



CASE STUDIES OF INTERVENTION EFFECTIVENESS

A 'First Look' into Empowering Families and their Communities to End Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A collaborative effort of Seefar and My Choices Foundation in West Bengal



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Empowering Families and their Communities to End Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC): A ‘First Look’ at the collaborative effort of Seefar and MCF in West Bengal

Acronyms

BFA	Better Fit Approach
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CFM	Community Feedback Mechanism
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
CT	Child Trafficking
DCAP	Data Collection and Analysis Partner
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FCRA	Foreign Contribution Regulation Act
GFEMS	Global Fund to End Modern Slavery
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
KII	Key Informant Interview
MCF	My Choices Foundation
NCRB	National Crime Record Bureau
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SC	Scheduled Castes
SCF	System Change Framework
SVP	Safe Village Program
ST	Scheduled Tribes
ToC	Theory of Change
WB	West Bengal
WoM	Word of Mouth



Abstract

West Bengal is one of the epicentres of India's child trafficking crisis. Economic crisis caused by the Coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing nationwide lockdown and super-cyclone Amphan have aggravated the situation. Seefar and My Choices Foundation (MCF) are running an experimental campaign in three districts of West Bengal to build a body of evidence on 'best practice' communications models for preventing CT/CSEC in West Bengal.

In this context, this report is the first of a two-part learning exercise designed to critically review the Seefar intervention and generate lessons and insights that are of practical utility for a wider audience. The 'First Look' case study acts as a snapshot of the current status of the project and seeks to understand the extent to which the project is in line with its articulated theory of change. It also documents the progress made, if any, at the preliminary stages of the project. Findings suggest that progress is on track for the first phase of the project, despite COVID-19 pandemic-related delays and modifications to the project plan. Given that it is still early in the project execution phase, the bulk of evidence will be assessed in the 'Second Look' case study which will offer a deeper, more comprehensive overview of the intervention and its impact.

Introduction

Context

The Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) is a transformational multi-donor fund that works to forge public-private partnerships and catalyse a comprehensive global strategy to end modern slavery. GFEMS, in an agreement with the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), has funded projects in three target areas – Ethical Recruitment, Apparel, and Commercial Sexual Exploitation. GFEMS selected the consortium of *Athena Infonomics* and *Itad* (henceforth, *Athena-Itad*) to support its review and learning activities for this set of projects.

GFEMS is funding Seefar and MCF to run a campaign for ‘Empowering Children, their Families and their Communities to End Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children’ in three districts of West Bengal, namely Birbhum, Bankura and Bardhaman. West Bengal (WB) is one of the epicentres of India’s child trafficking crisis according to the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB). According to the bureau, 8,205 children (based on police records; actual number is feared to be even higher) were trafficked from the state only in 2018¹. Forced marriages, children in labour and sexual exploitation are among the top common reported causes of trafficking.

The scenario has deteriorated over the course of 2020 due to the economic impact of the nationwide lockdown in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and has been further complicated by super-cyclone Amphan. According to UNICEF, the cyclone affected approximately 16.57 million children in West Bengal².

Scope of study

GFEMS has partnered with *Athena* and *Itad* to review the intervention in the context of the project’s broader Theory of Change (ToC), with the objective of measuring progress towards a sustainable model for reduction of prevalence of modern slavery, and using the learning from the projects to offer feedback for how to scale and increase effectiveness over time.

For this review, the *Athena-Itad* consortium follows a case-study approach that provides a longitudinal perspective across earmarked components in each project. This approach allows for continuous tracking of changes in the goals and achievements of the project. As these case studies cannot formally be considered to constitute a traditional baseline-endline longitudinal approach, the terms ‘First Look’ and ‘Second Look’ case studies have been introduced. Apart from desk reviews, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with the implementing partners and support service providers in different roles to understand and assess the progress of the project and related issues. Based on these discussions, for the First and the Second Look, the projects will be assessed against the Better Fit Approach (BFA) and the Systems Change Framework (SCF) to ascertain the

¹ <https://www.savethechildren.in/child-protection/humanitarian-crisis-poses-threat-to-human-trafficking-in-west-bengal/>

² <https://www.unicef.org/media/82091/file/India-COVID-SitRep-31-May-2020.pdf>

- a) effectiveness of the approaches against a diverse set of factors, described below, and
- b) nature of the improvement to the status quo of the knowledge, attitudes and practices among the children, their parents and their communities.

Project overview:

Seefar has partnered with My Choices Foundation (MCF) to design and implement an awareness campaign to test and build evidence for what works best in promoting positive knowledge, attitude and practices among children, parents and communities to prevent Child Trafficking (CT) and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). The goal of this experimental campaign is to build a body of evidence on a 'best practice' communications model for preventing CT/CSEC in West Bengal. The project will run different intervention models to test both its breadth and depth and aims to document evidence of their comparative efficacy in achieving long-term objectives.

