

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2009-2010

INTRODUCTION:

Being a woman in today's world can be a joy, a challenge, a blessing and-- sometimes-- even seem to be a curse. Just as men tend to be saddled with expectations about what are appropriate and inappropriate ways to be a man, women are sometimes limited by constructions of what it is to be a woman. We see examples of this as strong and assertive women are labeled pejoratively and deemed threatening. There are many many ways to be a woman. Women particularly those in poor families will be affected differently than men.

Violence against women encompasses a subset of family and intimate violence including threatening or actual use of physical, psychological or sexual abuse against a woman by her family members or other intimates. Commonly referenced behaviors included within the broad category of violence against women include: homicide, domestic violence, partner abuse, psychological abuse, dating violence, same-sex violence, spousal abuse, woman battering, elder abuse, courtship violence, sexual assault, date rape, acquaintance rape, marital rape, and stranger rape. Some of the root causes of Domestic Violence include: power and control, growing up in a cycle of violence and abuse, and a distorted concept of manhood.

Power and control, Growing up in a cycle of violence and abuse, Distorted concept of manhood, *Root Causes of Violence*, Poverty and unemployment, Underemployment and economic disequilibrium, Lack of housing and displacement, Circumstances of racism and injustice, Alcohol and substance abuse, Hopelessness and despair, When it comes to female education rates, progress has been made around the world, and in many countries girls and young women have outnumbered and outperformed boys and men at all levels of schooling for decades. Nevertheless, these advances have yet to translate into greater equity in employment, politics and social relations.

Bhumika, with its feminist renderings and analysis made its writings available to women which otherwise is only accessible to urban elite and english educated. Bhumika also focuses on providing an alternative discourse to understand and

address women's subordination and generating discussion on a wide variety of issues. Today "Bhumika" has become more popular for its toll free tele helpline for women and in the process emerged as advocacy organization at the state level. Through this process it paved the way for bridging the gap between activism, literature and academics.

Objects of the Bhumika Women's Collective:

- To support new methods of research towards understanding the various dimensions of women issues.
- To strive towards putting together a journal, preferably in telugu,. Which will reflect the different issues that have been raised by women from various perspectives? This journal would be made available to individuals or groups interested in women studies.
- To recover women history, literature and art by supporting projects based on empirical research.
- To support women by providing counsels in health, legal and psychological issues.
- To create a common forum for networking among academician, activity's and students from different fields by organizing discussions, seminars and workshops.
- To study trends in mass media in relation to women's concerns by organizing film review discussions.
- To build up a documentation center as a resource facility in pursuance of the above objectives.
- To create awareness and educate women.

General Body Members:

Ms.Santha Sundari	-	President
Ms.Madhavi	-	Vice President
Ms.Satyavathi	-	Secretary
Ms.Shailaja	-	Treasurer
Ms.Geeta	-	Member

Ms.Samata Roshini - Member

Ms.Abburi chayadevi - Member

Bhumika Magazine:

Since 1997 Bhumika magazine is successfully running. As you all know that bhumika magazine is a one and only feminist magazine in Andhra Pradesh, known for its various political movements and cultural diversity, it emerged as one of the strong voices circulating women's perspective on various issues. Bhumika also focuses on providing alternative discourse to understand and address women's subordination and generating discussion on a wide variety of issues. This year we have got many special topics to publicize.

In March 09, editor visited Manipur and attended a national workshop organized by network of women in media. She wrote a detailed report and travelogue about the conditions of northeast women. She met Sharmila, a women fasting for the past 10 years demanding scrapping of armed forces special powers act in Imphal. We published the report in April month.

May 2009 issue was released with a cover page of a girl child. In this issue Dr. J. Bhagya lakshmi wrote an article on her Syria visit. Pasupaleti Geeta wrote a wonderful story namely "Idukalla Thodelu". The regular columns of course were also featured. We published a short story by Dr. Bhargavi Devi on the eve of her 1st death anniversary.

