

BHUMIKA HELPLINE

ANNUAL REPORT 2008-09

BHUMIKA WOMENS COLLECTIVE

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Contents

Introduction

Objectives of helpline

Process of helpline

Timings of helpline

Mode of information

Types of cases

Role of media

Helpline Activities during 2008-2009

Review meeting

Achievements

Areas which we need support

Conclusion

HELPLINE ANNUAL REPORT

Name of the Implementing Partner Organization: Bhumika Women's Collective

Project title : Bhumika helpline

Project reference number : INDA41

Project period : Mar '08 to Apr'09

Reporting period : Annual Report

Total amount sanctioned (grant) : 9, 50,000

Introduction:

Bhumika helpline started in early 2006 has its own identification in present days with the support of OXFAM GB. We are very happy from its overwhelming response. Till now we received around 4000 calls. At present daily helpline receive 20 to 25 calls. It has also increasing its network of services and growing through many bonds. Earlier we have started this to help the women in our state but now it has spread to all over the country. Now we get the calls from other state. It draws also a large group of volunteers through out the state of Andhra Pradesh to assist women seeking to come out of or tackle the violent relationships that they are caught in. it also have the network of advocates, in that some of them are giving their voluntary services to helpline. The idea of helpline took more concrete shape and powerful helpline and with the able support from OXFAM. In the initial year itself the helpline handled more than thousand cases successfully while a majority of them are related to domestic violence. We thank all the people who are supporting the helpline for its success.

Objectives of helpline:

- To provide / give space to women in distress by listening to them.
- To provide link with formal justice system.
- To provide referral services to women.
- Providing help to women in distress.
- Popularize the toll free number.

Process of helpline:

Bhumika helpline is a telephonic helpline. It operates through telephonic lines only. Counselors provide advises through phone only. Depending on the need of the caller, counsellors give suggestions or refer the case to someone else. Some times helpline also involves directly for some cases depends on the case seriousness.

Timings of helpline:

Bhumika helpline calls are classified into different sections and are handled accordingly by the counselors. At present there are two full time counselors (8am to 8pm) and one part time counselor (8pm to 11pm) are working for the helpline.

Mode of information:

According to the objectives of helpline there is a great need to maintain each and every information in helpline. Currently helpline maintaining the information related to all police stations, short stay homes, and legal service authority, family counseling centers, MROs details, protection officers, NGO's , women police stations, protection cells etc.

Types of cases:

This year helpline received different types of cases, but as the majority definitely we receive Domestic violence cases. After that the major number of cases is related to extra marital relation cases, self employment, husband and in-laws harassment cases, love affairs as a majority it is also increased, career guidance from college students and employees, psychological problems, alcohol addicted cases, health problems, property cases etc.

But it is necessary to know that, number of legal cases also increased this year, we already gave a whole day (Saturday) for the legal cases only.

Role of media:

The reason behind the success of helpline is media, its both electronic and print media. Both play a significant role for the popularization of toll free number. Because of the wider reach now bhumika helpline is receiving the cases from all over Andhra Pradesh even from the remote areas. In different programs in TV channels like TV9 Naveena, Etv2 Sakhi, HM TV, Vanitha Channel, etc. whenever the program come in these channels, it brought huge change response from the viewers especially during the days following a telecast. They keep the number with them and call us whenever the problem comes. Most of the immediately are the enquiry calls.

Coming to print media, helpline advertisement came in almost all the news papers, magazines etc. we also sent a requesting letter to all the magazines. Bhumika got good response from the callers. Whenever advertisement comes in news papers, most of the calls are enquiry calls. In

this manner media plays a vital role in publicizing helpline number and creating awareness among people from different parts of the state.

Network with Volunteers and Advocates:

For every organization there is a great need for human resource for the development. Bhumika helpline is very lucky that its success depends largely on its network strengths. As the helpline number got publicized more socially active citizens are registering themselves as volunteers. Bhumika helpline depends a lot on this volunteer's base. In handling emergency cases based outside of the Hyderabad.

Helpline also have the large network of advocates. As the majority of cases handled by the helpline is either domestic violence or legal issues. Indirectly every problem is some or other it is related to legal aspects. The advocate's collective plays a very important role in providing the victim's proper information about their rights and various laws that can help them resolve their problems. Helpline also conducts regular advocates meeting to sensitize them on women's issues and also to update themselves on various developments.

Helpline Activities during 2008-2009:

Awareness programs on helpline:

As a part of helpline activities, this year we have conducted many awareness programs and also attended for those programs.

Community meetings:

APSA meeting:

APSA is an organization working for the development of the community situations. They often conduct the meetings in the slum areas. They invite helpline to make them aware of their problems and also about helpline. Helpline staff goes there and introduce them about the helpline and also distributed the material.

College meetings:

One of the main activities of Bhumika helpline is to aware the society about the helpline and sensitize them about the women issues by conducting awareness programs in colleges and communities. This year helpline has gone to many colleges to conduct the meetings. In Hyderabad we have gone to some engineering colleges, degree colleges also.

