Faith Foundation

A glimpse of the work of the Organization of the year 2015-16

Faith Foundation is an organization which is still at its infant stage. It has many more milestones to accomplish. Formed by a group of women in the small town of Shillong, its main aim is to uplift communities and empower women and children.

Faith Foundation work

The members of the Faith Foundation work tirelessly to uplift and educate communities in Shillong. From the beginning, they have been working with women and girls along with the help of stakeholders and the leaders of the community. In the year 2015, Faith Foundation developed a Community Advocacy Plan to address the issues on various manifestation of gender-based violence happening in the communities in Shillong. Faith Foundation recognized the need to reach out to other members of the community and empower them to be able to address the issues.

Community Empowerment

Faith Foundation developed a Community Advocacy Plan earlier in 2015. The plan was designed when one of the co-founders of the organization participated at the Global Indigenous School, New York. The plan was supported by the Youth Involve Fellowship, Bosco Institute, Jorhat. The plan was to address the issues on various manifestation of gender-based violence happening in communities. The organization recognized the need to reach out to members of the community and empower them to address such issues. The organization implemented this plan in Umktieh Community which is a rural community.

Fellowship Grant

In the same year, the organization had already started implementing the Community Advocacy Plan when it received a fellowship grant from the International Indigenous Women’s Forum to implement an advocacy project titled “Advocacy to prevent sexual and gender based violence against Khasi girls and young women in a matrilineal society at the grass root level” from the Global Indigenous School, New York, which further strengthened their work towards the Community Advocacy Plan. The project started from the 7th, November, 2015 to 31st, March, 2016. The people benefitted by this project were the Indigenous Khasi People of Umktieh Community, RiBhoi District, Meghalaya. The direct beneficiaries were 15 male and 58 female. The indirect beneficiaries were 300 members both the male and the female.
**Indigenous Rights**

An awareness program was held with the community members of Umktieh on various gender issues and human rights instruments. To aware the community members of their indigenous rights, the organization conducted an awareness program on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) on the 21st, February, 2016. The main aim was to educate the people on their Rights under the UNDRIP. A total number of 18 participants were present which consisted the community leaders and youth members.

**Skills to Strengthen Girls**

The organization conducts life skills to strengthen and empower adolescent girls. The Life Skills programs are a part of the Community Advocacy Plan. Faith Foundation implemented the Life Skills Programs at Umktieh Village in collaboration with the SOS Children’s Village through their Family Strengthening Program. The organization conducted Life Skills Programs with the girls of Umktieh Village. It created a safe space for adolescent girls. The program assisted the girls to develop skills on problem solving, critical thinking, decision making, communication skills, self-awareness, creative thinking, and interpersonal relationship skills, coping with stress, emotions and empathy. Moreover, the SOS Children’s Village wanted Faith Foundation to work with the Women Self Help Groups and thus they were also included in the advocacy plan. The organization conducted leadership workshops with the adolescent girls and Self Help Women’s Group to strengthen them, their roles and responsibility in the community. The activities were conducted in a child friendly manner through interactive methodologies like group discussions, documentary screenings and communication learning tools like pictures. The organization conducted about 20 Life Skills sessions with the Adolescent Girls Peer Advocate.
SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM AT UMKTIEH

LIFESKILLS SESSION CUM PICNIC WITH ADOLESCENT GIRLS
Grassroots Comics Training and Campaign

Grassroots Comics training with Adolescent Girls Group was held with children from the 12th to the 14th of January, 2016. The main objective of this training was to assist adolescent girls in discussing issues that affect their lives and to create those issues into a story and stories into comics. Later on, a Grassroots Comics Campaign was held on the 5th, February, 2016 in Umktieh. The girls distributed the comics to as many households in the community creating awareness on the importance of the comics and the issues that carried along with them.

GIRLS TRAINED TO DRAW

PRINTED GRASSROOTS COMIC STRIPS IN LOCAL KHASI LANGUAGE
Cultural Exposure Visit
The organization took the Adolescent Girls Group of Umktieh Village for a Cultural Exposure Visit to the “Ever Living Museum” on the 12th, March, 2016. The exposure visit was to make children realised the importance of culture, to provide children an effective way of learning about culture and to reconnect children to the materials and items used in the past by the forefathers. The girls learned a lot during this visit. There was an increased in knowledge on culture and diversity of the tribes of Meghalaya. It reconnected them back to their roots.
“Bridging the Gap”

A Gender Sensitization Program was also conducted for both the boys and girls on the 19<sup>th</sup>, March, 2016. The organized camps called “Bridging the Gap” integrated sports and life skills, promoted gender equality and discussions on sex and sexuality. The organization had three visitors who were from Chennai, Delhi and America who run their own initiatives. There were many activities for both the boys and the girls and both took part in all the activities willingly and with full of enthusiasm.