In June 09, we published an editorial on violence against women and declared all forms of violence are grave crimes. In the month of April we conducted a review meeting of Bhumika help line and also launching of DFID (civil society resource facility) programme. We published a detailed report on that meeting. We also started a health column by Dr. Samatha Roshini.

July 2009 issue came out with a cover page of Kamala Das. P. Satyavati wrote a guest editorial on Kamala Das, who died in June. We carried a story by K. Satyavati namely "hum challenge sath sath". We also published a film review on "Ningi Nela Nade". The regular columns by Samata Roshni, Silalolitha, Kondepude, R. Santha Sundari, J. Subhadra were also there in this issue Pusupaleti Geeta translated 2 famous poems of Kamala Das and we published them in this issue of Bhumika.

August 2009 issue came out with a nice cover page of a picture drawn by the versatile artist Bapu. Bapu draws a picture of Madhuravani, a character from the famous drama of Kanyasulkam by Gurajada. Olga wrote a wonderful article on Madhuravani in this issue. Bhumika editor wrote a detailed article on Kamala Das with a title “Nirantharanveshi Nitya Chalanaseeli Kamala Das”. We also published the prize winning story of A. Sitaratnam. Kalpana Kannabhiran’s English article on IPC Article 377 and published in this issue. We also published a prize winning article.

The September 2009 issue came out with a cover page on human rights and women. The editorial is on handlooms with a title “Chenethaki Cheyootha Niddham”. We published 2nd Prize winning short story and essay in this issue. We also published a special article on Tapi Rajamma by Kondapaaly Koteshwaramma. In this issue we published a translated article on the Veteran Women’s movement activist and Founder member of Women’s Studies centres in India, Neera Desai. We carried all the regular columns by all the columnists.

In October 2009 issue we have published a main article of the chetana community tv by bhasker. The main essay published in this issue is on crimes against women by kusuma swaroopa. Kondepudi nirmala, silalolitha, janakibala wrote good columns ever interacting to the readers. Dr.Samatha roshini wrote about the symptoms low blood pressure in women.

November month we have published a special issue on kodavatiganti kutumbha rao. For this issue Ms.Abburi chayadevi wrote editorial on him and published a interview with Santha sunadari who is daughter of Kutumbha rao. Some of the famous writers gave their valuable experiences with him.

January issue came up with a good coverpage of the laadli winners. Editor satyavathi wrote a serious editorial on Ruchika case. Main essay is on rayalaseema fackshionism by sridevi along with a good story of Varanasi nagalakshmi. Himaja wrote the report on laadli media awards. We have also published a good article of P.satyavathi, silalolitha, subhdra, janakibala.

In February issue we published a very serious special essay on Acid attacks on women, with a good coverpage. The main story written by chandralatha. The regular columns by Samata Roshni, Silalolitha, Kondepude, P.satyavathi, J. Subhadra were also there in this issue.

In March month issue came up with a good coverage of the painting. It is a special issue of international womens day. We published the interviews of many women who are in employment field. it is a good experience to Bhumika to know the feelings of many women.

Bhumika Monthly Writers Meeting:

Bhumika conducts a writers meeting on 2nd Thursday of every month. Writers from different areas and backgrounds will attend for this meeting and discuss the issue topics and activities of Bhumika magazine.

Writer's trip:

Every year Bhumika organizing a special trip for all the writers. It is a educative and sahithi trip for all the writers.

Bhumika Story Competitions:

Bhumika is organizing story competitions every year and we invite all the people for this competition. We give advertisement to print media for publicity. This year we gave the topic on "Women Empowerment".

Projects under Bhumika Women's Collective:

Bhumika Helpline:

Bhumika Help line on its part doing all it can to spread awareness among the callers about the DV Act. helpline's popularity is growing leaps and bounds. Here at Bhumika helpline, we are leaving no stone unturned to reach every part of the state through our publicity in various forms. Indeed we are proud to say that Bhumika Helpline stands tall among other helplines that have made a mark in this field. 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.

