

# Himalayan Anti-Aids & Anti-Narcotic Drugs Society (HANDS)

## Activity Report

2019-2020

### 1. Counseling Seminar on “Education and Life Ethics” on 19th April 2019.

One of HANDS key areas of work is to create and spread awareness regarding substance use and its abuse; and chemical dependency. Our target group has always been the youth and youngsters. Given this, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2019, HANDSs joined a Counseling Seminar on “Education and Life Ethics” for the youth of the congregation organized by the United Churches of North India. HANDS interacted with the youth, and shared firsthand information, anecdotes and other problems locally and globally associated with substance use/abuse. We had a good number of young individuals looking forward to hearing from HANDS, who keenly participated by asking us questions. Two of our staff members Mr. Rajesh Diyali and Mr. Bidhan Pradhan addressed the youth at this seminar.



*Youth listening to HANDS talk and Mr. Rajesh Diyali addressing the youth at the Seminar*

## 2. Meditation “sebir” on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

HANDS recognises the importance of a well-balanced, healthy mind. In collaboration with Brahma Kumari Ashram member, HANDS organized a day long meditation “sebir” (camp) at HANDS Rehabilitation Centre for its indoor patients in Kalimpong. The goal of this one-day meditation camp was to help our patients work on their concentration skills, learn the art of focusing and meditation. Volunteers from Brahma Kumari Ashram came and meet our patients and conducted meditation for them. It was a refreshing event where our patients enjoyed learning this art of concentration. We look forward to many such initiatives from Brahma Kumari Ashram members that would help our patients.



Patients meditating at the Rehabilitation Centre with Brahma Kumari Ashram volunteers.

## 3. Felicitation by Kalimpong Journalist Association 8<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

One of the key events that was almost like a morale booster was the recognition that HANDS received for its service towards combating substance use/abuse and chemical dependency in and around Kalimpong. Recognising HANDS decade long tireless efforts, the Journalist Association of Kalimpong District felicitated some of our members at a program organized in Kalimpong Town Hall on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2019. At times, acknowledging the hard work HANDS members in and by our community goes a long way in motivating us further to work harder. This recognition has been well received by HANDS members. In 2019, Mr. Amode Yonzon, the Vice President of HANDS and Mr. Nereus Mukhia, Project Coordinator were felicitated by the Journalist Association of Kalimpong.



*Mr. Amode Yonzon and Mr. Nereus Mukhia being felicitated.*

#### **4. Celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day of HANDS's Rehabilitation Centre on 10th June 2019.**

While HANDS has been working against substance abuse since 2006, the Rehabilitation Centre which followed after three years in 2009 has since its inception been able to intervene and successfully transform hundreds of chemically dependent individuals into responsible members of the society, free from substance use and abuse. We are proud of the fact that HANDS has been able to provide a non-for-profit Rehabilitation Centre - the only one in Kalimpong District, where individuals from all walks of life, different socio-economic backgrounds and severity of substance dependency can seek help. The rate of enrolment and recovery has been very high, which also reflects a dismal state of our community/society where social ills relating to substance abuse still is increasing by the day. On our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we organised a small celebratory event at the Rehabilitation Centre, where we invited upon a few key public figures. The occasion was graced by our Mrs. Sarita Rai, MLA Kalimpong, district administration officials, board members, staffs and our indoor patients. The patients had put up a cultural program with folk dance and songs, much enjoyed by all those who attended the celebration.



*Mrs. Sarita Rai addressing the gathering.*





*Rehab-patients performing a song.*

## **5. International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019.**

Like every year, HANDS grabbed the opportunity on International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking to reach out to the masses, specially the youth and students to create awareness against substance use and abuse, and chemical dependency. This year HANDS had two programs lined up for the day.

1. HANDS in collaboration with Kalimpong District Police organized a rally starting from Town Hall that would traverse around the town and culminate at Thana Dara. The SP along with other high-ranking Police Officials, Kalimpong Municipality Chairman, students, and the public were a part of the rally. At Thana Dara, the SP addressed the audience or the rally participants on the containment of illicit trafficking of contraband substances. Our Project Coordinator Nereus Mukhia spoke on behalf of HANDS on the issues substance abuse and its dependency.
2. The same afternoon HANDS also undertook an awareness program on substance abuse to the students of SUMI school. The students were very enthused about the program where they were explained the path from experiment of substances to its dependency. Many questions were raised by the students, which were all addressed by HANDS representatives.



*Rally starting from Town Hall.*



*SP Kalimpong, Municipality Chairman & other dignitaries along with HANDS members.*



*Mr. Nereus Mukhia addressing SUMI students*

## **6. Independence Day Celebration on 15<sup>th</sup> August 20019.**

Independence Day is a much-awaited celebratory day particularly in Kalimpong - which is famous amongst the three hill regions for the colorful, beautiful parades at Mela ground. However, at our Rehabilitation Centre, where we have our residential patients, Independence Day is celebrated in our own humble capacity. This year, like any other year, had the regular parade, followed by a speech on the contribution of the Freedom Fighters of our country. The patients saluted the tricolor, raised it and enthusiastically shouted “Vande Mataram”. They sang the national anthem with outmost seriousness and love for our country. A short cultural program was organised by the patients again where they sang patriotic solo and group songs. There were indoor games – tambola - too for their recreational enjoyment.





