

# **Psycho – Social Counselling Report**

**(9-11) Aug 2017**

**Strengthening Social Justice through Promotion of Human Rights in the  
Terai (HURIT)**



**Terai Human Rights Defenders Alliance (THRDA)**

**Aug 2017**

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## List of Abbreviations

PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
THRDA	Terai Human Rights Defenders Alliance
NP	Nepal Police
APF	Armed Police Force
AHRC	Asian Human Rights Commission
EMDR	Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing
HRM	Human Rights Monitor
HRO	Human Rights Officer
RC	Regional Coordinator

## Introduction

THRD Alliance conducted “Psycho - Social Counseling” workshop in Birgunj for families who lost their family members in the Madhes protest of 2015 and thereafter. THRD Alliance works directly with the victims of protest and human right violation cases in the Terai. While working with the victims’ family, THRD Alliance’ HRM, HRO and RC recognized the need of psycho-social counseling for the victims’ family members.

With the Technical support of AHRC, THRD Alliance had planned to conduct “Psycho – Social Counseling” earlier; however, it came in to force only on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2017 in Birgunj. The workshop was led by Dr. Rajat Mitra, who is an expert of handling trauma cases. In the workshop 24 members participated voluntarily. Out of 24 participants 13 were male and 11 were female.

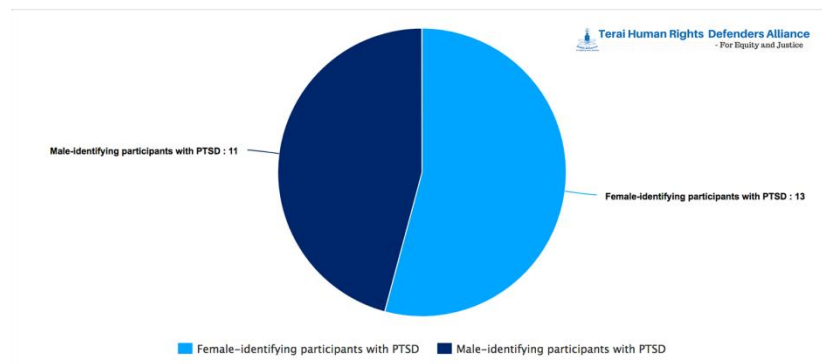
Dr. Mitra started with PTSD test. PTSD is a collection or set of problems that tend to cluster or occur together as syndrome – just like the flu is characterized by a collection of symptoms that occur together. The Diagnostic and Statical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association 1994). A set of PTSD questionnaires in “Yes” or “No” format were given to the participants to answer. Most of the participants were illiterate. Therefore, THRD Alliance team members assisted participants to fill the questionnaire.

The participants were shown documentary on healing Manipur by Josefina Bersten and Rosa parks life and times. Dr. Mitra taught participants EMDR and Jacobson Relaxation exercise. These exercises are meant for victims who are suffering from PTSD.

## Findings

Most of the participants were in the state of helplessness and hopelessness. Among them many had never experienced city lives. Therefore, in the beginning they were uncomfortable with the hotel life and foods. Women particularly felt uncomfortable to open up in the group.

Once the session started all the participants slowly adapted and opened up. The PTSD test shows that all the participants have PTSD. Among the reexperiencing, numbing or avoidance, hyper arousal symptoms of PTSD - the frequency of numbing or avoidance symptom is higher.



The Healing Manipur documentary by Josefine Bersten had great impact on women participants. They understood the importance of organizing and fighting against the injustice. Although, most of the women participants were illiterate they were enlightened with the Healing Manipur. They agreed that women play a key role in any type of revolution and therefore would fight against the injustice done to them by the state. They even agreed that without organizing they cannot go far in the struggle against injustice. This led them to come out with 9 points Birgunj declaration, reiterating their commitment to fight for justice:

- 1) To provide appropriate facilities for education, health and job for the poor and vulnerable victims family.
- 2) To make public the NHRC decision related to Madhes movement and to take action against the culprit.
- 3) To register FIR in easy way to take action against the perpetrator.
- 4) To make the report of High Level Inquiry Commission formed under ex Supreme Court Judge Girish Chandra Lal and to provide justice to the victims.
- 5) To make monuments in the memory and respect of the martyrs of Madhes Movement in every districts.
- 6) The government should erase any difficulty to use the money provided to the victims family and is kept in bank.
- 7) To provide opportunity for the martyr's family in local level recruitment of staffs and to allocate budget at local level for the martyr's family.
- 8) Ashish Ram, an Indian National who was killed by Nepali security force in due course of Madhes Movement should be declared a Martyr and the state facilities should be granted to the family too.
- 9) The people who are injured during Madhes movement should be provided with free medical treatment and medicines.

A short documentary on Rosa Parks life had great impact on each participants. Earlier participant concept was to beg for justice but when they came to know that a single black woman fought against the odds for justice and everyone benefitted from her struggle. These participants became surcharged and committed themselves to fight against all the odds for justice.

EMDR and Jacobson Relaxation exercise had instant effect on the minds of participation. They claimed that they had never felt so relaxed after the unfortunate incident. Most of them reported their head became lighter by (35-40) %. The participants were very content to learn this easy but effective exercise. After the exercise they talked and laughed in such a way that no one could guess that these participants were suffering from PTSD. Most of the participants are very poor and this exercise would be very helpful to them to keep themselves healthy and struggle for justice which they have committed to fight for.

This type of workshop was first of its kind organized for the victims' family. It gave a platform where they met and shared their pain and grievances with each other. They spent their time together for three days and vent out anger, pain and dissatisfaction among each other. They made friends and promised to help each other in need.

## **Conclusion**

The participants benefitted from the Psycho – Social Counseling workshop. The workshop helped to find out the PTSD in the participants and Dr. Mitra taught exercises to help them recover from PTSD. Participants understood the importance of counseling and have decided to meet together in a month and do exercise in a group.

The workshop united the victim' family members and they signed 9 Point Birgunj Agreement to draw the attention of the government and keep up their fight against injustice. They realized the importance of organizing and struggle for justice. Every participant agreed that an individual if committed can fight against all the odds for the justice.

Annexes





