

Building a Coordinated Response to Prevent and Reduce Gender-based Violence (GBV) in Kishangarh block, District Ajmer, Rajasthan-Phase II

Progress Report

Mid-February to Mid-March 2023



Centre for
Advocacy and
Research

Introduction

The members of Women's Forums, who meetings held in different villages during this period, raised many concerns around women safety and security and deliberated on the ill effects of child marriage and the importance of girls' education.

Gram Sakhis and Women's Forum members decided to jointly raise awareness on the adverse effects of child marriage in ten panchayats in coordination with the Department of Women and Child Development (DoWCD). DoWCD is planning to organize focused activities to raise awareness on this issue and involving all stakeholders, since *Akha Teej*, a local festival where many child marriages take place in the state, is celebrated in April.

Women's Forum meetings

Barna village: At the Women's Forum meeting held at village Barna, women discussed the issue of child marriage and the lack of public transport as this is only available twice a day, once in the morning and later in the evening. Around 15 girls have been forced to discontinue their studies due to poor conveyance facilities in the village. Women shared that the village school is till seventh standard and for further studies girls have to travel up to 8 km to reach the nearby school. Most parents do not allow their children to go to the school as they are concerned about their safety and security.

The women decided to share this problem of inadequate transportation in the gram panchayat meeting and seek solutions for it. They also planned awareness-raising activities such as rallies, puppet shows to name a few, to dissuade the people from practicing early or child marriage.

In a meeting held in March, the members of the Women's Forum shared that while child marriages are decreasing, but in some villages, many child marriages still take place. To make matters worse they often marry siblings together to save on the expenses for performing the marriages.

To discourage this practice, the Women's Forum members decided to raise awareness and do this in a campaign mode to reach out to every household and engage as many people as possible in the village. The women also decided to create awareness about Mahila



Women Forum members organizing meeting, Barna gram panchyat

Samadhan Samiti or Women's Dispute-Resolution Committee especially among women working in a private factory in a nearby village.

Khatoli village: A Women's Forum meeting was held at village Khatoli, and again a discussion was held on the issue of child marriage. The members of the Women's Forum said that although many of them got married at an early age, they are now determined to educate their children and not get them married before they attain adulthood. They also planned activities like rallies, puppet shows and street theatre performances

The Women's Forum member also addressed the problems faced by a victim of domestic violence. Having faced intimate partner abuse for five years, the Women's Forum members decided to intervene and referred her to the one-stop crisis centre.

Roopangarh village: In the Women's Forum meeting held at Roopangarh, again discussions were held on discriminatory practices like child marriage, harassment at workplace and domestic violence.

Case1: A victim was being harassed by her in-laws and husband. She has a two-year old daughter, is living with her parents and has decided to legally secure a divorce from her husband.

Case 2: A victim's husband has married another woman and is living with her. The victim has a five-year old son, is living with her in-laws, and wants monthly maintenance from him.

Both the cases were registered in the Women's Dispute Resolution Committee for immediate action and relief.

In an earlier registered case of domestic violence, two survivors of violence from Roopangarh who had been denied legal aid, were supported by the Women's Forum members to secure legal assistance.

The Women's Forum members met the District Judge of the block-level court and convinced him to provide free legal aid.

In a meeting held in Roopangarh village in March, they found that earlier they were not aware about the law enjoining the district administration to set up an internal complaints committee (ICC) to investigate into cases of sexual harassment at work place. In fact, they found that in private factories, women were afraid to complain out of fear of losing their job. But this did not help, they said "our silence increased the violence and now that we are aware about what the laws says about our right to legal redress, it has really helped us and we will share the same with more women," they added.

Bandersindri and Ganeshpura villages: Women's Forum members made people aware about Helplines, such as 1098, 181 and also educated other women about the block level, Women's Dispute-Resolution Committee. In both villages, the women felt more should be

done to pre-empt child marriage. To achieve this, they decided to collaborate with anganwadi or ICDS workers and sathins or frontline workers in the gram panchayat. In Ganeshpura village, the Women's Forum members decided to convince one community with 20 households to not practice early marriage and share examples of how early marriage can prove to be harmful to their children and to them

Awareness raising sessions in schools

In Sursura and Nala, at the senior secondary school, 75 students in the first school, 45 students in the second were made aware about 1098, 181 Helplines, good and bad touch. The principals of both schools said that the students found the information very helpful and they are now confident that they can reduce incidence of violence against girls. In both schools, the principals said complaint boxes have been installed, ensuring that every child can complain about their problems. The School Management Committee (SMC) in both schools are motivating the girls to register complaints without any fear.

Fifteen girls were trained to use the *Speak-up* app and were made aware of the hard and soft panic buttons and how to take the help of police and family members if they were in trouble.

Case: A Class 10 student was being harassed by a boy from the village. The girl stopped going to school. When her parents went to register a complaint against the boy, the boy's parents forced them to not register a complaint. Gram Sakhi and the CFAR team



Awareness raising session in government school, Sursura gram panchayat

counselled parents of the girl to register the complaint but they refused and stopped their daughter from going to school.

