

ASHSHASH: For Men and Women Who Have Escaped Trafficking NEWSLETTER

Issue 1, January-March 2020

Hope and Relief for the Trafficking Survivors

'Ashshash: For Men and Women Who Have Escaped Trafficking' is focusing on restoring dignity, well-being, and self-sufficiency of men and women who have escaped trafficking. The project works in partnership with public and private sector service providers to deliver a myriad of services to ensure the social wellbeing and economic empowerment of trafficking survivors. Ashshash intends to support the beneficiaries in getting employment and starting business after successful completion of skills development and entrepreneurial training. Ashshash project aims to improve the sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration of approximate 5,000 trafficking

survivors by the end of the project in 2022.

This four-year project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by Winrock International (WI). The program is currently working on five districts, such as – Satkhira, Khulna and Jashore in Khulna Division and Chattogram and Cox's Bazaar in Chattogram Division. The project aims to increase the capacity and commitment of local organizations and institutions to provide services that ensure sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration of men and women who have escaped trafficking.

Editorial: Note from the Team Leader

Our inaugural newsletter lands during the time of COVID - a time of quarantine, of loss, and a time of hope in the supremacy of communal cooperation and science. We write to share our condolences to those struggling through medical and economic hardship, and especially to those who have or may lose a loved one. As experts in modern-day slavery, we understand that surges in poverty and displacement – whether through conflict, natural disaster, or a pandemic – increase vulnerabilities that underlie and propel human trafficking. As migrants rush home, factories close, day labourers lack work, incomes collapse, and guardians pass away, the desperation that feeds human trafficking accelerates, emboldening those who would exploit others. The ASHSHASH Project collaborates in communities to reintegrate survivors – socially, mentally, and economically. In this time of increased economic vulnerability and medical risk, ASHSHASH is also supporting survivors and their families to raise awareness on COVID-19. Our commitment to fostering unity and cooperation to curb human trafficking retools handily in a time of pandemic, it is



also through common goals and working in concert that we can stem the spread of COVID. To this end, we share our mantra, 'Stay informed. Stay safe.' And in the temporary (and hopefully fleeting) time of COVID-19, we add, 'Stay home when you can. Wear a mask outside. Protect your loved ones.' And through our joint efforts and temporary sacrifices, may our next newsletter, full of survivor stories and future plans, find you healthy, resilient, and thriving.

- Dipta Rakshit, Team Leader, Ashshash

In-Person to Tele Counseling During the Time of COVID-19

Ashshash was looking for an alternative that allows survivors to access counseling remotely during COVID-19. Moving from the traditional in-person counseling, the project came up with an initiative of tele-counseling that can keep survivors motivated at this period.

With the support of Nasirullah Psychotherapy Unit (NPU) of University of Dhaka, Ashshash team oriented all Psychosocial counselors with the concept of tele-counseling and developed specific guidelines for capacity development of the counselors. Besides notifying about the preventive measures of COVID-19, counselors are also depicting how survivors can avail the aid from government, individuals, and other organizations in their respective districts.

The tele-counseling service for Ashshash's beneficiaries was launched on 26 March 2020 in

Khulna division and latter in Chattogram division. The service will be continued throughout the whole period which means until the government lifts the shutdown restrictions. Moreover, Ashshash has managed to provide counseling support to 394 trafficking survivors through 518 tele-counseling hours in its 5 working districts till the end of May 2020.



Survivors appreciated the initiative of tele-counseling services. A female survivor from Poigram Union, Fultola Upazila, Khulna said, "When I talk to the counselor, I share my pain and feel less burdened. This is the only time I can confide my distresses, cause there's none to listen to me." Thus, Ashshash project plans to include newly enrolled survivors in the tele-counseling sessions in upcoming days.

Ethical Story Telling: Words from a Counselor of Ashshash



"As a counselor of Ashshash project, I want to state and request you all to consider some aspect from now on-

- First, when you publish a story of any victim, please don't expose their personally identifiable

information;

- While portraying survivor's stories, can't we use imitation instead of using real photos?
- While interviewing the survivors, the approach should be empathetic and cooperative; thus, she can realize that she is being respected.
- The interviewer should make constant efforts to ensure that the interview does not cause any harm to the survivor.
- Any statement should be shared with the survivors first before publishing it to media.

In conclusion, I would like to request you all to join the fight of a survivor. We believe only joint and collaborative initiatives can stop human trafficking. Thank you."