There we explained them about the helpline activities and our Bhumika magazine. Bhumika coordinator and the volunteers, counselors attend these meetings. Most of the college students utilized the helpline services. It also increases the helpline publicity.

NGO's Meetings:

There are many NGOs working for different purposes in the state. In every organization women involves in some or other way. Bhumika collaborated with all these NGO's and attended for the meetings which were conducted by them. The NGO's like Ankuram, APSA, Asmitha, SWARD etc. with the help of these meetings we want to publicize the helpline numbers.

Exposure visits:

Since 2006 Bhumika help-line is constantly working for the cause of women in distress. Help-line is receiving hundreds of calls from all districts of the State. Similarly help-line is providing district-wise support services for the needy women to solve their problems.

Reason for the visit:

In 2006 August the help-line rescued two daughters from their father who is sexually harassing them and provided shelter to them in Chetana short stay home. Similarly in another husband harassment case the client was sent to the police station with the support of help-line and after counseling in police station they were able to solve their problem.

In 2007 February a victim of harassment from an alcoholic husband sought help to provide shelter for her. She was then sent to Sneha Sadan Secunderabad. Likewise in March 07 in a case referred to the help-line by Trivendrum police, the help-line sought the help of Hyderabad police to rescue the client and bring her to Andhra Pradesh and sent her to her native place.

In 2008 February a domestic helper who is from Andhra Pradesh, facing harassment from her employer in Trivendrum, Kerala came out of the house and sought police help. They sent her to Athani helpline in Trivendrum. They contacted Bhumika help-line's support to send the client back home. Again with the help of Hyderabad police Bhumika help-line was successful in sending the client safely back to her home. Similarly in March 08 through '108' reference, help-line was able to successfully stave off child marriages in Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh.

In 2009 February a case referred by the Afzalgunj police station was also sent to Chetana short stay home.

All these cases and many more like these were resolved by the helpline with the support of NGOs, short stay homes, 108, police and various other support systems. Keeping this in mind Bhumika help-line has organized an exposure visit to all the counseling centers, short stay homes and old-age homes in Hyderabad.

Main objective of this visit is to publicize help-line activities and also to assess the working conditions and capacities of various shelter homes to which the help-line is referring cases.

Initially the counselor took permission from all the homes to be visited. The coordinator and counselor took part in this visit.

Places Visited:

1. Old-age home, Madhapur
2. Sai Seva Sangh Old-age home, Kondapur, Ms Savithri
3. Sivananda Rehabilitation Home, Kukatpally, Mr. P. Hrishikesh, Chief Administrator
4. Choodamani Old-age Home, Kukatpally, Ms. Shashi
5. Old-age Home Welfare Center, Miyapur, Ms. Varalakshmi,
6. Chetan Short Stay Home, Miyapur, Ms. Bharathi
7. Old-age Home, Miyapur
8. Swadhar Shelter Home, Miyapur

It was also able to understand how these different organizations are providing their services to the people in need.

Review meeting:

Bhumika helpline review meeting was conducted in April month. Ms. Satyavati expressed her happiness over the successful completion of three years for Bhumika helpline. She explained how with great anticipation they started the helpline. How far a mere phone can help and change circumstances or make a difference? But today the helpline has attended almost 3000 calls in the past three years. Many people have benefited from the service provided by the helpline.

Helpline is started with the support of Oxfam for women in distress. In the first year the type of calls we received were mostly either harassment cases or legal cases. Over time the types of cases also started varying from legal cases, extra marital affairs, sexual harassment, dowry harassment, child marriages, medical advice, career counseling, information center etc. As part of helpline activities we conducted awareness campaigns, distributed helpline stickers and posters popularizing the toll free number 1800 425 2908. We advertised in both print and electronic media. There were times when the helpline received more than two hundred calls on one day on a single line.

Initially we received calls from only a few places in the State. We received very few calls from the backward areas of the state. This situation changed after we started advertising in TV9 and E TV2. Among the cases we attended there are quite a few number of them in which the callers were benefited by the service provided by the helpline and they called again to convey their gratitude towards our help. As a policy we maintain the privacy of the callers and hence we are

not discussing the cases in detail but we give a few real success stories with fictional names in order to give abroad idea as to how the helpline operates.

Over the past three years we have realized the usefulness of a helpline for women. Right now the helpline operates from 8 a.m. to 11p.m. We realize the need for a 24 hour helpline for women in distress. We shall hopefully work towards achieving this. The calls are attended with unlimited call time. As a result another common complaint is that the line mostly engaged. To overcome this we need more lines which mean more counselors which in turn mean more resources. We shall try and be hopeful of overcoming this also in future.

While one volunteer complained of the phone line being engaged another volunteer suggested that it is difficult for the people from marginalized sections of the society to even remember the helpline number. We have to think about innovate methods for the helpline to reach the marginalized sections also. People surrounding the victims should come forward to help spread the toll free number. On this note Bhumika helpline review meeting is concluded.

