



YOUR IMPACT THROUGH SAFETY

IMPACT REPORT, MARCH 2021

This project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

While emergency situations often bring out the best in people, they can also bring out the worst. An immediate result of the COVID-19 pandemic in India was a rise in sex trafficking – traffickers quickly exploited the economic vulnerability that COVID-19 lockdowns had caused and lured children away to be sold. In addition, and as in many other countries, the quantum of reported domestic abuse against women and children rose sharply.

In the first 11 days of the Indian Government's lockdown, the government-run Childline helpdesk, which addresses human sex trafficking, received 92,000 calls. In addition, the India Child Protection Fund has reported a 95 per cent increase in searches for 'child pornography' on sites in India since lockdown began.

VOICE OF THE PROGRAM

MALALANI'S RESCUE

In July 2020, 17-year-old Malalani went missing from Gadag, Karnataka. In India, this is an all too frequent occurrence, with estimates that one child goes missing every few minutes. Many children are trafficked as part of a nationwide trade separating them from their families; millions end up in forced labour, domestic slavery and sex work.

Some people in Malalani's village started a rumour that she had eloped. This meant that her family did not file a formal complaint with the police because they feared the loss of respect and reputation that would result if their unmarried daughter had run off. They asked the police to find out what had happened but police were unable to trace her.

Over the next three months, her family received missed calls from different phone numbers in Bangalore but every time they tried to call back there was no response or

the person who responded told them that it was a wrong number.

Narasapur, who lived in a nearby village, had attended the Safe Village Program, run by Opportunity partner, My Choices, which creates awareness about child trafficking. She asked Malalani's father to call the Red Alert National Child Helpline dedicated to addressing human sex trafficking to see if Malalani could be rescued.

After Malalani's father called the helpline in November, the case was referred to a local NGO partner who followed up on the missed calls and discovered the identity of the man who had enticed Malalani away. The trafficker was known in garment workers' circles for luring girls with promises of jobs in garment and shoe factories.

¹ Name changed

² BBC news 16 May 2020 <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-south-asia-52685559>



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Two women from the local NGO started a conversation with the trafficker, asking for a job. He promised them a job in Anekal but only if they came to stay in a nearby village. When the women agreed, the trafficker gave them his office address in Jigani.

On 8 December 2020, the two women went to meet the trafficker, while a third

person coordinated with police in Bengaluru and Jigani. Malalani had been taken 700 kilometres south to Tamil Nadu and forcibly married. With the assistance of the Jigani police, Malalani was rescued and the trafficker was arrested. Malalani is now safe and was able to tell police about other women who had been trafficked. The police are trying to trace them, too.

Data to December 2020

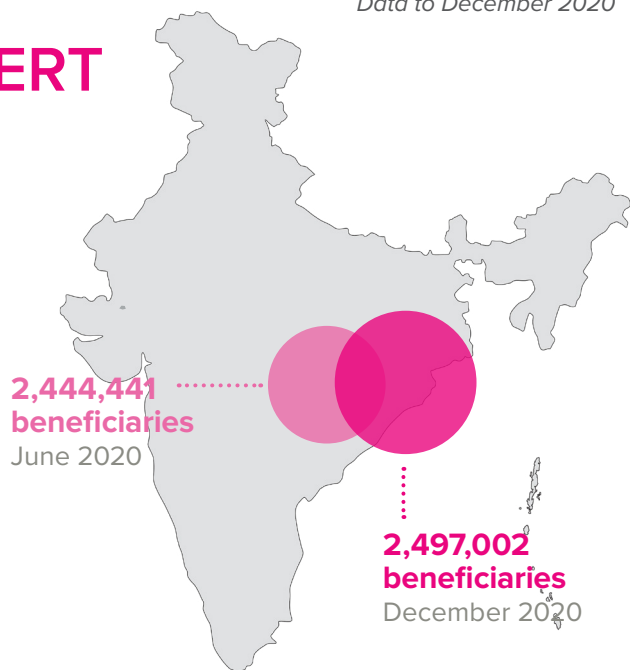
OPERATION RED ALERT

HIGHLIGHTS

From August to November 2020 the Safe Village Program reached **64,441 participants** in 237 villages, distributing 40,246 comic books with anti-trafficking messaging and reinforcing key messages with social media campaigns. The Safe Village Program teams also distributed relief supplies, responding to the grave hardship that COVID-19 restrictions had caused.

By using targeted text messages and mass media community radio broadcasts the team broadened the reach of their anti-trafficking and women's safety messages to **70,000 people per month**.