The project implementers, in partnership with Sattva Consulting, conducted thorough market research³ to build a contextual knowledge base on CT/CSEC in the targeted areas. The research contributed to the development of the communications strategy to empower children, their families and communities to recognise, prevent and respond to CT/CSEC. Different communication tools were used in different frequencies (described below) to understand which works best and at which depth.

The project has randomly selected 27 test villages across the three districts from a pool of 71 high-risk villages and randomly assigned the villages to 9 test groups, 3 test villages to each group. Group A is a comparison group and group B, group C, group D and group E are test groups. Each test group has two subgroups, i.e. A1 and A2.

All groups, including the comparison group A, will receive the following services:

- **Remote consultations** in the form of Word of Mouth (WOM) counselling, will be offered through a helpline run by MCF to provide confidential consultations through empathetic listening.
- MCF will use **referral pathways** to guide victims of CSEC to organizations that specialize in victim support.
- **Digital media outreach** through YouTube and a Bengali social media page on Facebook for promoting content featuring awareness messages, latest news, and helpline ads.
- **Media engagement** to generate unbranded media coverage on the risk and realities of CT and CSEC.

1. Group B will receive the following interventions

- **School-based outreach:** events to disseminate information, raise awareness and influence attitudes and behaviours of children.
- **Community-based outreach:** events to target children out-of-school and children attending schools not targeted under the school-based outreach cop.
- **Parental outreach:** community-based methods targeted towards influencing knowledge, attitude and practices of parents of at-risk children.

³ [Understanding child trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in West Bengal, India: Knowledge, attitudes and practices among children, parents and community leaders in Bardhaman, Bankura and Birbhum, January 2021](#)

- **Rakshak, Nodal Teachers and Gram Mitras** are voluntary community members who will play key roles in fighting CT and CSEC. A Rakshak (protector) is an anonymous whistle-blower, appointed in each village, who reports suspicious activities back to MCF and its referral system. Nodal teachers are teachers committed to sharing CT/CSEC prevention messages in their communities. Gram Mitras (friends of villages) are individuals motivated to prevent CT/CSEC in their communities and share awareness messages.
2. Groups C will receive all above mentioned interventions plus:
 - a. **Community Outreach Events** targeting community leaders and other community members to increase reach and acceptance of campaign messages.
 3. Group D will receive all above mentioned interventions plus:
 - a. **In-person consultations** (Word of Mouth (WOM) counselling) by the field trainers directly with children to raise awareness and drive behaviour and attitude change.
 4. Group E will receive all above mentioned interventions plus:
 - a. **In-person consultations** (WOM counselling) by the field trainers directly **with parents and community leaders** to raise awareness and drive behaviour and attitude change.

The total testing component of the project period is divided into 3 phases— the first 3 months for the initial test phase, the next 3 months for a deeper test phase followed by a one and half month break for wrap-up culminating in an evaluation and reporting phase.

Type 1 of group B and C will receive the interventions for the first month of the initial test phase. Type 1 of group D and E will receive the interventions for all 3 months of the initial test phase. For Type 2 of all test groups, a similar modality will be repeated for the next 3 months’ deeper test phase. The evaluation phase will analyse the efficacy of different interventions in different frequencies and will attempt to identify the most effective interventions. The team will then be in a position to evaluate which modalities work best and at which depth. The project will leverage the presence and experience of the Community-based Organizations (CBOs) in the targeted areas; MCF has a long-term working relationship with these CBOs.

Activity	A	B1	B2	C1	C2	D1	D2	E1	E2
My Choices Foundation Facebook page	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
My Choices Foundation website	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Helpline	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Media Engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rakshaks, Nodal Teachers and Gram Mitras		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
School-based outreach to children (No. of interventions)		1	2	1	2	3	6	3	6
Community-based outreach to children (No. of interventions)		1	2	1	2	3	6	3	6
WOM counselling to children Target: 16 sessions per village/month (No. of months)						3	6	3	6
Parents Outreach Separate sessions for mothers and fathers (No. of interventions)		2	4	2	4	6	12	6	12
WOM counselling to parents Target: 16 sessions per village/month (No. of months)								3	6
Community Leaders Outreach (No. of interventions)				1	2	3	6	3	6
WOM counselling to community leaders Target: 8 sessions per village/month (No. of months)								3	6

The basic Theory of Change (ToC) is that:

<i>If</i>	boys and girls, parents, and community leaders are engaged in CT/ CSEC awareness activities, AND if these activities successfully address particular vulnerabilities and if these vulnerabilities are not further exacerbated by negative external systemic shocks,
<i>then</i>	targeted groups will better understand/ internalize the risk of CSEC within their communities and the specific risk to themselves as potential targets, consumers, and enablers;
<i>And If</i>	CBOs are trained to deliver interventions, and interventions are robustly tested to assess effectiveness and value for money, AND continue to be invested in CT/CSEC programming (despite FCRA regulations), AND can effectively reach target populations in the COVID 19 pandemic context,
<i>then</i>	CBOs will demonstrate increased capacity to implement such interventions
<i>resulting in</i>	demonstrable change amongst youth in knowledge, attitudes, and practices that put them at risk of CT/CSEC, families and communities being better at discouraging behaviours that put children at risk of CT/CSEC in targeted communities in West Bengal, and a strengthened body of evidence that supports the development community to scale better interventions to reduce vulnerabilities to CT/ CSEC
<i>leading to</i>	a reduced prevalence of CT/ CSEC among 12-18-year-olds in targeted communities in West Bengal.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- All planned activities were postponed during the COVID-19 outbreak. The COVID-19 pandemic followed by a FCDO budget cut led to the removal of the six month scale-up phase and reduced the target of project outreach from 270 villages to 27 villages. The scale up phase has been shortened to a 3 month long deeper test phase.
- The cut in project implementation time has restricted the project's ability to measure longer-term outcomes of the activities which could offer a greater understanding of sustained awareness and behaviour changes.
- MCF immediately stopped their fieldwork as soon as the lockdown was declared. However, they received a significant relief fund⁴. MCF thereby took advantage of the opportunity to [expand their reach to the remote villages](#). They also initiated radio programs. From August 2020, they resumed their regular field activities, maintaining COVID-19 safety measures.
- The market research indicates that the loss of income and employment opportunities due to the pandemic lockdown has worsened the risk of overall CT/ CSEC issues. The suspension of regular school programs increased the students' presence online, which also increased their vulnerability to traffickers.
- Securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) services (ethical approval) for the market research was challenging due to pandemic uncertainties. With persistence, Seefar and Sattva were able to complete the approval process and take proactive steps to prepare for IRB approval for the subsequent baseline.

⁴ <https://mychoicesfoundation.org/covid19/>

- The research had to incorporate in person data collection with consideration of the sensitiveness of the topic and associated social taboos. Whether local authorities would allow the data collectors to enter their villages because of COVID risks was a major concern and the research team adapted accordingly. Research coordinators maintained continuous communications with the Sarpanch (head of the communities) and health workers to track the risky areas and select geographic clusters where the COVID situation was less pronounced.
- Thus, ensuring availability of the data collectors was also challenging as the timeline of the research was continuously changing due to the adaptive data collection strategy to avoid high-risk areas using real-time updates.

Status (as of Early March 2021, First Look): The market study has been conducted, and the team has designed the interventions based on the findings of the market research. By the end of January 2021, the project launched their baseline data collection activities, which are now almost complete (early March 2021). The team started implementing the project interventions in the targeted locations from mid-February 2021. This First Look exercise has been conducted at this early stage of the project to capture the plan and outline the pathway of expected results.

Methodology

Research design

Each 'First Look' case study focuses on

- a) understanding the project's theory of change as articulated by implementing partners, which may or may not be written down
- b) some evidence on specific standards for the services provided by the implementing partners
- c) providing contextual information of the current situation before⁵ or during an early stage of implementation.

The 'Second Look' case studies will focus on assessing evidence of change, different pathways to change, and other determining contributing and contextual factors. Enquiries into the 'Second Look' case studies will seek to unpack observed behavioural change of stakeholders at the target community and system levels. However, given the timeline of the First and Second Look (nine to twelve months), the bulk of evidence is likely to be at the output and immediate outcome level, rather than the longer-term outcome and impact level.

The main learning questions for this case study are:

1. Can supply side interventions, in particular behavioural change communication, contribute to a reduction in risks to CSEC and prevalence (or will traffickers just go elsewhere for victims)?
2. How sustainable are community-based approaches for raising awareness? What kind of mechanisms or ownership (linkages to government or other systems) are necessary to ensure sustainability?

⁵ The 'before implementation' information is often problematic in reality, as typically, the intervention will build on some previous work that has been done by the subrecipient, or work that has already begun. In either case, the 'First Look' still provides a point in time against which to assess change in the 'Second Look'.

3. Can this program be rolled out at a low cost across a wide region, ensuring scalability?
4. How have Seefar and MCF modified their original plan to adapt to the COVID pandemic? What are implications for implementation fidelity, program delivery and acceptance?

Desk review, Key Informant Interview (KII) and group interviews will set out to answer these questions.

Evaluation framework

The *Athena-Itad* case study has taken the project ToC as the main entry point into discussions and will look at which change pathways are working well, which change pathways are potentially challenging or lack up-to-date programming evidence. This **theory-based approach** was followed to design a case study that aims to test, with evidence, the assumed causal chain of results with what is observed to have happened, checking each link and assumption in the process to verify the foregrounding theory.

The theory-based approach is accompanied by **contribution analysis**, which provides a systematic way to arrive at credible causal claims about a programme's contribution to change. By verifying the respective ToCs and taking into consideration other factors that may have influenced outcomes, contribution analysis provides evidence about where and how the grantees did (or did not) make effective programme objectives.

