

## CHARITABLE GIVING THROUGH ACTION LEARNING PRO BONO WORK

*"From small beginnings come great things."  
– Proverb –*

STOP is an NGO that has been combating trafficking of children and women in India since 1998.

STOP rescues, repatriates and rehabilitates survivors of human trafficking back into society through services like trauma counseling, psychological support, education and vocational training.

Koshish is a self-help group supported by STOP, comprised of survivors of trafficking and young adults from vulnerable communities. Koshish trains women in food catering, cooking, nursing, sewing and other skills to overcome economic odds and live dignified lives with gainful employment.

Subsequently, while awaiting the funding, the focus has been on how to use the current kitchen facilities to start an out catering business on a smaller scale.



National Railways has agreed to build a commercial kitchen for Koshish a division of STOP. Koshish will use this kitchen to develop an out catering business to better facilitate vocational training, gainful employment and generate revenue for the center.

The work undertaken with STOP initially focused on the steps required to scope the building of the commercial kitchen (essentially the business plan) in order to receive the funding from National Railways.

The work started in February 2014, the follow up meetings and subsequent AL sessions have continued over the past 18 months.

Smriti, one of the survivors who now oversees Koshish, summed it up perfectly in the learning component of one of the sessions: “we learn by asking more questions which in turn helps to shape our ideas”.

Even though Roma is a retired university lecturer, she commented that she had learned more in the first AL session than she had in the past 40 years of her life!

As is will most NGO's, STOP rarely receives 'professional' support in the form of capability development or strategic problem solving. To have the opportunity to use AL has been immensely powerful for all the people involved in the project.

AL provides empowerment to each team member to have a voice, to challenge the ideas.

In addition, the process provides a focus on results they want to achieve, rather than the issues the organisation may or may not face with the project.

The opportunity that Koshish presents for the women who have survived trafficking is incredible. Being involved in the development of the out-catering business is very humbling. I have since seen the girls in action at various events around Delhi over the past year, they are so proud of what they have achieved, and rightly so.

The biggest learning for me through all of this is to be prepared, the sessions rarely run 'perfectly' but as a coach I have to be very alert and adapt to each situation. It is up to me to make sure the team gets action and learning from each session, and for an organisation such as STOP this is invaluable.

To have Smriti, a survivor herself, participating with intelligence and common sense demonstrates that these girls have a positive future. Not just for themselves, but also for the families they will bear in the future. For me, this is the true power of Action Learning.

Emily Rogers  
India  
/published2015