*Independence Day Parade.*



*Speech on Freedom Fighter by one of the resident patient.*

## **7. World Aids Day on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019.**

HANDS does not let go of any opportunity in reaching out to the masses and World AIDS day has been one of these International events where the staff and volunteers go out to various officials like the Police Department and the public, request for two minutes of their time and pass on the message of HIV/AIDS and its mode of transmission. We give and seek solidarity with other thematic areas. Last year, our member Mr. Yabesh Mukhia took time, meet various police officials and dignitaries, including locals of Kalimpong and created awareness about HIV AIDs.



*HANDS member Mr. Yabesh Mukhia with the ASP, Kalimpong and other police dignitaries.*

### **8. Health Camp (for awareness) at Suruk on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2019.**

HANDS along with the alumni of St Augustine's School, Kalimpong had organized a health camp and an awareness program for the people of Suruk Busty, which is not only remote and distant but also neglected in terms of infrastructure and development. It was a much-anticipated program and many villagers, particularly the youth had gathered at the designated venue - Suruk Primary School. From HANDS, Mr. Nereus Mukhia and Mr. Palden Bhutia had attended this awareness program. Mr. Mukhia had addressed the locals there, and explained the horrors and ills of substance abuse, specially alcohol related, which remains rampantly in the rural areas.



*Mr. Nereus Mukhia & Mr. Palden Tamang in Suruk.*



## 9. Christmas Celebrations / New Year Celebrations

HANDS celebrated Christmas with the resident patients. Young members of the Christian Motorcyclist Association volunteered and joined the celebrations.



*CMA Members at the Rehabilitation Centre.*



*Christmas Celebration by the resident patients at HANDS Rehabilitation Centre.*

## **10. Blood Donation Camp on 30th January 2020.**

HANDS along with the Kalimpong District Police had organized a blood donation camp at Town Hall. More than 100 people attended this camp and donated blood. This program was an initiative of Kalimpong Police, where HANDS specific role was to reach out to the general local people and get them to voluntarily donate their blood. Police personals, locals and a good number of HANDS members were key blood-donors.



*HANDS Members along with Mr. Nereus Mukhia at the donation camp*

## **11. HANDS Picnic on 16th February 2020.**

This is another event that HANDS staff and resident patients look forward to. All the resident patients were taken down to riverbank of Rangit for a change of environment so that they would feel refreshed and rejuvenated and can focus on their recovery program. Those who could swim enjoyed the river; while others danced and sang. It was a fun-filled day. The resident patients were all served special lunch, followed by tea and snacks in a nearby stall.



*Staff & patients at the picnic stop on the banks of River Rangeet.*

## 12. Anti-substance Campaign on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

Concerned over the rampant substance abuse incidences amongst the youth, specially school and college going students, Bharatiya Women Gorkha Parishang - a Non-Profit-Organisation, mostly comprising of elderly women - and HANDS organized a one-day Anti-substance Campaign on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 at GDNS Hall, Kalimpong. This was HANDS's first collaboration with a woman's organization to combat substance abuse, where various social groups were invited to discuss the growing ills of substance use/abuse. Given this, representatives from different samaj, clubs, and other organizations attended the one-day campaign. It was also attended by the Police Department, Kalimpong, who discussed ways to tackle the growing social ill. Our discussions additionally touched upon issues relating to illicit trafficking of substances solutions. It was a good initiative where women were taking center stage in combating these ills. We look forward to many more such collaborations with Bharatiya Women Gorkha Parishang.



*Bharatiya Women Gorkha Parishang members, HANDS and few Police dignitaries.*



*Rehabilitation Centre-In-Charge, Mr. Palden Tamang addressing the audience.*



### **13. Felicitation by All India Women's Conference on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020.**

The All India Women's Conference celebrated International Women's Day on 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, with this year's global theme "Each for Equal". Mr. Nereus Mukhia was felicitated for his sustained efforts in fighting substance abuse and all other work relating to this struggle. The event was graced by other women dignitaries like District Magistrate of Kalimpong and MLA Kalimpong. A few other social workers were felicitated too by the dignitaries.



*Mr. Nereus Mukhia being felicitated by the DM, Kalimpong.*



*Mrs. Sarita Rai (MLA), IAWC President, DM (Kalimpong) and other dignitaries and NGO representatives.*

#### 14. Sober Birthday Celebrations.

All year around, our recovered patients keep coming back to the Rehabilitation Centre to share their success of beating substance abuse and chemical dependency with the residential patients; which in many ways motivates the struggling resident patients to continue with their fight to overcome their respective dependencies. These recovered patients come back to share their joys in being able to make a comeback in life, of becoming responsible and productive member of the family and society at large. They express their gratitude towards HANDS for giving them freedom from active addiction. The Rehabilitation Centre celebrates their success in the form of Sober Birthdays which gives immense hope and strength to the inpatients still under treatment for a better life, a better future.



*Sober Birthdays celebrated by recovered patients.*

## **15. Weekly Staff Reviews and Monthly Staff Meetings.**

To evaluate every patient and assess every counselor's individual progress and success, HANDS Rehabilitation holds weekly reviews by the Centre in Charge Mr. Palden Tamang. HANDS's Project Coordinator, Mr. Nereus Mukhia also gives counselling once a week to the resident patients. Additionally, Mr. Mukhia conducts monthly staff, followed by clinical meetings to understand and assess the treatment of the inhouse patients.



*Staff meetings at the Rehabilitation Centre.*