The observations in this report showcase the expectations from the project based on the information available during the 'First Look' stage, and not the status of the project at the 'First Look' stage. It is important to note that with further progress in the project and with better availability of information (completion of development, tool implementation and feedback from M&E system), the goal is to develop an accurate as-is picture during the 'Second Look' stage.

Better Fit Approach

The case-study framework integrates the Better-fit Approach (BFA) methodology to help determine the degree to which an initiative's design is 'innovative' and locally responsive. BFA seeks to either apply a new solution to a given problem, or innovatively adapt a solution from a different context to fit another, locally. It usually involves doing something differently from how it is currently being done and should seek to make the outcome or experience better, particularly in a complex and/or rapidly changing programming environment. BFA is not necessarily evaluative insofar as it may be too early to conduct interventions during the planning stages, or early trial stages of an intervention. The elements of the BFA pathway are presented in Annexure 1. In principle, BFA provides an 'innovation design audit' to understand the following aspects of the implementation process:

- Transformative: How, and to what extent, is the programme flexible to offer intended services more effectively
- Inclusive: How, and to what extent, is the programme trying to serve the excluded groups
- Adaptive: How, and to what extent, is the programme collecting and using results for decision-making
- Economically viable: How, and to what extent, has the programme maintained cost-effectiveness and shaped itself as acceptable and scalable.

Systems Change Framework

Wherever applicable, a theory-based approach will assess how the interventions help improve system-level capacities and connections that aim to bring forth changes at an individual level. The Systems Change Framework (SCF) will appraise the challenges of achieving pathway effectiveness, including structural barriers, and strategies employed for improving structures. The SCF scale is presented in Annexure 2. The assessment of SCF expectations for the project was accomplished through a detailed

review of the project theory of change and/or logframes, as well as through KIIs with key stakeholders to assess:

- The capacities of the project to understand the local context
- The capacities of implementing partners in influencing the knowledge, attitude and behaviour of the targeted community members and actors.
- The design of the awareness campaign model, and its probability to create a foundation of evidence of what works best.
- The connections and coordination with other relevant actors, including local and government authorities in providing holistic services to identify and address the risk of exploitative trafficking practices.

While BFA focuses on the design aspects of the project, allowing it to achieve its identified primary and secondary targets, SCF aims to understand how well the project impacts or influences the existing systems and their services and capacities. To assess these capacities of the stakeholders, we explore:

- Capability (ability to provide intended services): How well does the project deliver its services and how do the system and other actors respond to it? How scalable are the activities to other services and target groups, with quality measured and maintained?
- Incentive model (ability to serve interests of a diverse group of stakeholders from demand as well as supply side): How well-designed is the project to ensure incentives for the associated stakeholders of both the demand and the supply side to continue? How well does the project identify and address mismatches between the services intended and the services received by the target audience?
- Sustainability (evidence or indications of buy-in for offering intended services): How convinced are the partners to continue the service model? What evidence or indications do we have to prove stakeholders' willingness to replicate the model or continue post-project period?
- External Linkages (linkages with government or apex bodies): Is the project connected to or aligned with programmes or schemes in the sector and locality that will help ensure long-term success and viability of the project?

Sample of Stakeholders

The 'First Look' exercise started with extensive desk review of the project documents, including initial project proposal, ToC, Logframe, market research report, inception report and project reporting documents. Primary data collection was conducted between 17 February and 9 March 2021. For the 'First Look', two group interviews were conducted with the main implementation partner: Seefar's programme team and the programme team of MCF. One KII was conducted with the focal person of the market research firm, Sattva. No interviews were conducted with the direct beneficiaries, community people, CBO representatives or other community actors considering the very early stage of the project. However, it will be ensured that they are included in the Second Look exercise. Semi-structured questionnaires and checklists were used for collecting information and the findings were analysed and compared against the updates reported by the project. Similar questions were asked to different stakeholders for triangulation and to explore perspectives.

Key Results/Findings

Summary of results against key learning questions

(Findings as of early-March 2021)

1. Contribution of supply side interventions, in particular behavioral change communication, to a reduction in risks to CSEC and prevalence (or will traffickers just go elsewhere for victims?): The project is designed to test effectiveness of different strategies in reducing vulnerability to CSEC in the targeted areas. It is a possibility that the traffickers may change their target areas because of the project activities in the localities. However, even without such interventions, traffickers regularly shift their bases to keep them safe from law enforcement bodies and community populations. Traffickers cannot operate in one area for a long time, at least not with a fixed strategy. The possibility of spill over benefits in neighbouring high-risk villages will be explored at second look.