Hand Prints and Pinwheels

As part of the Life Skills Program, it was a poetic moment for the adolescents with the activity that was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, 2016. There were two sessions engaging the adolescents via creative methods and educational tools. They were first asked to choose the colours they wanted. They were then asked to handprint the colours that they have chosen on the white cloth. They were also taught on how to make pinwheels. The main aim of the session was that the children should look at a way forward and as a mark of commitment to share what they have learned in all the Life Skills Sessions. The children benefitted from participating in the activities and were able to link their learnings with life. It was safe space for them where they were able to learn, participate and be themselves with the rest of the peers.
Women for Rights!

The International Women’s Day was celebrated on the 8th of March, 2016 at the Umktieh Village. The number of members present in the program was around 300 members. SOS Children’s Village along with Faith Foundation supported the Women’s Group at Umktieh Village in organizing the event. On this day, sports were organized for the women to participate in the event. One of the guest said, “We respect women and especially our children’s surname is given from the mother’s surname.” Through the program, the organization was able to reach out to 300 people and made them aware of the importance on women’s rights and indigenous collective rights.

“Girl Child”

A workshop on Girl Effect and Human Trafficking was also conducted on the 6th of March, 2016. The workshop was on the “Girl Effect”- which portrays early marriage, early pregnancy and the risk and consequences to a young girl be it health, social or economics. It was to aware people of the consequences of early marriage and early pregnancy and importance of “Girl Child”. Documentaries were shown to create an understanding on the effects of human trafficking and sexual abuse. The workshop had a session on human trafficking as well and sensitizing the community on the suffering of millions of children and women in the sex industry.
Women’s Rights are Human Rights

A program on CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women- a United Nations convention) Women’s Rights and Domestic Violence Act was organized on the 11th of February, 2016 in collaboration with SOS Children’s Village. The North East Network was the resource organization for the program. A total number of 79 community members attended the program and they were all women participants. The resource person talked about women’s rights. The resource person also talked about the various forms of violence that women face especially in the private sphere.

An Alliance to Authorise Indigenous Women

The Indigenous Women Leaders Alliance Consultation Program was organized on the 7th and 8th of March, 2016, to mobilize women leaders from different parts of the State to form this Alliance at the local level. This was done in collaboration with the Grassroots organization. The number of women who attended this consultation was 17 of them and they came from different districts of Meghalaya. The main aim of this Alliance was to strengthened leaderships roles of local Indigenous women.
Child Abuse: See it, Hear it, Report it!

The Personal Safety Education Program is one of Faith Foundation’s most important programs. The program teaches children the skills to protect themselves from abuse and sexual violence. The Prevention Safety Education Programs (PSEP) is conducted mainly in schools and child care institutions. The stakeholders are the parents and the teachers.

PSEP with Schools and Child Care Institutions

The PSEP was conducted with the mothers of SOS Childrens’ Village in Umiam (mothers and children). The schools were responding well to the PSEP programs. Schools recognized the need and importance of the PSEP in their schools. St. Margaret’s Girls School had been very supportive of the programs and were able to sensitized parents as well as teachers. The organization reached out to 150 students, 700 parents and 69 teachers. St. Dominic was another school that the organization has been pursuing since 2013. The organization conducted programs with 5 schools in the Mawprem Community. The organization has conducted programs in 7 schools and has reached out to 1106 students.
Staff Development

Mrs. Shannon Dona Massar had the opportunity to travel to New York and participated in a program on Human Rights and International Advocacy Skills from the 13th to the 26th of April, 2015. The program was organized by the International Indigenous Women’s Forum. She attended trainings at the Columbia University and the United Nations. She was also very fortunate to have had the chance to participate in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Faith Foundation was able to understand and integrate the gained skills and knowledge into their programs with an indigenous perspective. It assisted them in developing the Community Advocacy Plan which was also presented during the program.

Miss Darhmingliani Hlonchue was selected and represented Meghalaya at the International Young NGOs (IYONS) from the 24th to the 26th of July. She connected and learned from young people from all over the world. She also presented the works of the organization at the summit.

Mrs. Barida Laloo undertook a six months online course which was offered by the Public Health Foundation of India.

Mrs. Shannon Dona Massar and Miss Darhmingliani Hloncheu participated in a program on Human Rights, Food Security and Nutrition organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations and the International Indigenous Women’s. The program was held from the 12th to the 21st of November, 2015. The main goal of this program was to increase the participant’s knowledge on national and international Human Rights, Indigenous People and Women’s Rights instruments. As well as relation to food security and nutrition and the principles and guidelines of FAO’s work for indigenous people.