Helpline activities during the year 2009-2010:

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. Helpline also have the large network of advocates. As the majority of cases handled by the helpline is either domestic violence or legal issues.

The advocate's collective plays a very important role in providing the beneficiaries the 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.

We have conducted 2 volunteers meetings and one advocate meeting. This year helpline organized meetings for advocates and volunteers. We have few more new advocates and volunteers from all over Andhra Pradesh. We also dealt many direct intervention cases with the help of volunteers.

Types of cases handled this year:

This year we have got major number of cases related to domestic violence and out of marital affair problems. Apart from this we also received number of legal cases, love affairs, psychiatric problems, Alcohol addicted cases, Health problems, property cases, self employment, career guidance, living relationship cases, sexual abuse etc. we observed that number of extra marital affairs are increased.

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.

Trainings and meetings:

As a part of the helpline project, we conducted meetings to advocates and volunteers. Bhumika helpline staff attended for many meetings to publicize helpline number. all other meetings are organized by different Non governmental Organizations and government organizations.

Traninig to all the social workers in Tata Institute of social sciences (Mumbai):

OXFAM has given a wonderful chance to the social workers to participate in training in TISS Mumbai. Social workers from all support organizations attended these trainings. It was organized from 10 to 28 Aug 2009. It was a 15 days training for the social workers on counseling skills. It was very useful training for the social workers. In the month of February'2010 the same refresher training was conducted in Bhubaneswar in Orissa.

Visit to short stay homes, family counseling centers, police stations:

Help line provides a space to the women to express their problem. Helpline shows different options to solve their problem. As part of this activity, helpline refers the cases to many short stay homes and counseling centers etc. we refer some of the clients who doesn't have support we will send them to short stay homes we really do not know what are the conditions there, so we thought of visit these homes.

We have visited almost all the homes located in Hyderabad and Secunderabad. There are many positives and negatives which came to know for us about these homes.

Awareness programs on helpline:

As a part of helpline activities, this year we have conducted many awareness sessions in colleges and communities. It is to sensitize the students and public about the women issues and make them to know about the helpline. For these programs we involved our volunteers, writers, advocates.

Role of media:

The reason behind the success of helpline is media, its both electronic and print media. Both plays 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 electronic media Etv2, Tv9, played a very important role. The success in this area is HM tv has started a helpline for women in collaboration with bhumika. Weekly once there will be one live show on Friday. Number of cases increased with reference of HM tv.

Coming to print media, helpline advertisement came in almost all the news papers, magazines. This year every leading news papers like Eenadu, Andhra Jyothi, Saakshi,

Vaaritha etc are carrying helpline information in their special sections meant for women. Whenever there is an advertisement in the paper we get enormous call and cases to helpline.

Review meeting:

Bhumika helpline review meeting was conducted in March 11th in Jala Vihar. Ms. Girja from Oxfam, Bhumika General Body Members, NGOs leaders, volunteers and advocates. Ms. Satyavati expressed her happiness over the successful completion of four 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 7000 calls in the past four years. Many people have benefited from the service provided by the helpline.

Helpline is started with the support of Oxfam. Ms. Girja from Oxfam said that “in the first year the type of calls we received were mostly either harassment cases or legal cases.” Over the time 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 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.

International women's day:

On the same day we have celebrated International Women's Day. We invited all the writers and members of Bhumika. On that day we inaugurated the Bhumika Magazine Special Issue.

Bhumika as a Civil Society Resource Facility:

Activities under DFID:

Attended for the Women and Child welfare department meeting:

On 3rd of July 2009, the Women and Child Welfare department and home ministry organized a meeting with all women NGOs in Jubilee hall. Different NGO leaders and coordinators attended the meeting. Ms. Chaya Ratan IAS inaugurated the meeting.