2. Sustainability of the community-based awareness raising approach- what kind of mechanisms or ownership (linkages to government mechanisms or other systems) are necessary to ensure sustainability? Sustainability of the community-based awareness raising campaign depends on the ownership of the campaign by the community people and actors. Field partners are more amenable to build these partnerships. Focusing on capacity building of the CBOs and working with parents and community guardians are keys to sustain messages. These parties know about the main drivers, but they did not know about online CT/CSEC risks and how the online space is shifting. Addressing this lack of knowledge is a key contribution of the collaboration model. The CBO capacity building workstream is also focused on reporting (journals), the way information networks are used, and tailored to specific village environments which vary considerably. CBOs are the key entry point for longer term community-level capacity building strategies. These strategies utilize implementing partner approaches to prioritize cultural dimensions, open conversations with communities, and bridging gaps directly through CBOs.

3. Possibility of rolling out this program at a low cost across a wide region, ensuring scalability: This learning question will be covered below under the section 'Economically viable' in the BFA analysis.

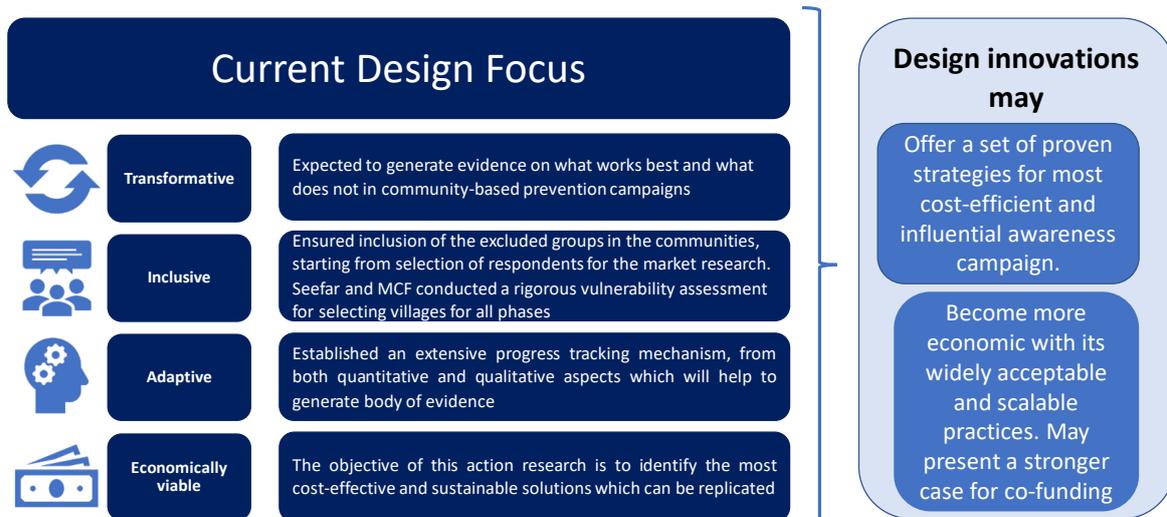
4. Modification of the original plan by Seefar and MCF to adapt to COVID interruption- implication on implementation fidelity, program delivery and acceptance: This learning question has been covered in above section 'Impact of the COVID 19 pandemic'.

Framework-based Findings:

Better Fit Approach

As this was the 'First Look' assessment, the main focus was on the design aspects of the interventions, seeking to understand their intended potential impact across the standards of Transformation, Inclusivity, Adaptability, and Economic Viability. The learnings from here will dovetail into the larger-picture view provided by the Systems Change Framework.

Image 1: Better Fit Approach – Design innovation in the project to address commercial sexual exploitation of children



Transformative: Although MCF and the partnering CBOs are experienced in implementing awareness activities in similar localities, they conducted a thorough market research to customize the activities to make those more appropriate and context oriented. The recommendations helped to design the intervention with a focus on identifying critical vulnerabilities to CSE and how to reach the larger ecosystem. The project is an adaptation of MCF’s Safe Village Program (SVP) that aims to innovate by conducting extensive pre-campaign research to revise the program for targeting, content, and communication modalities. The communications strategy will be rigorously tested to provide insight on messaging and frequency of the communication events, type of events (1:1 WoM consultation is Seefar’s adaption of a solution successfully used in Nigeria on modern slavery⁶) and duration of intervention (3-6 months being tested as opposed to SVP being a 3-4 day program).

Inclusive: The project has intentionally selected areas where people from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) are prevalent to ensure inclusion of vulnerable groups. The events are also arranged in different locations of the villages so that they are accessible to people across communities. The project carefully selects those locations so people across different communities are represented. During the market research, Sattva (the market research firm) kept in regular touch with the CBO workers to ensure respondent groups were inclusive of different genders, castes, tribes and classes.

Adaptive: Adaptations to SVP were based on the findings of the market research conducted in the districts as part of the pre-campaign research phase. The detailed messaging of the campaign was revised to address key attitudes and practices (related to risks of CT/CSEC) that are prevalent in the target districts. Seefar also updated the evaluation and monitoring tools based on learnings from the market research and have included cyber risks and online safety into the campaign messages.