In response to this incident, the principal and the sarpanch or headman of the village reached out to the parents and advised them to allow their daughter to continue with her studies and assured them of all support from the panchayat or village assembly. This proved successful and the girls returned to school.

In Harmada village, at a senior secondary school, 55 students were made aware about 1098, 181 Helplines. They were made aware of the process of registering a complaint on 1098 and getting the required support immediately. Thirteen girls were trained to use the *Speak-up* app and were also made aware of the hard and soft panic buttons and how to take help of police and their family members if they were in trouble

In Kadha, Roopangarh and Salemabad villages, in a senior secondary school, 120 students were made aware about 1098, 181 Helplines. School Management Committee members were also oriented to look into such cases and help the students to voice their problems either directly or communicate it through complaint boxes installed in the school.

After awareness was raised, the problem of a three-year-old girlchild with a heart problem was communicated to 1098 Helpline. The 1098 team immediately contacted the family and the case was referred for treatment.

Meeting with SHO, Bandersindari and Harmara police station

The CFAR team met the SHO of Bandersindari and Harmara police station, and discussed the activities undertaken under the project. The SHO assured them total support and also



Male group members raising women safety issues in monthly gram panchayat meeting, Barna gram panchayat

provided a list of Suraksha Sakhis or Safety Buddy or Guide working under the police personnel.

A training for Suraksha Dakhis along with Gram Sakhis has been planned for 17 March, to ensure that all incidents of violence against women and girls is prevented and addressed in the most effective and meaningful way.

Facilitating gram panchayat meetings

Gram Sakhi and the CFAR team participated in the monthly gram panchayat meetings held at Nalu Harmada and Patan gram panchayats. The team discussed the issue of women's safety and security and recommended installation of street lights in the villages.

The Sarpanch or the Headmen assured the women that street lights will be installed and all problems related to women harassment at worksites set up under the Rural Employment Guarantee Act, will be addressed.

Redressing grievances

In village Chundari, the women pointed out that they had to trudge 7 to 8 kilometre to get their monthly ration from the fair price shop and do this they have cross the busy national highway, where many accidents occur. As a follow-up the Women's Forum members decided to raise their collective voice on this issue and submitted a petition to the District Supply Officer, Ajmer. The administration responded and sanctioned the opening of a ration shop in the village on 27th February. Women were overjoyed and decided to celebrate the opening of the ration shop.



Kadha and Roopangarh gram panchyat gram sakhi facilitating the distribution to five women and girls with disabilities for receiving tricycle and hearing aid in camp organized by Social Justice and Empowerment department, Ajmer

Facilitated distribution of assistive aids and appliances to women with disabilities

Gram Sakhis participated in the camp organized in Ajmer, where assistive aids and appliances were distributed to people with disabilities. The camp was organized by the Social Justice and Empowerment Department and five women along with men from Roopangarh and Kadha with disabilities received a tricycle and hearing aid.

Micro planning meetings

At a microplanning meetings held at Patan and Nalu gram panchayat to plan activities, the Women's Forum members planned to address the issue of child marriage by holding a chaupal or a space for gatherings and meetings and raise awareness on the issue through puppet show and street theatre performance and also prepare list of marriages to be held in April and May and persuade each of the families to not go ahead with their plan of marrying underage daughters. And also readmit girls to schools from where they discontinued their education.

Taking this forward, meetings have been planned with the parents and family members of school dropout girls and identify the reasons for their leaving school, identify cases of workplace harassment and make women aware about the redress mechanisms and provide them a better workplace.



Anganwadi worker, Sathin and Women Forum members holding a micro planning meeting, Patan gram panchyat

Sensitizing sathins or frontline workers

The CFAR team participated in a monthly meeting of sathins or frontline workers organized by the Women and Child Department on 2nd March. To sensitize and enthuse them team shared about the activities conducted in the 10-gram panchayats.



Anganwadi worker, Sathin and Women Forum members discussing on schemes and programs implemented by Women and Child Department in Jajam baithak, Salemabad gram panchyat

Male involvement

The Male Groups members participated in a public hearing organized by the Sub-divisional Magistrate (SDM) and Block Development Officer (BDO) in village Salemabad and submitted a petition demanding streetlights and improving transport to and from the village. SDM and BDO assured them their demands will be considered.

Celebrating International Women's Day (IWD)

In village Kadha, on 8th March on IWD, Women's Forum observed the day by lighting candles and taking a pledge to stop all violence against women and girls and decided to popularize the slogan, 'हिंसा को सहना नहीं कहना है' or **Hinsa ko sahna nahi kahna hai** -

No one will be advised to tolerate violence and from now onwards there will be zero tolerance to VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.



Women group taking pledge on International Women's Day against child marriage and to motivate others for not following this practice and continue education of girls, Nalu gram panchayat