and resuming my studies. I acknowledge the support received from the Balmanch [club] in providing me with an opportunity to share and learn from my peers. I wish to pursue higher studies and become a doctor," said Reena.

Reena's Back to School Journey

INDIA

In Jharkhand, India, 14-year-old Reena and her family live in a village that is essential to the Mica supply chain. This means that most people there are involved in Mica collection and processing activities. When the pandemic hit this area, the lockdown led to a decrease in wages, as well as a lesser demand for daily wage labour. This left people who were already living in precarious conditions even worse off than before.

As schools closed, Reena's parents could not afford smartphones, which would have given Reena and her brother access to online classes. As a result, they both had to drop out of school during the first lockdown of 2020. Even though both parents were working (their father was a day labourer in neighbouring villages, taking part in agricultural and construction activities; their mother was engaging in Mica processing activities) their income was not enough to support the family's basic needs. This meant that the children also had to start working – specifically, cleaning, segregating and delayering of Mica flakes at private factories. While doing this, Reena injured herself multiple times.

Reena's parents were also thinking of marrying her off, especially since during the pandemic marriages were cheaper.

Fortunately, Terre des Hommes Netherlands project staff Ms. Asha Kumari identified Reena during a home visit in December 2021. It was immediately clear that the family's poor economic conditions were the primary reason why the children were not attending school. Ms. Asha Kumari organised a meeting with the Self Help Group for Reena's mother, and encouraged her to seek support.

Reena and her brother were readmitted to school, and they were supported with educational material. Reena was assisted in the opening of a bank account so that she could receive a scholarship. In addition, Ms. Asha Kumari, in coordination with the Balmanch Children's Club and the VLCPC (Village Level Child Protection Committee) facilitated sessions for parents and children on the ill effects of child marriage. They were also informed about the toll free helpline 1098 to report cases of any child rights violations.

Reena's mother was encouraged to grow mushrooms as an alternative way to earn money. This initiative was part of a community participative scoping exercise which assessed potential additional livelihood opportunities for Mica-dependent families.

In two months, the family's average monthly income increased by 50%. The additional income and the acquired livelihood options were beneficial, as they are now able to spend more time together as a family.

The Balmanch Children's Club continues to monitor that Reena and her brother stay in school, and Reena is now one of the leading members of the club. They stopped engaging in Mica processing activities in February 2022.

Reena was also saved from marrying too young, thanks to the awareness session provided by the project.

*"I was nervous at the start.
But later on, my
nervousness faded. I feel
confident now to anchor
on the radio."*



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Sustainable Mentoring of Child Rights' Advocates through the Radio Program “Ang Kabataan Karon”

With the goal of attaining a sustainable approach to mentoring, the Children's Legal Bureau in the Philippines arranged for their radio programme Ang Kabataan Karon (The Youth of Today) to incorporate mentoring sessions on radio advocacy every Saturday.

This was done with resources which were originally intended for the now concluded programme Down to Zero – Building Back Better, making the initiative very cost effective and an excellent way to center youth and children as agents of change. The programme broadcasted relevant discussions surrounding child and youth issues, while also offering a participatory, collaborative, and engaging experience for child rights' advocates.

Only a few pioneer child's rights advocates have been trained on radio advocacy, and so the Children's Legal Bureau sought to have these pioneer and trained advocates mentor other members (who had little to no exposure to radio). During these mentoring sessions, not only child and youth participation is highlighted, but also the value of peer-to-peer mentoring. The key implementers and participants of these programmes were therefore the child rights' advocates who are still learning, along with the pioneer and trained child rights' advocates who served as mentors.

The radio programme is aired live every Saturday at one o'clock in the afternoon by the DYRF 1215 radio station. It is also streamed live through Facebook on both the DYRF 1215 and the Children's Legal Bureau's page. The mentoring sessions were carried out every Saturday between 19 February and 14 May, 2022.

Many of the members being mentored were nervous at the beginning, but the mentors helped in making the experience easier by making sure that the pupils were comfortable while on the air. Although some of the members expressed that they were not very confident yet, they were willing to join more mentoring sessions, so that their confidence could increase.

This practice effectively centered youth and children as agents of change against sexual exploitation of children. In addition, with radio as the medium, their advocacy plans surrounding prevention and response were shared (including helpful information, such as red flags or where to report), and discussions on relevant child and youth issues were broadcasted.



