

Elimination of Violence against Women Program

INTRODUCTION

Himachal Pradesh often referred to as “Devbhoomi” (The land of gods) is considered to be a place with diverse cultures and peaceful co-existence. However, behind the scenes many women are victims of physical or sexual violence and suffer in silence inside and outside of their home. The crimes which are reported to authorities are an iota of what the reality reveals. It is well known that for one woman reporting a case, three women bear domestic violence in silence. The cases remain unreported and generally remain hidden for fear of disgrace to the family or to maintain the so called ‘matrimonial harmony’. The home is often believed to be a place where the family members feel safe and secure but for a large number of women in Himachal Pradesh, as anywhere else in the world, home is a place where the largest number of crimes against women take place. Violence is usually perpetrated by men who are in positions of trust, intimacy and power. In a patriarchal society, such as in India it is even more difficult for rural women to raise their voice against violence as they would face criticism and humiliation, both at home and in society. The fact that they have no alternative and no platform that will hear their grievances with sympathy and sensitivity. A place where they can fearlessly report their problems and seek a solution. The situation is even worse for the women belonging to marginalized communities. Both, literate and educated women often have no knowledge about their legal rights as they have never been told about the laws that can help them. Rural women are ignorant about the basic legal redressal systems available to them to fight against the violence inflicted upon them.

GENESIS:

It is against the context mentioned above that Jagori Rural Charitable Trust (JRCT) began addressing issues of violence against women in 2006. In fact, as the program began to work in villages, the Jagori team started receiving information about domestic violence cases from the community. At the same time women themselves started approaching the teams with their own domestic violence cases.

The primary goal of the programme is to reduce the incidence of violence and create awareness in the community around the issue of domestic and other kinds of violence.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

1. Break the silence among women and girls around the issue of domestic violence and other forms of violence; and strengthen women’s and girls’ voices to ensure their right to life, dignity and safety.
2. Increase their right to participation and decision making.
3. Build a cadre of grassroots women as Friends of Justice (Nyaya Sakhis/ Barefoot Lawyers) and to empower and strengthen their capacities to intervene in cases of violence.
4. Provide women with emotional and legal support to resolve incidences of violence against them.
5. Increase larger public consciousness on the issues of VAWG, making homes and society violence and discrimination free.

STRATEGIES

- Set up Community based Institutions for seeking justice for the victim.
- Identify women to conduct the women’s courts

- Build capacity of community members
- Work in partnership with government justice systems partnership
- Conduct Research and plan Advocacy systems
- Network and build Campaign for wider awareness.

MODES OF INTERVENTION

1. Provide Mediation, Counselling and Legal Help through weekly women's courts (Nari Adalat).
2. Regular tracking of the status of the cases and follow up sessions with the concerned survivor.
3. Resolve cases of domestic violence and other forms of violence by keeping in view of the women's specific situation and find the best resolution as per her decision.
4. Help women and men to have a free and fair dialogue with each other as well as with their respective family members in order to find a just resolution of the problem.
5. Extend emotional and mental support to women who are going through emotional stress and trauma ensuring her well being and safety from further trauma.
6. Work closely with the survivors to re-build their identity and restore their dignity through encouragement and support.
7. Help the survivors with legal redressal by referring them to empaneled lawyers in order to find a more permanent legal solution.
8. In dire cases of serious violence, with a threat to her life, find alternative shelter with support from the police.

Stake holders

The team of the Nyaya Sakhis, under close supervision and support, work closely with the following stake holders:

1. Violence victims/ Survivors
2. Police/ the Protections Officers/ AWWs/ Panchayati Raj Representatives (PRIs)
3. Judiciary/ Lawyers/ Government health functionaries CBOs, school and college students 5. with village level womens' and girls' collectives

NARI ADALAT

Women's Court popularly known as Nari Adalat is an initiative of the Jagori Rural at the community level where issues related to violence, injustice and gender discrimination are raised, addressed and the process of resolution is achieved through dialogue and negotiations with the voices of women as central to the decision making. All, including men are free to seek help, in an open and transparent environment.

Legal and socio-emotional support is provided through Nari Adalats (Women's Courts) managed by 15 barefoot women lawyers as well as by the formal judicial processes. The friends of justice have been trained on Mediation and Counselling skills and also in referring the cases to the court.

Jagori Rural also works with the protection officers, the police personnel, lawyers and other actors who are responsible for women's safety and justice. In collaboration with the Police and the Women and Child departments, a number of capacity building trainings have been organized as part of the program.



PUBLIC HEARINGS AND CAMPAIGNS:

- Public hearings are held in order to bring the justice authorities and the women survivors face to face, especially in cases where women have not received justice over a long period of time.
- Every year as part of the international campaign, a 16 days campaign is organized in order to create larger and extensive awareness on the issue of violence against girls and women by conducting night meetings, street plays, writing songs and also conducting sessions with the authorities.
- The team also participates in campaigns such as forest festival, One Billion Rising and other public events organized by the JRCT.



CASES OF VAW REGISTERED WITH THE WOMEN'S COURTS (APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2021)

JRCT organises Weekly women's courts in 4 Blocks of the Kangra districts and 2 Blocks of the Chamba district. In addition, survivors of Violence also come from far off places and districts which are not part of the project areas.

