

#IMTHEMOVEMENT
AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Report on
WALK FOR FREEDOM

16th OCTOBER 2022

Organised by
Department of Social Work (UG) &
The Faith Foundation, Shillong (Lead Partner
NGO)

VENUE: St. Edmund's College

Human trafficking in India, although illegal under Indian law, remains a significant problem. People are frequently illegally trafficked through India for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced/bonded labour. Although no reliable study of forced and bonded labour has been completed, Non Governmental Organisations/ Voluntary Organisations of India estimated this problem affecting¹ 20 to 65 million Indians. Men, women and children are trafficked in India for diverse reasons. Women and girls are trafficked within the country for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced marriage, especially in those areas where the sex ratio is highly skewed in favour of men. Men and boys are trafficked for the purposes of labour, and may be sexually exploited too. A significant portion of children are subjected to forced labour as factory workers, domestic servants, beggars, and agriculture workers, and have been used as armed combatants by some terrorist and insurgent groups worldwide.

India is also a destination for women and girls from Nepal and Bangladesh trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. Children of Nepalese origin are also trafficked to India for forced labour in circus shows. Indian women are trafficked to the Middle East for commercial sexual exploitation. Indian migrants who migrate willingly every year to the Middle East and Europe for work as domestic servants and low-skilled labourers may also end up part of the human trafficking industry. In such cases, workers may have been 'recruited' by way of fraudulent recruitment practices that lead them directly into situations of forced labour.

As part to raise Awareness to the general public the Walk for Freedom is the world's largest walk against human trafficking organised globally by the nonprofit A21(Abolishing Justice in the 21st Century) and brought to India by The Movement in 2017. The Movement India has conducted 36 Walks in 20 cities from 2017 – 2022 as recorded by the Movement website on the 16th of October 2022.

Pre Program Activities:

Prior to 16th October 2022, a Non Profit Organisation – The Faith Foundation approached the Department of Social Work (UG) with a proposal to collaborate in organizing the Walk for Freedom for Shillong city. After a few meeting with the lead partner other organisations and educational institutions also joined hands together in participating for the Walk for Freedom – Shillong.

The Participating organisations included of St.Edmund's College Social Work Department (UG), Child Friendly Shillong (Bosco Integrated Development Society), Indian Institute of Professional Studies, The School Of Social Work- Martin Luther Christian University.

WALK FOR FREEDOM (October 15th, 2022)

To raise awareness about human trafficking, a “Walk for Freedom” was organised in Shillong on October 15, which brought about 450 participants from corporates, educational institutions, and non-governmental organisations. This year the “Walk for Freedom” was conducted in 10 cities of India.

The Shillong edition of the Walk was declared open by the Chief Guest, Dr. S. Lamare, Principal, St. Edmund’s College. Speaking on the occasion he said, “It was very important to raise awareness about this issue of human trafficking, especially in Shillong. Awareness is the need of the moment to make people understand and aware about human trafficking of adults and child trafficking still exists in our own community.”

The walk began at 10:00 am from St. Edmund’s College Field (the assembly site) and culminated at St. Edmund’s College after passing via the Fire Brigade, Beat House, and Don Bosco. A total of 446 people (students and invitees) participated in the walk.

Participants in Shillong took a pledge which was read by Ms. Iamon Syiem, Chairperson of State Commission for Protection of Child Rights Meghalaya where the participants declared to do everything within their power to help eradicate human trafficking in their lifetimes at the outset of the Walk. They then marched in a single line leaving St. Edmund’s College Field and returning there while carrying placards with facts and figures about human trafficking. The Walk, which was held in support of the silent victims of human trafficking, was conducted in silence.

After the walk, a Skit was performed by the students of Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong where through their skit they sensitize the participants about how a trafficked victim was tricked into accepting a job offer by her aunt into accepting a job as a housekeeper in one of the city of India. She was taken from her village to the city unknowing being tricked to work as a commercial sex worker in the red lights area of the city. Upon being rescued after a few years the trafficked victim showed signs of anxiety, depression, memory loss, eating disorder and showed signs of dependence on drugs and alcohol.

CONCLUSION

The Walk for Freedom is the world’s largest event to raise awareness against human trafficking, happening simultaneously in 500 locations across 50 countries. It is a silent walk where participants pledge to help end human trafficking in their lifetimes and walk single file in a public place holding placards about the reality of human trafficking that raises awareness among the watching public. Globally, the Walk is organised by A21, an international NGO in the fight against modern-day slavery.

PHOTO GALLERY





