

With barely a week to go for International Day of the Girl Child, we speak to organisations that empower girls, as well as the girls who benefit from them

Because Girls Matter

By Averil Nunes, Rama Sreekant and Pooja Bhula

Sonia Lamba* (12), Apne Aap Women's Collective



I, Sonia Lamba, now in Udaan, have been associated with the AAWC since I was very young. I have been living at the night shelter facility for the past three years. I love staying here as I've made friends with all the other students. I feel nice when I'm here. I have learnt several things with the help of the teachers and staff during my stay. I can recite tables, I can read properly and I can talk confidently. What I love the most at AAWC are the activities we regularly engage in. I love doing *masti*, singing and dancing and want to become a dancer! I want to become like Katrina Kaif when I grow up!

* Name has been changed to protect identity

Catalyst: Apne Aap Women's Collective (AAWC) was founded by Sudarshan Loyalka in 1998 on Falkland Road, Khetwadi, Mumbai to address the plight of women trafficked into brothel-based prostitution. The Udaan (flight) programme took off in October 2000 to prevent second-generation trafficking. In June 2002, toddlers were included through the launch of the Umang (joy) programme.

Agenda: Providing resources for a better quality of life to empower women who have been trafficked into brothel-based prostitution and breaking the cycle of intergenerational prostitution among their daughters. Services include pre-school tutoring, school enrolment, nourishing meals, a healthy and hygienic environment, medical facilities, career counselling, extra-curricular activities, boarding placement, day-care and night shelters.

Modus Operandi: Equipping girls to pursue aspirational professions and genuine socio-economic mobility.

Outreach: Kamathipura and Falkland. As of March 2014, AAWC has helped around 505 girls. At present, it is looking after 75.

Achievements: AAWC has helped more than 2,800 women and children. Its alumni have earned bachelors' and masters' degrees and entered professions ranging from accounting to social work and teaching... Till date, no alumni have entered prostitution and they report a 99% annual pass rate in school exams.

Future plans include: Reaching out to a wider beneficiary base within Greater Kamathipura; expanding to scattered red-light areas within Mumbai, where women beneficiaries migrate; starting a shelter home for women, children and girls on the outskirts of Mumbai.

You can help by: Donating, partnering, interning, running, fundraising, volunteering...

www.aawc.in