Direct intervention cases:

Though helpline is dealing the cases in phone. Depends on the case seriousness Bhumika helpline directly involve in some cases. This year we involved in more than 20 cases. There are some major cases which we explained in our reports.

Achievements:

- Greater achievement for this year for helpline is, now helpline is reaching to all the colleges and also in the communities. We conducted many awareness programs in colleges. Because of this most of the students came to know about the hlepline, they also called to helpline to discuss about their problems. And also to take suggestions from helpline.
- Greater achievement for this year for helpline is also that , the High Court has sent GO
- This year helpline extended the working hours from (8pm to 11pm). Because of this we are able to speak with working women problems and call center women problems. The women who are not able to call in mornings they are using this facility.
- We have also started the new project “DFID” successfully. With the help of this program helpline could reach to each and every organization and also to every rural community.
- Network with advocates and volunteers increased. Most of the advocates are showing interest to work voluntarily with helpline. We have extended one day that is Saturday for only legal cases.

- As you know media is playing a very significant role. Now, everyone knows about Bhumika helpline. Even from the remote areas we are getting the calls. By those we got feed back that helplines are the most useful and also a good symptom for change in the society.
- With the help of Delloite Multi National Company we are able to reach to some of the software companies. We also get the calls from from software companies.
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Areas which we need support:

From the call timings and callers also requesting the helpline to to be a 24 hours helpline. To make it as a full fledged one.

Many of the callers, wants to come to office and speak with helpline thought to start a direct family counseling center. So that we may also communicate them more effectively.

Need of volunteers are much important in Bhumika helpline. We are seriously thinking to inspire them or sensitize them about women issues and involve them in helpline. And its activities.

CONCLUSION:

As compared to the last year this year Bhumika helpline has done well and it was publicized in a long way. Increased number of calls is shown that women are finally coming out and trying to solve their problem. Network of helpline also increased because of workshops and meetings. Numbers of legal cases are increased. This is also good symptom for helpline.

With all these inspirations Bhumika helpline wants to do more activities and also able to help the more women who are in need.

Bhumika magazine:

Bhumika women's magazine:

Bhumika women's magazine is the only feminist magazine in Andhra Pradesh. Our focus has always been on how to bring a positive change in the lives of distressed women through writings. We started with very aim fifteen years ago and there has been no looking back since then. In this endeavor, we roped in several distinguished personalities from various fields like working journalists, freelancers, academicians and advocates whose like working journalists, free lancers, academicians and advocates whose force is behind Bhumika and whose contributions also welcomed. We cover a wide range of issues ranging from women's health, education and their contribution to the society. Another major change brought out is regular monthly meeting of all the writers Bhumika. We have also successfully launched our own website is www.bhumika.org. This is viewed by a number of NRI Telugu members. So far 16000 persons read bhumika on line since November 2006.

CWS Projects:

This year bhumika got the Research projects from Center for World Solidarity for the support of Bhumika. They have given 5 projects to Bhumika. There is some information given below about those projects.

Child labour project by prasanna:

Child labour is one of the major social problems of the society. There are many reasons for this problem. It might be the reason of over population, poverty, illiteracy, low economic status, single headed families; migration etc. according to the researcher's project details in India Andhra Pradesh there is very huge development of child labour. The government and child rights forum has to implement the acts seriously. There should be awareness to all citizens about the problem and make them sensitive about this problem.

Bridge schools for girl child- their impact:

This program is the one of the achievement of the government. It is started for the girls who are in adolescent age. Most of the girls in rural areas are benefiting by this program. Here they provide every thing and give vocational training to the girls. Most of the girls settle after learning from here. Government appoints teachers and they are very glad to work with the girls who have ambitions to settle their lives.

Rehabilitation of girls rescued from child marriages:

Child marriage is also a major social problem in Indian society. Even though there are many acts started to prohibit this social evil. Of course it was demolished in some areas because of the education and western education. But child marriages are still prevalent in our country especially in Rajasthan and other rural areas. Mostly in Dalit and poor communities, it is located to prevent this social evil the government should sincerely work for this NGO's, Mahila sangh, Police people also should work for this. The girls who are rescued from this are very happy and want to learn some thing for their standard of living some are feeling bad because parents also lost some money because of these arrangements. Government support for this people is very less and it should implement some programmes for the help of these girls.

Women in land struggle

“Land is a social prestige it is just not an individual struggle. If I get land it will mean respect for my community as a whole and a better future”

In recent years the most prestigious social problem is land problem. For every problem in India women suffered a lot. Among these land struggles is the major one. There are many land rights issues are going on in our country. Most of the women, who are involved in these are backward class women. It is not only restricted to one area but also situated in all over world. Land rights activists suggest that one way to give women guaranteed access to land is to separate formal ownership of land from the ability to use it.

Thus while the land may be registered in the name of a man, he would be barred from selling it without the consent of his wife or wives or other heirs.

There are many activists who are fighting to introduce or strengthen laws intended to give women more secure.

Dalit women and men across rural India work as a re- access to land and are combating social norms and practices that stand in their way.
