

Building a Coordinated Response to prevent and reduce Gender-based Violence (GBV), Kishangarh, Block, Ajmer Block, Rajasthan, India- An Update, October, 2022- Implemented by CFAR, supported by PTF-IDRF

Context

In keeping with one of the leading project objective to raise awareness on GBV and the response mechanisms that can be leveraged in local communities, the project implemented by CFAR with the support of PTF-IDRF, has set up three Women's Forums or Support Groups to combat GBV in three gram panchayats or village level elected body of Roopangarh, Patan and Sursura. Of these three gram panchayats, Roopangarh is reporting the highest incidence of violence against women.

This 35-strong Women's Forum of survivors and advocates, led by six women, two of whom are graduates from the Schedule Caste community and the other four, who belong to Other Backward Classes (OBC), are now growing from strength to strength. Having been oriented on laws to address GBV cases and trained on how to access the existing response mechanisms to enforce the rule of law, the leaders of the Women's Forum have documented and registered eight VAW cases with the one stop crisis centre (OSCC) or Sakhi and in one case petitioned to the district legal services authority (DLSA) for free legal aid.

Breaking the silence: Recapping the process

Learning to engage with police and law enforcement agencies

Survivors of domestic violence from Harmara, Roopnagarh and Sursura villages, often triggered for various reasons; for not begetting daughters, refusing to accept the bigamous relationship of their partner and not willing to put up with heinous violence committed under the influence of alcohol and other substance use. In at least three cases where the women are facing unacceptable levels of physical assault and attack, they have filed First Investigation Report (FIR) at the local police station. The eight survivors mentioned above have been linked with OSCC and one with the DLSA for free legal aid. In one instance, a survivor for Roopnagarh was forced to undergo six pregnancy and child delivery operations in the quest for a male child and now with her failing health, she has turned to the Women's Forum for support and help

Strengthening Capacity

Mr Rampal Jat, Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, trained the Women's Forum members of 10 gram panchayats on the laws and legal redress they can avail of to prevent and stop GBV. He emphasized that the efforts initiated at the ground level by Gram Sakhis and Women's Forum members will go a long way in arresting GBV. He urged the Women's Forum members to coordinate with the Legal Services Authority and constitute a WhatsApp group, inclusive of judicial officials and paralegal volunteers, to ensure timely and coordinated response.



Mr. Rampal Jat, Secretary, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), trained the Women's Support Group members of 10-gram Panchayats on the laws and legal redress that they can avail to prevent and stop GBV at a workshop organized jointly by DLSA and CFAR.

Developing the eco-system

With the Women's Forum or Support Group members now aware of services provided by OSCC, or Sakhi centre, and the free legal aid support provided by DLSA, they met and counselled each survivor, informed and cautioned their family members about the laws to prevent and address GBV and educated them about the mandate of OSCC and the rights of victims. In one case in Hamara village, the Support Group members linked the families –natal and in-laws- with the counselling team at OSCC centre and after the interaction, written assurances were taken from members of both families to stop all harassment and intimidation of the survivor.



Ms. Durga Mahich, Head, One stop Crisis Centre (OSCC) or Sakhi Centre, Ajmer, trained 21 women of the Women's Forum Members of 10 gram panchayats on schemes and services to curb and violence provided by OSCC or Sakhi Centre. This training was held at Sakhi Centre on 10 September, 2022.

Response of the System and its Duty Bearers

The Block officials and judicial officers of DLSA admitted that for the first time survivors are directly approaching them to get the free legal aid and secure other administrative help. “With women getting aware of the services provided by DLSA and administration, it is a matter of time when they become empowered enough to not only avail of the services but also make it responsive,” they added.

Meanwhile the Head of Sakhi Centre has formed a WhatsApp group and linked the Support Group members of all gram panchayats with this Group to impart right information to them and connect them with the services provided by the Centre.

All the nine cases mentioned above were officially registered by the Department of Women and Child Development in presence of the members of the Block Mahila Samadhan Samiti or Block Women's Resolution Committee and the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM). The case registration process obligates them to follow the cases referred to Sakhi centre and coordinate with the police. SDM will publicize the guidelines of the Mahila Samadhan Samiti or Women's Resolution Committee with the support of the Women's Forum and its leadership in all the ICDS or childcare centre

Meanwhile a discussion is under way on creating a model gram panchayat, where all elected representatives, frontline workers and service providers will work together with Women's Forum or Support Group to empower women and stop all incidence of GBV.