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**Himalayan Anti Aids & Anti Narcotic Drugs Society
(H.A.N.D.S.)**

Annual Report

2021-2022

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The year 2021-2022 was relatively much uneventful as the pandemic fear and uncertainty had greatly eased. However, whether pandemic or not, the Himalayan Anti Aids & Anti Narcotic Drugs Society (H.A.N.D.S.) has consistently and dedicatedly worked towards its objective and goals of creating mass awareness for the prevention of substance abuse and addiction in and around Kalimpong District. H.A.N.D.S. staff and members have provided year-round awareness programs throughout the district at grassroots level which included educating not only the victims or potential victims of substance abuse but also their families. Hence our targeted audiences ranged from youth to families to women and mothers in villages as well as at community level.

We have briefly outlined some of the activities that H.A.N.D.S.undertook in the year 2021-2022, individually and in collaboration and partnership with other local organizations based in Kalimpong and other regions nearby below. This is in addition to round the clock treatment to victims of substance abuse provided at the H.A.N.D.S. Rehabilitation Centre at Chebo Busty in Kalimpong.

Commemorating International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, Himalayan Anti Aids & Narcotic Drugs Society (H.A.N.D.S.) along with the Kalimpong District Police had organized an awareness program at Rotary Centre, Upper Cart Road, Kalimpong as an ongoing Substance Abuse demand reduction program that goes by the name “PAHAL Kalimpong”. The Superintendent of Police of Kalimpong (SP), Mr. Hari Krishan Pai (IPS) along with H.A.N.D.S. coordinator Mr. Nereus Mukhia addressed a gathering of more than 100 people at the Rotary Centre. “PAHAL Kalimpong” project is an initiativeof the Kalimpong District Police, which focuses onworkingon three major social aspects -- substance abuse or drugs, career guidance and sports -- atcommunity level,in collaboration with other social organizations to facilitate and implement itsobjectives. H.A.N.D.S.’s focus remains on the first aspect i.e. substance abuse and hence, along with Kalimpong district Police organized an awareness program with various

communities in the town, especially women/mothers, empowering them to identify and tackle substance abuse in their families and communities.

H.A.N.D.S. in collaboration with the District Legal Services Authority, Government of West Bengal began conducting therapeutic and counselling classes for the inmates of Kalimpong district Correctional Home from the 6th of August, 2021. We conduct our counselling classes every month.

This initiative was made by the departmental Judge Mr.BishalMangrati himself and has been going on even to this day, where the inmates of the correctional home get an opportunity to interact and listen from H.A.N.D.S. staffs or members-- who are fully trained professional with requisite knowledge, skills and expertise on substance abuse --on a regular basis. In the counselling classes, the jail inmates are given talks about the ills of substance abuse and addiction, the do's and don'ts, enabling substantial substance abuse related correction at the correction home. One of the main objectives of such classes is/was to motivate the inmates and equip them with information when they get released from the jail.

Independence Day celebration is one of the most awaited celebrations of the year because in Kalimpong, this day is celebrated by the public, school and college students including administrations with great pride, pomp and show. So patients in the Rehabilitation Centre look forward to celebrating this day and we, at HANDS try our best to make this day as entertaining and fun as possible for our patients and staff members. Not to let the patients miss what is happening in the world outside the rehab, we started the day as usual with marchpast for which our patients had been practicing for weeks. This was followed by flag hoisting and a day full of indoor games and sports in the form of mini tournaments such as carrom board, chess and tombola. A special lunch is prepared for our patients and staffs on this day.