Then ministers explained their role and the activities which are going to be taken by the government. They want to start mobile courts for women problems. In the words of minister Surekha, there is a great role for NGOs to solve women problems. Some of the NGO members presented the papers in the meeting.

Circulated the high court notice:

Bhumika posted the circular copy issued by Honorable High Court regarding early disposal of cases filed under protection of women from Domestic Violence Act 2005.

In next few days we received circular copies from Adilabad, Chittor and Warangal District and Sessions Court.

Oxfam meeting with all the partners:

On 27th of November Oxfam India organized a Review meeting for all the partners associated in Andhra Pradesh. Ms.Madhu from Oxfam Delhi, Ms.Moutushi Sengupta, Director, Policy and Advocacy, Oxfam India attended for this meeting. All the partner organizations attended for this meeting. Everyone has given their presentations about the activities they have done in past quarter and plans for the next quarter.

CWS meeting:

CWS organized a training program for women elected representatives on the enhancing the role of women and strengthening the democracy. It is a three days workshop.

Bhumika coordinator attended for this meeting. She explained about the gender and politics. She gave a presentation and definition of gender and different stereo types associated with the concept of gender. She made the people involve in this presentation. It's like group activities, discussions on given topic. She concluded with a question and answer session as "why there is a need for change and role of women to bring change".

On 9th July, all women groups organized a meeting on the topic women in secularism. Bhumika helpline counselor and volunteer attended this meeting along with coordinator. The coordinator gave a presentation on secularism. Distributed the material and also explained about the helpline.

Delhi meeting:

Oxfam India organized a workshop for all the partner organizations in Delhi. It is from 21st Dec'09 to 23rd dec'09. Meeting was organized in Glarion classics hotel, Delhi.

For this meeting all the program officers from Oxfam India, Co-ordiantors and counselors from Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat (partner orgaisations) attended for this meeting. From Andhra Pradesh Ms.Girija Program Officer and each 2 from every partner organization attended.

21st meeting was started with welcome address and Introductions by Ms.Moutushi Sengupta, Director,Policy an Advocacy, Oxfam India. After that, work with Support Institutions - open forum discussion facilitated by Ms.Girija Programme Officer, Oxfam India, Hyd. At first the Andhra Pradesh team gave presentation about their activities. Ms.K.Satyavathi from Bhumika gave the presentation. Than the group session was started to discuss about the activities.

Visit to Civil Society Partner Organizations:

CSRF coordinator and Ms.Girija Program officer Oxfam India, visited Sarvodaya Youth Organisation in Warangal and Krushi in Karim nagar. It is regarding setting up of support centers in SP offices or in women police station.

First coordinator visited Sarvodaya organization director, Mr.Damodar, discussed about the topic. Then visited the police station, met with Surender, CI, discussed the possibility of putting support centers to women in Warangal. After that both went to SPs office to explain the project. But he was not available there. So they interacted with the concerned officer and got the details of crime against women. He also assured that, they will try to start the center as early as possible. Next day morning went to Karimnagar, KRUSHI organization. Discussed about the support centers in police stations. They gave positive response.

Meeting on Acid attacks:

Violence has been increasing against women in public and private sphere. They are assuming different forms. The increasing acid attacks are one of them. This has become a matter of concern and debate among women's groups and government. In this context Bhumika Women's Collective, and Oxfam India collective organized a

conference on November 28, 2009 and invited cross section of people like lawyers, women's groups, government officials, legal experts and human rights activists.

The following suggestions were made by all the groups after an elaborate discussions for one hour.

