

December 7, 2016

Bring light to trafficking of women & children in TN

On Human Rights Day, Stella Maris College organised a seminar on the topic



Annie Jesus Mary at the event

● Roshne B

She was only 13-years-old when she was taken away from her family — by her own maternal uncle and forced into prostitution in Mumbai, where she was forced to have sex with 14 to 16 customers a day. She saved almost ₹90,000 every year, only to give it all to her uncle. One such year when her uncle came back to collect the money, she was nowhere to be found; probably sold to a different brothel house.

The enraged uncle accused her parents of raising a 'thief' and 'cheat'. They were oblivious to the trauma Madhuri had endured for nearly two years. This is just

one of the estimated 2 lakh stories of women and child trafficking cases that take place in the country.

For International Human Rights day 2016, themed 'Stand up for someone's rights today', department of social work, Stella Maris, in collaboration with the Madras Christian Council of Social Service, organised a panel discussion on Trafficking in Women and Children at their college premises. Participating in the discussion were activists Annie Jesus Mary, executive direc-

tor, Jeevan Jharna Vikas Sanstha, Esther Mariselvam, regional manager, Action Aid, Isabel Richardson, CEO, MCCSS and Andrew Sesuraj, assistant professor, Loyola College.

"Women and children are the primary targets in trafficking. They are often cheated into it with false promises of good jobs and money, and are exploited. Also, the poverty of the family is often misused," says Esther. With mostly women and children being sexual exploited, forced into brothel-based

prostitution, sex-tourism, flesh trade and pornography, the only way this can be curbed is through creating awareness at the ground level and by providing education. "We have to discuss it. Once an individual goes through trauma, it's difficult for us to reintegrate them back into the society. We need to become more supportive," explains Andrew, pointing to the statistics that revealed a staggering fact that Tamil Nadu stands third in human trafficking with 577 cases, after West Bengal and Assam.

"Out of this, only 10% cases are in international waters, the rest happens within the country," he says. The cases are increasing steadily every year and the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) data record 6,877 cases in 2015, compared to 5,466 in 2014.

With creating awareness at the grassroots level being the need of the hour, Annie opines, "You must educate people about the ways through which women and children are abducted or deceived. They become aware of their surroundings."

Pointing to loss of identity as one of the main challenges faced by victims, Isabel added, "What you can do is adopt a victimised girl child and make her life better and normal again. We need people who can support them and let them know they are loved and not alone."

They are often cheated into trafficking with false promises of providing jobs & money

— Esther Mariselvam