Chart-A

District-wise Cases of VAWG intervened by JRCT Women's Courts			
Year	Cases VAWG	Kangra	Chamba
April 18-March 19	273	243	30
April 19-March 20	310	272	38
April 20-March 21	250	235	15
Total	833	750	83

Chart-B

Total Cases	833
Resolved	410
Filed in the Court	75
Referred to Police	3
Referred to CDPOs	6
Dismissed	12
On hold	22
Ongoing	138

Chart-C

Trainings of Protection officers	
Year	No. of workshops
2018-19	6
2019-20	5
2020-21	3

Chart-D

Year wise description of cases of VAWG intervened by JRCT Women's Courts										
Year	N o. of ca	Solved	Pendi ng cases solve	Filed in court	Referred to Police	Referred to CDPO	Dismissed	On hold	Ongoing	Sugge sted for courts

	se s		d							
2018- 2019	27 3	86	34	25	2	1	9	20	70	26
2019- 2020	31 0	160	104	12	0	3	0	2	29	2
2020- 2021	25 0	164	0	38	1	2	3	0	39	0
Total	83 3	410	138	75	3	6	12	22	138	28

COVID-19 RESPONSE

During the Covid-19 lockdown, the cases of violence against women rose exponentially and it was especially hard to get to the survivors. In spite of this, the Nyay Sakhis were able to do home visits for women suffering near their houses and with the help of the Jagori wider team rescued many women from extremely violent homes with the help of the police. Telephone counselling and whatsapp communication was also actively operationalized to respond to the ongoing violence cases.

In addition, food packages were provided to survivors of violence who had no access to the subsidised ration.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROGRAM (APRIL 2018-MARCH 2021):

In 2017, as the programme became recognized by the government of Himachal. The JRCT was recognized as a “Service Provider” under the PWDV Act, 2005.

The JRCT is also a member of the District Level Monitoring Committee constituted under the PWDV Act, 2005.

Another significant achievement is that the *Nyay sakhis* and other senior members of the JRCT teams have been offered a working space to execute their duties in various police stations which are located within the jurisdiction of the project implementation areas. this collaborative support has greatly helped in resolving cases of domestic violence and abuse.

- Weekly Nari Adalats are conducted regularly in 6 different locations of the Kangra and the Chamba districts of Himachal Pradesh. The community based institutions such as Nari adalats have received extensive acceptance in the community as they provide a sympathetic environment, listen to both parties and seek resolution based on the principle of justice. They are not expensive and the resolution is found in a short time except in cases that have to be referred to the court.
- There is an increased access of violence survivors to seek amicable resolution of their problems and receive justice from violence and discrimination. As a number of cases of men have been resolved in their favor, it helped in erasing the initial resistance against nari adalat by them.
- In the last three year, as elaborated in the charts above, a total number of 833 cases of different forms of VAWG were registered with the women’s courts. Nearly 70 % cases were of domestic violence. With mediation, counseling and emotional support by the Nyay Sakhis, a total of 438 cases were successfully resolved. The rest of the cases were related to other forms of violence, including sexual harassment, child and adult rape, murder, etc. Some of the cases include land disputes, and personal quarrel with neighbors. Nyay sakhis have successfully helped in retrieving dowry, the custody of children, and getting restriction orders etc. In addition, in some cases they were able to
- Access to pension and economic support to very poor survivors.
- JRCT also provides scholarship to children of the single women, violence survivors and other disadvantaged groups.
- In collaboration with the police department, in the last 3 years, 7 trainings were organized with the police personnel in the Kangra district.
- Another significant achievements of the JRCT was to be recognized by the State Police Training Academy as a training faculty members. consequently, a formal collaboration was established with the office of the Principal Police Training Centre for gender and law training sessions. This was an excellent example of private- public collaboration. This also helped the team members to get positive response from the police personnel at various police stations. The training with police personnel, both the new recruits and promoted cadre was greatly appreciated by the principal and the IG police. Similarly in collaboration with the women and child department, 5 trainings were successfully conducted with 189 protection officers (152 women and 37 men) in 3 districts (Kangra, Chamba and Sirmor) of Himachal Pradesh. These trainings are primarily focused on gender equality, legal framework such as PWDVA 2005, POCSO, sexual harassment, etc. and also the legal procedures.

- Contacts have also been established with the Directorate of Prosecution, Shimla, the department for all Public Prosecutors of the State for conducting training sessions on Gender and the legal provisions, especially under the Domestic Violence Act.
- Established good contact and easy access to the offices of the Superintendent of Police, Kangra and the District Program Officer, Dharamshala as well as with the SDM and the collector of the district.
- In addition, the trainings of the Nari Adalat teams are regularly organized to build their capacities. They are also sent to other states for exposure and learning. During the follow up sessions, it was reported by the participants that these kinds of trainings have helped them to efficiently provide legal support to the domestic violence survivors and successfully implement the provisions of Domestic violence Act 2005..
- Every 3 months a session is organized with the survivors of violence primarily to ensure their well being. who have been helped by the Nyay Sakhis. Infact they act as the ambassador of JRCT and refer cases to the Nari adalats.
- A file of each case is systematically organized and maintained in order to have detailed information on each case where every visit of the survivor or the husband and other family members is recorded and mediation or counseling is provided.
- Every year ,in collaboration with local NGOs, as part of the international One Billion Rising Campaign, the JRCT oranises several events to raise awareness around the issue of increaing violence against girls and women. The campaign is successfully organised by the entire Jagori team in three districts of the Himachal Pradesh. Through this campaign nealy 10000 community members participate , with a special participation of young girls ,boys , the youth and women and men.

The Nari Adalat as an alternative system of justice has become successful and recognized model, both, by the community and the state various authorities