- a. Instead of raising the period of punishment, the government should think about sureness of punishment.
- b. To resolve the cases of attacks, the government should establish separate courts.
- c. The amount of compensation must be as much as required for recovery of normal life through the medical treatment. It cannot be restricted. A separate fund should be set up for the purpose.
- d. The government has to identify and declare certain hospitals for treatment to victims of acid attack and bear all the expenditure.
- e. Where it is found that police acted in callous manner in preventing the acid attacks (in cases of prior complaint of harassment), they should be prosecuted for their criminal negligence like in SC/ST POA Act 1989.
- f. In all colleges and work places, the Committees against sexual harassment should be set up and made to function. Otherwise, their registrations should be cancelled.
- g. A policy on regulating the sales and use of acids should be declared.
- h. A serious media campaign should be started by the government.
- i. The curriculum in the schools and colleges should be development in such a way as to make the boys gender sensitive and girls conscious of their rights.
- j. The programmes in electronic media should be self regulated not to encourage the violence on women.

Government making serious effort to introduce a bill which extends to the whole of India covering the subject of offences by Acids. The subject of penal and procedural

laws being included in list – III, the proposed bill prepared by the national commission for women and intended to be introduced in the parliament by the central government appears to be exhaustive and includes establishment of an assistance board to the victims of acid attacks.

In the aforesaid scenario, a bill incorporating appropriate provisions in the Indian penal code, the criminal procedure code and the Indian evidence act are proposed to be introduced in the forthcoming assembly session by the state of Andhra Pradesh as an immediate measure.

After the bill is passed by the state assembly, we want to conduct the meeting with all groups.

Workshop on Gender Budgeting:

As an organization working with women we often face the problem of inadequate facilities funded by the government. There is a need to demand for reprioritization of funding of needs of women in distress. This is required if we want the government to implement the domestic violence Act seriously. Without proper funding for any Act, it would be just a paper.

Ms. Bhumika of CBGA was requested to deal with aspects of gender budgeting. Analyzing budgets from the perspective of social sector and marginalized sections is important to get their share.

Ms. Kanta of CBGA elaborated the concept further. She said that there are part A and part B in gender budgeting. The first one is exclusively for women and the second one for both men and women where at least 30% goes to women. There are lots of misconceptions about gender budgeting. For instance the child development is seen as part of women's development.

Mr. Saptarshi Mandal of Lawyers Collective spoke on the monitoring and evaluation report on PWDV Act 2005. After a decade of campaign against women's violence, Lawyers' Collective has been successful in forcing the government to enact PWDV Act. After that LC has been involved in monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Act because there is that need.

Meeting on study report of short stay homes and helplines in Andhra Pradesh:

Bhumika done a study on helplines and short stay homes in Andhra Pradesh. We released a present status of the homes and helplines.

On 3rd march we conducted a meeting with women and child welfare department, short stay homes superintendents, NGOs all around the state. We invited Ms. Girija from Oxfam, Ms.Anuradha, commissioner,IAS from women and child welfare department, Ms.Ramadevi from state social welfare department as our guests. In this meeting we presented the status of the short stay homes and helplines. After conducting the above presentation, satyavathi explained the conditios of some short stay homes which she visited. It was observed that there was no staff or counselors present, let alone the victims.

After the presentations the entire group was divided into four sub-groups: Swadhar, Short Stay Homes, NGOs along with Service Providers and Mixed Group. The task given was to identify the problems along with short- and long-term measures at government and NGO level. All the groups came up with a certain measures to identify the problems.

After that we have intiated the open discussion forum infront of the guests. Everyone expressed their problems and suggestions, even the commissioner has suggested the concept of geographical uniformity of homes. If, for instance, one district has a certain number of homes, it has come to note that another district does not have a single home. This creates disparity on a geographical basis. In addition, structures and funds should also be uniform.

She has recommended the concept of GO-NGO partnership wherein a master NGO be identified, who will act as a convener for conducting bi-annual meetings. This suggestion has emanated from the fact that there is no coordination between the Central Government, the State Government and the NGOs. The Central Government identifies certain NGOs for funding and provides the same directly without using the State Government as an intermediary. Due to this, State Government is facing lot of problems because of being bypassed. At a later point, the Commissioner has touched on the aspect of DV (Domestic Violence).