- Reshma, Counselor, Ashshash

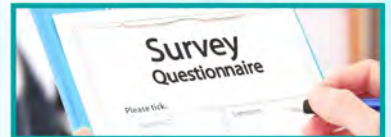
SDC's Visit to Ashshash Project

Suzanne Mueller, Director of Cooperation, SDC and Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Switzerland in Dhaka, Jeni Sorensen, Associate Director of WI and Nadim Rahman, National Program Officer, SDC visited a shelter home of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), named 'Thikana', at Vekutia, Jashore on 7 December 2019.

On 5 March 2020, a delegation team from the SDC's Global Program on Migration and Development (GPMD) paid a visit to Jashore to oversee Ashshash activities.



Prime Events and Activities (January-March 2020)



A Five-Day ToT on Skills Development Training for Instructors

Date & Place: 7-11 January 2020; BURO Bangladesh, Chattogram; **Participating Organizations:** BRAC, BGS and UCEP Bangladesh; **Outcome:** Enhanced capacity of the Instructors of partners on skills development training and economic empowerment services of Ashshash project.

Joint Partners' Meeting of Ashshash in Chattogram

Date & Place: 12-16 January 2020; Meheranti, Patiya in Chattogram; **Participating Organization:** BGS, BNWLA, BRAC, UCEP Bangladesh and Caritas Chattogram; **Outcome:** Created a common understanding of Ashshash's implementation strategy and developed a mechanism for effective collaboration between and among the partners.

Baseline Study of Ashshash

A baseline of the project has been conducted during the first quarter of 2020. The baseline information has been collected from trafficking survivors and their

linked service providers under a few key thematic areas.

MOU Signing between Ashshash and University of Chittagong

On 12 February 2020, Ashshash has signed an MoU with University of Chittagong with a view to engaging business graduates to mentor the Ashshash beneficiaries regarding business development.

A Five-Day Training on Basic Counseling Skills for Counselors

Date & Place: 22-26 February 2020; RRF Training and Resource Centre, Jashore **Outcome:** Developed a pool of psychosocial counselors in the working areas of Ashshash project.

Need Assessment of Trafficking Survivors for Economic Empowerment Services in Khulna Division

Date & Place: 4-5 March 2020 in Jashore and 15-16 March 2020 in Khulna; **Outcome:** All participants enrolled in different trades; i.e. tailoring, industrial sewing, consumer electronics, driving, etc.

Project Inception Meeting in Khulna and Chattogram Divisions

Partners of Ashshash organized several inception meetings at their respective districts with a view to introducing the goal, objective, expected outcome and strategy of the project among the relevant stakeholders. Agrogoti Sangstha and CWCS jointly organized an inception meeting on 19 January 2020 at the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) Office, Satkhira. On 6 February 2020, Rights Jessore, Dhaka Ahasania Mission, and RRF Jashore cooperatively arranged an inception meeting in the Jashore Circuit House, Jashore. In Chattogram, Caritas Bangladesh

and UCEP Bangladesh successfully organized a meeting on 11 March 2020. Participants including Additional Deputy Commissioner- Revenue, Civil Surgeon, Officer of Expatriate Welfare Desk, Principal of Technical Training Center, government officials and NGO representatives, Chairman of different Union Parishad and Upazila Parishad participated in these meetings respectively. The project was highly appreciated by the stakeholders who committed to work together to bring positive changes among the trafficking survivors and overall in the society.

Ashshash Partners at a Glance

Social Protection Partners (SPP):

Caritas Bangladesh, Bangladesh National Woman's Lawyers Association (BNWLA), Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS), Agrogoti Sangstha, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, and Rights Jessore.

Training Service Providers (TSP):

BRAC, Bangla-German Sampreeti (BGS), Underprivileged Children's Educational Programmes (UCEP) Bangladesh, Rural Reconstruction Foundation (RRF), and Mirpur Agricultural Workshop and Training School (MAWTS).

Flashback of Year I



Dec 2019
Three Day Orientation
Program on Entrepreneurship
Development Training for
Partners

Dec 2019
Joint Partners'
Meeting of Ashshash
in Khulna Division



Dec 2019
MoU Signing between
Ashshash and NASCIB
and in Oct 2019
between Ashshash and
Dhaka University

Dec 2019
International Migrants Day
Observed by Ashshash
Partners



July 2019
Gender and
Vulnerability
Assessment of
Ashshash

Feb-Mar 2019
Mapping of Training Service
Providers &
Landscaping of Public/Private
Sectors

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