H.A.N.D.S. coordinator Mr. Nereus Mukhia along with members of Kalimpong NGO Network (KaNGON) -- a collective umbrella organisation of over 22 registered NGOs of Kalimpong-- conducted an awareness program on substance abuse and child rights at a remote village of Lingsay Busty under Block 2 of Kalimpong district. The rural villages such as Lingsay are plagued with the menace of porous liquor, hence the awareness talk emphasized on alcohol related abuse and dependency. The main aims and objectives of KaNGON is to build positive synergies and strategic partnership with the Government, other Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), other Community based Organisations (CBOs) at the local

level to encourage, facilitate and promote more local-participation and community engagement in decision-making processes particularly concerning and combating the social ills within Kalimpong.

With ongoing programs of “PAHAL Kalimpong”, the team of H.A.N.D.S. along with inspector in charge of Kalimpong Police station and his team assisted H.A.N.D.S. members in conducting a successful program for the entire community of Thakur Bari. The women folk in particular were keen on learning how to tackle the horrors and issues of substance abuse in their homes and neighborhood.

On the auspicious occasion of the 4th Foundation Day of Mitra Samuh, a social organization formed by concerned citizens of Teesta Bazar, the organization in collaboration with H.A.N.D.S. conducted a program for the entire masses of Teesta Bazar to make the public aware of the solutions/ treatment to the disease of substance abuse and alcoholism.

Like every year, H.A.N.D.S. does not let go of any opportunity in reaching out to the masses and bringing about help, support and solution. World AIDS day has been exactly one of these international events where the staff and volunteers go out to various officials like the Municipality Chairman, Police Department Officer In charge and the masses, ask two minutes of their time and pass the message of HIV/AIDS and its mode of transmission to each one of them. Along with the above program H.A.N.D.S. in association with all India Tibetan Youth forum conducted a program to sensitize the Tibetan community on the relevance of Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS.

Yet again, local social organization -- Mitra Samuh, from Teesta Bazar in collaboration with H.A.N.D.S. conducted an awareness program, especially for the youth living in and around the Teesta Bazaar. Over 300 young hearts attended the program with great keenness as the subject issues of substance and alcohol addiction and abuse being delivered remained a common struggle for most of them, affecting their families and community at large. The program empowered the youth with information, to equip themselves from the do's and don'ts of substance abuse; and broadening their know-how knowledge about how to tackle this menace in their respective communities and families.

HANDS has always celebrated Christmas with members of Christian Motorcycles Association (CMA) who visit the rehabilitation center on the 25th December morning and spend the day with the patients. The young members of CMA come early at 8 am to share the

significance of Christ and Christmas with the patients – all of whom belong to diverse backgrounds. HANDS believe in religious diversity; and gives space and encouragement to its staffs and patients for the celebration of all religious and cultural festivals as celebrated in Kalimpong. The CMA members bring with them cakes and other food items for the patients. They conduct pray them, read Gospel parts and gave the patients a fun day. The purpose of such visits is to motivate the patients into believing that there is a life, fun and happiness without drug use.

Popular Regional band “Nomads” conducted a charity show on the 31st of December 2021 at the Rehabilitation Centre for the in-patients. As the band, Nomads was celebrating their 25th Anniversary, they chose to perform for the patients and provide some entertainment. It was a huge honor and privilege for the patients and staff of the Rehabilitation Centre to come face-to-face with the band members, and enjoy their live program to its fullest. H.A.N.D.S. is very grateful to Nomads for their thoughtfulness towards our patients. It was a good way to end 2021 and welcome 2022 for both the staffs and patients of the Rehabilitation Centre.

Under the banner of ‘PAHAL Kalimpong’ an initiative of Kalimpong District Police and H.A.N.D.S., a joint team conducted an awareness program at 7th Mile, Milan club, Kalimpong. The program was well attended by the community members who reached out to H.A.N.D.S., seeking help for their community members suffering from substance abuse and addiction.

Being the youth icon of the region, Mr.Nadung Bhutia inspires hundreds and thousands of the youth and masses as a national soccer player. As a local from our Hills, he has an effective followers and great mass appeal. In this capacity, Mr.Nadung Bhutia was invited by H.A.N.D.S. coordinator Mr. Nereus Mukhia to visit the Rehabilitation Centre and interact with the patients as a motivational speaker. He was one of the most anticipated guests whose visit made our in-patients inspired.Mr. Nadung Bhutia spoke about his life and his story of hard work that gave him success, listened to with great interest and awe by our patients and staffs.