Ms. Rama Devi, Director, Social Welfare Department, has pointed out some issues as under:

- Understaffed. One officer overburdened with several tasks
- Language barrier. For instance, placement of an officer from the north to work in the south at the grassroots level, when the local language is not known
- Recommended that retired people be recruited as their experience would be useful. Argument against this is that the government has specified a retirement age and employing people of this age would increase unemployment.

CWS project of refreshment for women headed NGO's:

Bhumika organized some workshops for the women who are dynamic task masters and proved their capacities well by efficiently running NGOs working on different issues. The only objective is to create a platform for all women to share their views on this issue. As a part of this we conduct a first workshop in DINDI.

(i) *DINDI village:*

The main object of the work shop is to identify professional and personal challenges faced by heads of women headed NGOs. There is a need for better understanding of the challenges faced by them and address them and overcome these challenges by conducting workshops on effective time management, relaxation techniques to create effective work life balance. We invited some facilitators to provide excellent ice breakers and conducted fun filled introductions.

On the whole the workshop went well and the participants were well relaxed, enjoyed.

(ii) *Pragathi resorts:*

This is also just to relax the members, here we enjoyed the trip. Everyone shared their feelings about their lives, how they started their career and what they achieved till now. Now all the members are doing at present and how

much they satisfied with their work at present. The entire day we enjoyed in a joly situation by dancing and singing.

Laadli Project:

On 17th of December bhumika organized a laadli media function at Ravidra Bharathi Hyderabad. The Mumbai based organization “Laadli” is working on girl child issues. Every year they will give awards to the best journalists in electronic and print media in all regions.

As a part of south region they selected bhumika to lead this. It is a 4 months project. We publicized this issue in all south states. Everyone sent their applications and juries selected the best ones. After that bhumika organized an award function at Ravindra Bharathi. We invited home minister Sabita Indra Reddy as our chief guest.

We invited DIG CID Mr.Umapathi from police department, Ms.Anuradha from women and child welfare department, chief justices of high court and famous writers etc. to give awards to the awardees. It is a very successful program organized in this year. Bhumika got national wide publicity because of this program.

Advocacy points:

Advocacy with Judiciary

AP High court issued a circular to allot a specific day for hearing of cases under PWDV Act. Yet only few of the districts have taken steps towards this. The letter of chief justice was sent to all the districts requesting allotment of particular day. There are lots of issues to be dealt with judicial response to PWDV Act. Many magistrates

without accepting DIR, are returning the cases to POs for 'settling; compromising the security of women. This practice needs to be dispensed with. Once the DWDC comes up with the analysis of all the 811 judgments, the agenda for advocacy can be broadened. But before that there is need for taking up dialogue with high court to stick with 60 days of time limit to pass the orders and organize Lok Adalats for disposal of long pending cases. Otherwise the enthusiasm generated by the Act will fizzle out among women

Implementation of PWDV Act in AP: Evolving an agenda for Advocacy

The response of the government of AP in implementing the PWDV Act has been hailed by NGOs all over the country but the ground reality is different. Every piece of legislation is just a good intension unless it is backed by concomitant budgetary allocations to create mechanisms, infrastructure, equipping them with skills and orientations, clear cut roles and proto calls to all the departments involved to address the complex issue of domestic violence. With this realization, CSRF organized a meeting on Gender Budgeting with particular reference to PWDV Act.

The following are the important advocacy points for implementation of PWDV Act.

1. Work towards a setting up of independent POs, preferably women, at divisional level with full fledged infrastructure and with a strong village level network to report to them about violence.
2. Setting up of district and state level Coordination Committee with GO-NGO partnership to review the problems in implementation of Act.
3. Creation of awareness and insertion of the Act in curriculum of all training institutes: Judicial Academy, Police Training Centers, APPA, SLSA. Teaching manuals for the purpose need to be prepared. (DLSA can be taken to organize trainings to judicial officers: DLSA can be asked to organize a workshop on PWDV Act and invite magistrates of PWDV Act)
4. Trainings to POs, Service Provides, Counselors, Judicial officers in judicial academy and NGOs.
5. Demanding state to provide resources to Service Providers.
6. Setting up of Protocol for Coordination for all institutions involved. Steps wise.
7. One page note to chief justice: a. disposal of pending cases within 60 days; special Lok Adalats for pending cases.
8. Evidence based advocacy with testimonies about implementation of Act.