"I will continue to be a part of movement leaders among the Pressure Group members. I am firmly committed to preventing early marriage in my area."

Recovering Boyhood: How Rakib Went Back to School and Became an Advocate against Child Marriage

When Rakib was 19, he had just passed his secondary and higher secondary examinations with distinction, and he had been admitted at Dinajpur Government University College. However, he had also fallen in love with a student younger than him, and they got married in secret.

When Rakib's parents found out, they stopped supporting him and his education. His wife moved in with the family and had to take care of all the household chores, while Rakib started working in rice mongering.

Agriculture is a major activity and occupation in his village, and most people do rice mongering or farming of cattle and poultry. Rakib had to stop going to school and take part in this. With the support of his grandmother, he bought a bicycle, with which he would go to markets and bazaars to buy rice. Then he would resell it in his own village.

Rakib's wife was soon pregnant. During her pregnancy, Rakib was busy from dawn to dusk buying and selling rice, so he did not have time to take care of her. Unfortunately, no one took her to a doctor when she needed medical attention, and when it came time to give birth, she had to have a C-section in a private clinic. Afterwards, both her and the baby were very prone to illness.

Fortunately, in July 2021 Rakib was identified by the Nuffic Project staff.

Although he was initially reluctant, he did end up receiving training on SRHR, child safeguarding, gender equality, and other topics. After they analyzed his special needs, he was selected as an Early Marriage Spouse in his village.

He was also able to go back to school: with the help of the Coordinator of Pollisree, Rakib visited the college administration. Due to the recent COVID-19 lockdown there was some flexibility: the college told him a delayed admission was possible. Rakib then took the first year's honors final examination in December 2021, and passed with good marks. This boosted his confidence, thanks to which he agreed to take a number of capacity building training courses, including leadership, negotiations and networking, advocacy and life skills.

He is now an active change maker and was selected as a movement leader in the Pressure Group. In the meantime, his wife was selected as a Married Adolescent to take part in the project, and her father and mother were also included in the In-laws Group. Rakib is now actively campaigning against child marriage in his district, and he is still being regularly trained as a movement leader along with the other Pressure Group members.

In addition, Rakib's wife and daughter can now access medical attention whenever they need it. Rakib helps his wife with some household chores, and he is committed to getting informed consent when his sisters get married in the future.

"I am very happy to be able to continue my studies. It has been possible because of the support of the Balmanch club and the SHG. Thanks to TdH NL for helping with study materials, the bicycle, and being with me and my family in coming out from the worst conditions in our life."



"I enjoy being in the company of the Balmanch club members, playing and learning together."



Anshu's Story: From Collecting Firewood and Mica to Biking to School Everyday

Anshu is 14 years old and lives with her parents and younger siblings in a remote, small village in Jharkhand, India. Due to its location, the village is a key part of the Mica supply chain, and it has been severely affected by left wing extremism in the last 15 years. Around 60 families live in this village, and they all live below the poverty line.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the area, Anshu was in class 8 and happily going to school. Then the pandemic made their situation even more precarious, as the prices of firewood and Mica went down about 50%. This impacted the income of everyone in the village, and due to a reduced income, Anshu's parents couldn't afford to send Anshu and her sister to school anymore.

Anshu started helping her mother with the household chores, and she also began taking part in Mica and firewood collection activities. She and her younger sister stopped going to school completely in June 2021.

Luckily, Anshu was identified by the project staff Ms. Rupa Kumari in December 2021 during a home visit. The staff encouraged Anshu's mother to join a Self Help Group, where she received support to start her own shop as an alternative source of income for the family. She received INR 8,000 (around 100 USD) in February 2022. Anshu also received educational support (notebooks, school bag) so that she could pass the board examinations, which she did in April 2022.

She was also given a bicycle, as the only school beyond 8th standard was situated 6 km away from her village. Anshu's younger sister also received educational support. In addition, Anshu's parents were informed about their eligibility regarding social welfare and social protection schemes. They then received financial aid in the form of two instalments of INR 125,000 (around 1500 USD) in June and July 2022, so that they could rebuild their house.

Anshu was readmitted to school in January 2022 and passed her 8th board examination in April 2022. By June, she was enrolled in 9th standard. She is regularly going to school (for which the bicycle has been very helpful) and the Balmanch children's club members monitor her attendance. She does not take part in Mica or firewood collection activities anymore, but she does help her mother with household chores.