The project has established extensive monitoring and Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM) processes to collect regular quantitative and qualitative information regarding the progress and feedback on their activities. Seefar and MCF partners pay regular quality control visits with the CBO partners and are in continuous contact with the field trainers. The project has established an online based M&E system to ensure real-time updates and outcomes monitoring. The system is expected to help them respond to any probable issue in the earliest possible time, and the implementation team

⁶ <https://seefar.org/news/projects/seefar-in-west-africa-mission-driven-and-innovative-with-a-sustained-impact/>

would be able to take informed decisions. This will also help them to uphold their ‘Do no harm’ policy. The adaptive management process has been a learning experience for the partner CBOs to understand how to adjust for what works (and what does not) during project delivery. After the project, the field teams will be better equipped with skillsets and knowledge on effective ways of approaching and supporting their communities.

Economically viable: In terms of scalability, the objective of this experimental project is to generate findings about cost-effective and scalable project modalities. The findings from the action research in turn will help implementers and other interested stakeholders identify prevention models that are the best value for money. MCF already intends to replicate the ‘best practice’ models evidenced at the end of the project⁷ through their network.

Systems Change Framework

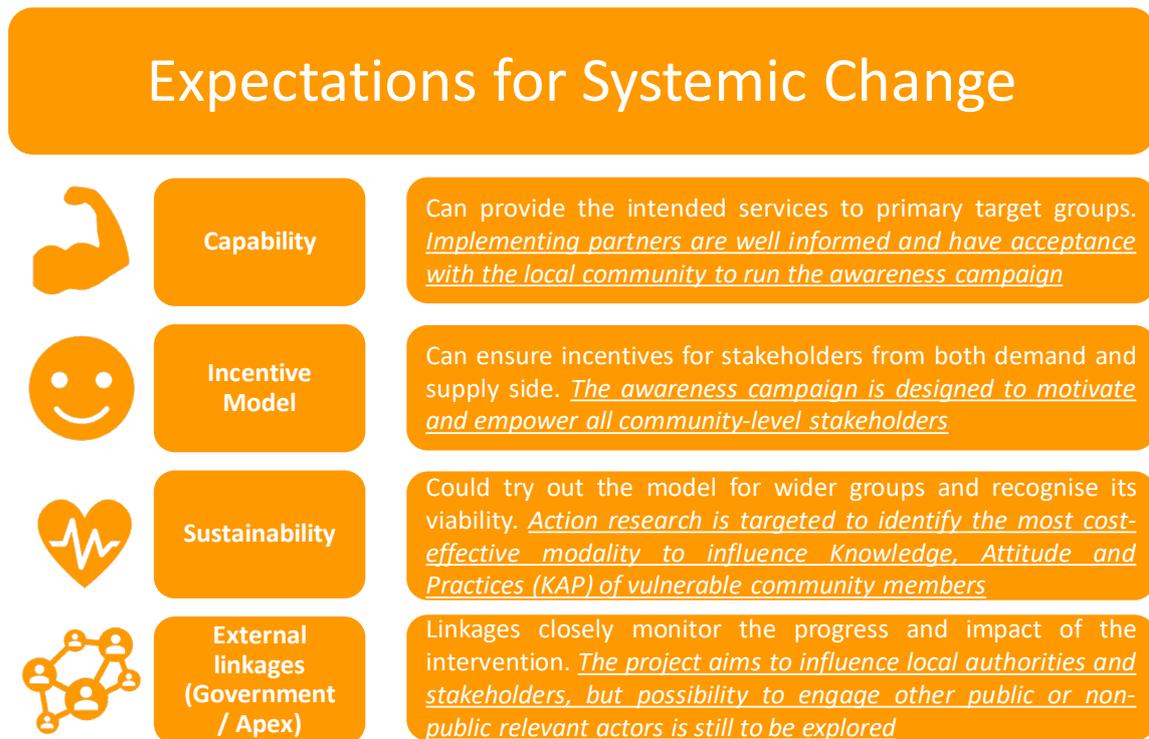
The SCF explores elements of the intervention for sustained long-term impact and improvements in the existing systems that govern the industry or space targeted by the intervention. This framework identifies the ability of the intervention to affect system-wide change and how advanced the project is in the pathway-model described in Annexure 2.

Systems Change Framework indicator table:

Since the project is still at an early phase, the SCF analysis only identifies the expectations or indicate the projected state of the intervention beyond the life of the project period once effective components are identified for scale.

⁷ An MCF scale-out will need to adapt for Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) regulations on administrative cost restrictions.

Image 2: Systems Change Framework – Expectations of the awareness campaign to prevent CT/CSEC



Capability: The project is leveraging the implementing partners’ working experience in a similar space. The implementing partners along with the local CBOs are well positioned and have acceptance to the local community to run the awareness campaign. MCF runs their safe village programme across India, including community group events and one-to-one counselling. MCF typically collaborates with these CBOs and their partnership model with the CBOs is proven.

There are other organizations that do similar work in West Bengal. However, MCF is one of the largest organizations in India in terms of prevention programming, covering 4,800 villages with an estimated outreach of 12 million.