9. Writing in the press.

At NGOs level the following points came for advocacy

- a. Publish a directory of POs, SPs, and circulate among police, NGOs and support service providers like shelter homes, helplines.
- b. NGOs should prepare training materials and modules for NGOs and government training institutes.
- c. State civil society Resource Facility should take up research on all aspects of implementation of the Act.
- d. Organize a meeting with CEOs of media to start awareness generation about Act.

A Committee with a leading and facilitating role for CSRF was formed to take forward the advocacy work.

- a. K. Satyavati of Bhumika
- b. Girija, consultant Oxfam
- c. Representative from AP Women's Network.
- d. Padma from AP Mahila Samata.

Mobilizing Public Support to Help-line

BWC mobilized volunteers and advocates to support the activities of help-line and organized series of meeting to discuss the kind of support women in distress required. The overwhelming support received from the people across the state proved that there is public support to end the violence against women and that needs to be tapped and involved in a huge way. We also conducted a short survey on the nature of legal course available in police stations and support services in shelter homes to understand the facilities to women in distress. This gave us a required foothold on the various issues which needed to be addressed as part of our advocacy work.

Short Studies on Support Services to Women

CSRF has commissioned three short studies on the status and role of support services viz., shelter homes, helplines and legal aid to women. The studies

revealed pathetic functioning of these services without regular funding, monitoring, standards, quality of services, publicity and accountability. The finds laid bare the lacunas in the entire policy and practice of support services to women in distress. It needs to be completely revamped and streamlined. This can only happen with constant pressure from committed civil society groups on central social welfare boards and state governments. The studies identified the following areas for intervention.

1. The government should undertake the process of redefining and redesigning the role of support services in the changed legal policy towards domestic violence. The PWDV Act envisages a larger role to the support services to defend the right to violence free life of women.
2. It should undertake a reassessment of the existing policy of support services including helplines.
3. Creation of support services and their allocation to different states and districts should be based on the assessment of the nature and extent of violence against women.
4. The new policy on support services should have following components:
 - a. The role of helplines should be defined in clear cut terms not as an adjunct to shelter homes but independent of it.
 - b. The NGOs that runs helpline should have experience in working with women's groups and issues.
 - c. The ability of NGOs to network with different agencies to provide services to women facing violence should be taken into consideration while selecting for helpline. The formation of committee of volunteers to supervise the functioning of the helplines should be made mandatory.
 - d. The structure of grant should be designed in such a way as to provide effective services to women. The suitability of grant should be assessed once in every three years.
 - e. The salary of the counselors should be adequate enough to attract experienced and committed persons.
 - f. There should be a clear cut policy of monitoring by the specific agencies. The present confusion should be removed.
 - g. It is the responsibility of government agencies to publicize widely the support services available to public.
 - h. The coordination and collaboration among support services should be made mandatory.

- i. Elaborate forms for collection of data on violence should be prescribed for the support services.
- j. The DWCD should undertake the projects of research and analysis of the data on violence against women and how they are addressed.
- k. The NGOs running support services should be accessible for public scrutiny and made accountable.
- l. The help-lines should work round the clock in real sense.

Advocacy with Media

CSRF has been closely working with electronic and print media to propagate the help-line services and about PWDV Act. At present an understanding has been reached with HMTV to hold live telecast every week on PWDV Act. After every show, the calls from women have been increasing tremendously. Various other channels are also invited representatives from BWC to provide online counseling to women callers. Helpline facility is also extended to women with HIV and facing domestic violence and also to different abled person.