PAHAL Kalimpong team organized yet another awareness program at Melli Bazar community hall. This was the first program attended by the newly transferred Superintendent of Police (SP) of Kalimpong District, Mrs.Aparajita Rai (IPS), who shares deep concerns regarding the grave substance issues that plague the hills. Mrs. Aparajita Rai had worked extensively in the same field at her previous posting in Kolkata. And since 2022, she has dedicatedly worked towards alleviating this menace from the hills by various many proactive initiatives that were

formed under her guidance and leadership. A huge crowd had gathered at the community hall to attend the program which left the masses with great determination to fight the substance abuse menace in Melli Bazar.

Another program of PAHAL Kalimpong at Teesta Bazar organized specially for mothers, women organizations and SHG's to make them aware of the nature of substance dependency in the family and neighborhood. They were also prepared to fight illicit substance trade in the locality as Teesta located at NH10 is prone to such illegal activities crippling the entire community.

H.A.N.D.S. believes that family counselling via such interactive classes is an important step that goes towards the final rehabilitation of the patient when they are discharged. Given this, H.A.N.D.S. have always made family classes and counselling a mandatory part of the patient's rehabilitation process. Smaller groups this time allowed us to interact more interpersonally than in big groups. In such classes, we explained to the family members what the patients are learning in the rehabilitation centers, how the patients must be handled/treated once they return back to their respective homes, how to deal with the patients at home, what the patients have to continue doing at homes and so on. We also cater to the needs of our patients who have been discharged but must continue to attend their follow up sessions at H.A.N.D.S. Day Care centre.

Another key H.A.N.D.S. activity is the celebration of sober birthdays of patients who have recovered well and have remained off any kind of substance use/abuse. We celebrate this as a successful milestone in the patients journey towards full recovery; and invite our past patients for a cake cutting ceremony followed by a good lunch. But there is much more to this. We celebrate these success stories to motivate and show our in-patients that staying clean of substance is possible, being productive and living a normal life is possible, being full-functioning members of the society is possible, integrating back into the society, community and most importantly their families is possible. We show our patients that they too can overcome their recovery processes and walk toward the path of healing, free from substance use.

In addition to these, HANDS has continued its operation at its two centers – the rehabilitation and the day care. The following are the numbers for the year 2021-2022.

THE FIGURES AS PRE THE PERFORMANCE CHART AND REGISTERS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Rehabilitation Centre

Patients treated in the rehabilitation centre: 112

Chemically dependent: 56

Alcoholics: 43

Poly (Both): 13

Total no of patients succeeded after discharge: 66

Out of which its categorized as (Chemically dependent 46, Alcoholics 17 , Poly 03)

The annual success rate of the rehabilitation centre in percentage is 58.9%

2. Day Care / Drop in Centre

Patients treated in the Day Care Centre: (out of which- individuals on a regular basis)

(Regular)Chemically Dependent: 260

(Regular)Alcoholics: 321

(Regular)Poly (Both): 113

3. Family Classes in Day Care Centre

Total No of family classes conducted on a weekly basis: 28

Total No of family members attending classes: 323

Overall, H.A.N.D.S. has what its current capacity has enabled it to do. Our success rate has been boosted bywhich is remarkable for a small organization like ours. We can look back with a lot of satisfaction as we were able to bring back more than of our patients back to mainstream society. They have become contributing members of the nation and brought happiness to their families and to the whole community.

It is with great pride that HANDS can claim to have positively worked towards living up to and fulfilling its larger objectives and visions for a drug free society in our small town of Kalimpong. Let us continue to work with the same dedication and contribute towards our people and community in Kalimpong