Seefar brings strong international experience on awareness building campaigns that target the most marginalized people in those contexts. They are well positioned to disseminate and scale the knowledge this project is expected to generate.

Incentive model: Child trafficking is an addition to the portfolio of most of the partner CBOs. Their collaboration with Seefar and MCF will build organizational and improve their acceptance in vulnerable communities. The partnerships will also strengthen their credentials for funding agencies and support their longer term sustainability.

The SVP is designed to communicate positive messages for each type of stakeholder: boys, girls, fathers, mothers and community members. The program messaging spreads an attitude of empowerment by treating community members as ‘champions’ if they are aware and take steps to protect their surroundings. This approach generates interest in prevention by paving the way for communication on sensitive and challenging topics and creates a positive sense of satisfaction.

Sustainability: The implementation phase has just started (as of early March 2021) and the way forward for scaling is not clear yet. The implementers are expecting to generate the findings by December 2021; evidence and recommendations will be disseminated with support from GFEMS. Seefar and MCF also have an internal fundraising mechanisms that will be explored for utilizing the findings from this project.

Rakshaks, Nodal teachers and Gram Mitras supported by this project are community volunteers who are passionate about the betterment of the villages and they are expected to continue playing their role as whistle-blowers and disseminators of awareness messages. The targeted communities are fairly closed to outsiders and building that ownership is crucial for long-term sustainability. The ‘second look’ exercise will further explore this issue.

Additionally, core support services offered by MCF⁸ (remote consultations, referral pathways, digital media outreach, and media engagement) will remain accessible for the communities beyond this project lifetime.

External linkages: MCF collaborates with 105 NGOs across eight states, including running a prevention campaign where they are connected to organizations who offer rescue and rehabilitation services to identified victims. The project team also anticipates they will need to engage with the government at a later stage for greater impact. The Government has similar programs which can be leveraged, the most widely known is ‘Kanyashree’ to prevent early child marriage and promote continued education of girls in West Bengal. While the project target areas are technically covered by government programs, in practice, people are not aware of or accessing these benefits.

MCF campaign resources are freely available and any organization can use those in their programs. However, MCF strongly suggests that these organizations receive training from MCF for better efficacy in implementation.

Implications & Recommendations

Success stories

The initial concept of this project was proposed by MCF, and they were encouraged by GFEMS to work on a co-creation model with Seefar, who had also proposed a similar project idea. The co-creation model blended Seefar’s global exposure and research expertise with MCF’s deep-rooted local presence, contextual knowledge on CSEC, and network. This collaboration model is a good example of value for money in funding projects that encompass experience, expertise, and strong networks.

Enabling factors (Strengths)

- Seefar and MCF are implementing the project in partnership with established CBOs, whose strong reputations with local communities have been critical for the project. The project leverages Seefar’s integrated community engagement⁹ and MCF’s locally rooted network and experience, tailored to the local context in West Bengal. Thus, Seefar, MCF and the CBOs complement each other with specific areas of strength.
- MCF works across eight states of India, thus the evidence generated by this project can still be leveraged for their ongoing prevention activities. This ensures that while the scale-up phase was removed for COVID-19 pandemic adaptations, there is some assurance of longer term utilization of evidence.

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBcPKNBacEUMNP1K-MTAQ8A/featured>

⁹ <https://seefar.org/services/strategic-communications/>

- The activities proposed by MCF and Seefar are supported by another GFEMS-funded study conducted by Dalberg¹⁰. The study confirms the relevancy of the awareness campaign and likely replicability of an evidence-based model going forward.
- The effectiveness of behaviour change campaigns in CSEC prevention have typically not been evaluated as scientifically as this project intends (i.e. varied combinations of interventions and with a control group). The project is expected to generate robust evidence on which ‘packages’ of interventions works and which do not, which will be instrumental in future campaigns designed in India and other countries.

Challenges

- During this early phase of implementation Seefar, MCF, and CBO partners are gaining a better understanding of contextual challenges when interacting on CSEC topics in the target communities. For example, men at the household-level tend to be less supportive at the outset, whereas women usually have been more welcoming. The field staff are convincing the men to gain the access.
- According to market research, critical community guardians such as the Police and Panchayat members are usually reluctant to accept the existence of the problem in their localities. The project relies on community acceptance of the CBOs in the areas for creating access to the communities.
- During the market research, there were incidents where participants felt uncomfortable because of the sensitivity of the topic. The research team mitigated this by assigning only female data collectors to collect data from the female groups. With respondents who were reluctant to share information in front of others, the researchers conducted one-to-one interviews.
- Even where communities are aware of the problem of CSEC/CT, a tendency of ‘Othering’—a mindset of ‘The problem is there, but it happens with others. Nothing will happen to us’—exists among them. Lack of awareness and acceptance of the problem within their own communities leads to a lack of internalization of preventive behaviour. The project is trying to change that mindset through the awareness campaign.
- Engaging with government stakeholders has been politically challenging, as various political groups are present in the community. Implementing partners noted that there have been some concerns (currently unfounded) of connections to trafficking rings driving their reluctance to engage.