Meanwhile, the Self-Help Group still follows up on the progress of the shop set up by the family as an alternative source of income. Anshu's mother runs the shop and occasionally collects Mica, but she stopped participating in firewood collection. She now gets to spend more quality time with her children. On the other hand, Anshu's father helps run the shop and still collects Mica. He also works as a daily wage labourer in the MNREGA scheme whenever possible. The shop has allowed them to earn an average of INR 2,500-3,000 (around 35 USD) every month, and their average income has increased by 60-65%. They can now afford to pay for their children's educational needs.



"This experience has been truly life altering. Ever since I became an advocate, I didn't want to be stuck in one place, I wanted to explore and experience different things to learn and grow as a person to be a more effective advocate. I want to be the person who does all she can to help people who're in need of help. To be the voice of those who have no voice. A person who did something to make this harsh world a little more gentle, especially for our children."



Aira is an introverted 17-year-old who is a senior at Eastern Samar National Comprehensive High School. She was raised by diligent and compassionate parents Angel Fernando and Cheryl. Being second of four siblings, and the eldest daughter, she grew up responsible with a strong personality. At a young age she experienced how tough life can be. Her parents didn't have stable jobs then but had to raise and send four kids to school. And because her parents are both into humanitarian and community work, she has been exposed to the poorest communities and realized that no matter how hard their life has been, she is still more fortunate than them. Seeing and experiencing such misfortunes, she developed a heart to help those who are helpless and hopeless.

Thus an invitation from CoPE for a capacity building training for advocates in Promoting Child Protection through on Mental Health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) got her thrilled, knowing that CoPE is a humanitarian organisation helping vulnerable communities. It was her first time to attend such an activity and described it as a new and different experience but at the same time it was amazing. ***"Before, I was just so blunt and I didn't care what people might say or react. But after the training, I learned to be more aware and sensitive on what to say to not damage someone's mental health and well-being, and most importantly I am grateful to learn how to handle myself and help others to manage their stress as well,"*** said Aira.

Aside from the MHPSS training, Aira also grabbed the opportunity to sit in on the orientation on Child Protection and Child Safeguarding. Where she realized that she shouldn't ignore the people around her cause they might be suffering in silence from abuse or exploitation. To be more concerned and to take responsibility for her and other's protection. "And I'm glad I became more grounded with our laws and to always choose to do the right thing."

Also, with the on-going roll-out of the MHPSS trained advocates, the introverted Aira is taking down her wall brick by brick to be an effective stress management facilitator. Now she's opening up to people, able to talk to her peers - sharing her heart, her experiences and even pieces of advice, for people to also open up to her. She has become more empathetic and relatable. She realized that in sharpening one's learning and knowledge gained especially as an advocate she needs to engage and gain experience. Hence she will keep on trying, pursuing and learning.

Aira's experience with CoPE's interventions is something she will for a lifetime be grateful for. Because it's molding her to become and do better. It gave her confidence to socialize, to talk in front of a crowd and it opened doors for her to get involved in extracurricular activities in school. She's part of the Commission on Election Board and Ang Sinag The Official School Publication in Filipino.



"We can only listen, give basic advice and allow children to manage their feelings and problems on their own. Encouraging children to have a positive outlook gives me motivation to continue doing this volunteer work."

On the Other Side of a Call

Parunyu Kaitlatsame (Tai) is a recent graduate in Bangkok, Thailand. Graduating with a psychology degree, he decided to put it into good use and volunteer at the Childline Thailand Foundation Call Centre, a partner organisation of Terre des Hommes Netherlands.

"When I come to work, I feel good because I like to give advice, talk, and help children. Over time, I gained skills and knowledge about the common problems that children experience," said Tai.

As a part-timer, the 26-year-old volunteer had been supporting the ChildLine Call Centre for almost two years. Tai has dedicated his time in listening and providing advice to children in need of support.

Children from different provinces of Thailand seek support from the call centre. These children are often victims of abuse and sexual exploitation, often by their guardians such as their parents and family. *"The most difficult calls that I received is related to sexual abuse. Despite thinking that these cases happen rarely and far away, I actually received them at least twice a week",* explained Tai. With social workers, staff, and volunteers such as Tai, these children have the opportunity to get advice and express their feelings openly.