Distressed helpline callers were geographically mapped using the SafeTracker tool which incorporates data from Operation Red Alert's implementing partners.



Using this digital data collection tool, all helpline callers and local champions of the Safe Village Program who have been trained to be vigilant to risks of child trafficking were contacted regularly with text messages.

2,497,002

community members benefiting from trafficking prevention measures

4,706

safe village programs in some of India's most vulnerable villages

10,000

calls for assistance on the Red Alert helpline



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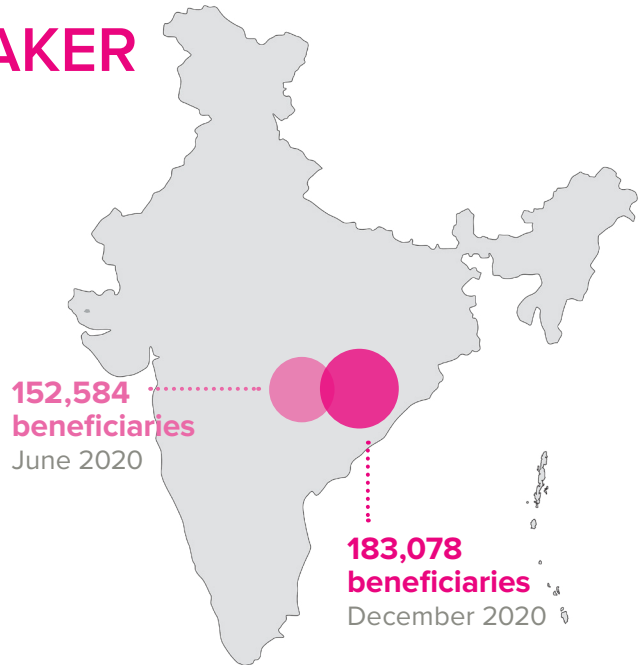
OPERATION PEACEMAKER

HIGHLIGHTS

Operation PeaceMaker expanded operations from four states reaching poorer rural communities and is now active in six states. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, Operation PeaceMaker recruited and trained new counsellors across West Bengal, Rajasthan and Jharkhand, creating awareness of domestic violence and conducting counselling sessions for women. Between August and December 2020, the team ran 541 meetings that reached 15,189 community members and students in these communities.

The PeaceMaker prevention program helps young students (female and male) become agents for change in their local communities. At the end of 2020, over 180,000 high-school and college students and adults had been trained in the prevention of domestic violence. From October to December 2020, counsellors handled over 2,300 domestic violence cases that had been referred through community-based Peacemakers or via the police.

Operation PeaceMaker launched a national toll-free helpline service they promoted through local community radio to address the huge spike in domestic violence during lockdown. The Peacemakers and counsellors reached out to over 1,000 clients in their database to stay connected with the women they knew, and offered



their support. They were overwhelmed with gratitude for reaching out – these often-isolated women felt comforted knowing someone was looking out for them. In some cases they used encrypted WhatsApp messaging groups to provide privacy for women who were concerned that their husbands or mothers-in-law might record their conversations or track their calls.

Engaging the local police in domestic violence training is a critical step in changing how women are treated when reporting a crime. Links with Telangana police were strengthened when 2,000 police officers received domestic violence training from Opportunity partner, My Choices. Training was also expanded for the community volunteers called Margadarshaks and Sangamitras to equip them to be change agents in their communities.

183,078

community members benefiting from violence prevention training

55

active Peacemakers supporting their communities

10,385

cases handled through counselling, rights education, and legal aid



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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Support rehabilitation of women and girls who have been trafficked and experienced domestic violence by strengthening connections with their programs.
2. Implement the competency framework built through digital data collection using SafeTracker for Operation Red Alert and PeaceTracker for Operation PeaceMaker.
3. Train and upskill field trainers remotely using new digital training modules. Opportunity's implementing partner will expand their digital training modules to improve their reach to rural women and girls in the poorest communities.

BUILDING IMPACT- MEASURING CAPACITY

In October 2018, Opportunity's Evaluation Manager visited the Women's Safety Program's implementing partner My Choices

and worked with them over the following six months to build their knowledge and skills in collecting and using data to demonstrate evidence of their impact.

The Head of Operation Red Alert, Sudha Upadhyayula, said that following the training My Choices:

1. Built a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Safe Village Program to continue to improve their program design
2. Started collecting survey data including statistics on the inclusion of people with disabilities
3. Built digital training modules to reinforce the key messages and increase impact.

Overall, the team is now more aware of the importance of collecting monitoring data to measure the impact, scale and sustainability of their program.

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