Key Lessons and Recommendations

- CBOs that are part of the MCF networks can be the champions to take the work forward after the testing phase. They are locally rooted and have gained the trust of the local people. Seefar and MCF should ensure proper training of the CBOs to make them capable of building inter-connectivity among different type of community members and retain the new practices and skills supported by the project.
- The ‘second look’ for this case study will employ a keen eye on the extent of knowledge and skillsets (that the project is trying to promote) that could be transformed. This should be accompanied by how the information network could be influenced and utilized to have a greater understanding on the contribution of these support platforms.
- The project should carefully observe the impact of informing the communities of online CT/CSEC risks. This is a growing area of vulnerability and according to conducted market research, the communities are not very aware of this. This new issue needs to be carefully followed up and documented. As there is potential of a materializing risk and/or unintended consequence of online

¹⁰ <https://www.gfems.org/news/2020/3/27/27-tech-tools-fighting-sex-trafficking-in-india>



message, the project should continue to manage and mitigate for risks through adaptive management and established risk monitoring processes. GFEMS will continue to work with Seefar to ensure accountability to affected populations best practice is applied in this rapidly evolving context.

Annexure 1:

Detailed Observations: Expectations based on the Better Fit Approach Scale

Transformative	Maintains status quo	Would an service	improve existing	Would create a new service, or substantially improve an existing service <i><u>(The campaign has just started and by the end of this experimental phase, it is expected to generate evidence on what works best and what does not)</u></i>	Would radically improve a service or create a new service – and could unlock change in other services
Inclusive	Serves one group within the community	Considers the needs of excluded communities		<i><u>Creates a clear role for excluded groups (The campaign has always ensured inclusion of the excluded groups in the communities, starting from selection of respondents for the market research. Seefar and MCF conducted a rigorous vulnerability assessment for selecting villages).</u></i>	Creates a role for excluded groups in leadership, planning and accountability
Adaptive	Does not offer effective measures of change monitoring	Offers some opportunity to measure and monitor change		Offers an opportunity to measure change, and takes these measurements into account for decision making	Results can be measured and incorporated directly into targets and a system established for results-based decision making <i><u>(The campaign has started tracking progress of the activities, from both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The results and targets are also aligned and clearly defined)</u></i>
Economically viable	Identifies potential resources and sources only to circumstances in one community or locality. Costs for further development are prohibitive	Explores alternative resources and sources to make implementation more economic and may apply in some other communities.		Negotiates effectively to make the deals economic and timely to make it widespread and uses approaches which are likely to be widely acceptable. High likelihood of co-funding <i><u>(The targeted results from this action research is to find the most cost-effective and sustainable solutions which can be replicated)</u></i>	Has been implemented in an economic and timely manner. Co-funding pipeline is strong



		Co-funding promising	is		
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Annexure 2:

Detailed Observations: Expectations based on the System Change Framework Scale

Capability	<p>Can provide the intended services to primary target groups</p> <p><i>(The implementing partners along with the local CBOs are well informed and have acceptance with the local community to run the awareness campaign)</i></p>	<p>Can offer additional services related to the intended services with quality/</p> <p>Can offer the intended services beyond the primary target groups with quality</p>	<p>Offers additional related services with quality/ beyond the primary target groups with quality.</p> <p>Other competitors/ similar service providers are showing interest/ gaining ability in offering the intended services</p>	<p>Other competitors/ similar service providers are offering similar services</p>
Incentive model	<p>Able to ensure incentives for stakeholders from both demand and supply side</p> <p><i>(The awareness campaign is designed to motivate and empower all community-level stakeholders)</i></p>	<p>Additional gaps in service delivery for the targeted groups are minimised to ensure more incentive for both demand and supply side</p>	<p>Other competitors/ similar service providers are showing interest in ensuring both demand and supply side incentives</p>	<p>Other competitors/ similar service providers are ensuring both demand and supply side incentives</p>
Sustainability	<p>Try out the model for wider groups and recognises the model as a comparatively viable one</p> <p><i>(Action research is targeted to identify the most cost-effective modality to influence Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) of vulnerable community members)</i></p>	<p>Make the model their mainstream practice</p>	<p>Other competitors/ similar service providers are recognizing incentive from the new model</p>	<p>Other competitors/ similar service providers are making the model their mainstream practice</p>
External linkages (Government/ Apex)	<p>Linkages closely monitor the progress and impact of the intervention</p>	<p>Linkages provide well defined support and incentives to ensure programme/ intervention success</p>	<p>Linkages encourage similar programmes/ interventions or linkages with other similar programmes/ interventions</p>	<p>Linkages have made the intervention model a system norm</p>



	<p><u><i>(The project aims to influence local authorities and stakeholders, but possibility to engage other public or non-public relevant actors is still to be explored)</i></u></p>			
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