Through the Down to Zero Alliance, Terre des Hommes Netherlands with ChildLine had been implementing the Building Back Better programme over the past year. Ending in May 2022, the programme concludes the focus on supporting children during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. For Thailand, the focus was to prevent sexual exploitation of children from happening through awareness campaigns.

"We deal with cases through prevention methods and coping mechanisms. We want to manage prevention so that not only children are aware, but also adults", said the volunteer.

Despite the programme ending, Tai will continue his volunteer work.

"The important thing is to listen intently and deeply. Ask how you feel about what happened? Has there been a repeat of the incident? Did you tell anyone yet? When the child calms down, we also request additional information to be forwarded to various agencies. Through this volunteer work, I feel encouraged by other staff and volunteers. I was to continue in this type of work. The important thing is to see the picture of society and that many families have many problems. I would like to continue my career in supporting them", Tai concluded.



"We are so proud of our children. Even as adults, we are all stressed about work and lifestyle but these children fight for themselves and never give up. They still try to find a job. At times, they ask for help and suggestions but they never give up. That means they can live by themselves already. The only thing that we expect from them is that they can walk by themselves. We are like their friends walking with them till they arrive at their destiny".



A Support System for Street Children

Kan Mongkol is a social worker at 'The Hub', a shelter of ChildLine Foundation. He had been supporting street children before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangkok, Thailand.

"These days have been challenging because with COVID-19, we need to be more secure about children's health. So, we need to make new plans to organise and manage. We need to increase the donation bags."

The Hub had been supporting street children for many years. Being strategically located near a major train station, the shelter is able to provide a temporary location for street children to get food, use hygiene facilities, and mental support. This was particularly difficult during the pandemic.

Kan added, *"We still gave them all their basic needs, food, and donation bags. We gave them knowledge about the need to be vaccinated. Also, we take them to get the clinics to check if they have the virus. The most important thing is to keep in touch with them because they want someone to talk to during these tough times. Just being beside them gives them suggestions and spirit".*

ChildLine Thailand is a partner organisation of Terre des Hommes Netherlands. Through the Down to Zero Alliance and the Building Back Better programme, street children can have access to support that they need such as employment and educational opportunities. Without these support, these street children are at an extreme risks to sexual exploitation and the virus.

As the Building Back Better programme reaches to an end in May 2022, ChildLine Thailand will continue to support children through its shelter and call centre. The issues of sexual exploitation of children will unfortunately continue but the work against it will last.



Epilogue

A note from the communications team:

This booklet collects a few success stories from 2022, but it is important to note that these were not the only success stories nor the most important ones. We would like to thank the TdH NL staff, our partner organisations, our volunteers, the communities and children themselves, since they were all crucial to the collection and publication of the stories presented not only in this booklet but also on our website throughout the past year.

As showcased in the stories, the work that we do with children and the impact of our organisation is a result of a collective effort. We want to thank everyone for their work and acknowledge that the success in these stories would not have been achieved without everyone's effort and commitment.

We hope that our organisation will continue to have great impact for communities, families and children. We will surely continue to work towards a world without child exploitation.

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Our Partners from Asia



APLE plays an integral role in responding to abuse and exploitation in the online environment in Cambodia.



INCIDIN Bangladesh is identified as a research, advocacy and capacity building organization.



Pollisree is a local non-governmental organization that aims at empowering oppressed and destitute women in Bangladesh.



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



Bidlisiw Foundation is a social development agency in the Philippines that helps the most disadvantaged children and families among the poor communities.



CLB is committed to empower children and communities while engaging with law enforcement, prosecution, corrections, courts and local government units for the protection of rights and the attainment of justice for children in the Visayas Region (the Philippines).



WYESHR is a non-profit organization that has operated in Nepal since 2012, where they are the leading female and survivor led developmental agency.



Childline Thailand Foundation (CTF) runs a nationwide 24-hour telephone helpline with an easy to remember number – 1387. They believe the children of Thailand should have access to timely and appropriate protection, health and human services to increase their quality of life.



CoPE, Inc. is a child-biased and gender-sensitive organization in Eastern Visayas (Philippines) that promotes inclusive participatory governance for effective and responsive delivery of programs and services to different sectors of society.



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