

## Bhumika – Analysis Report (2008 – 2010)

### **Background:**

Bhumika Women's Collective, Hyderabad has been running a tele-helpline to support the women in distress for the past four years. They operate the helpline from 8am to 11pm every day except Sunday. In the short span of four years they have responded to more than 4000 calls. During this period the helpline has extended its activities to network with relevant support agencies, increase the state wide alliances, volunteer base, media presence, awareness activities and a host of other initiatives, in line with the core purpose of providing relevant and appropriate support to women in distress.

The purpose of the current analysis is to understand the way the helpline is able to reach the women in distress and whether they are accessible to all sections of the society. More specifically the questions the helpline team is constantly asking themselves are:

- Is there any pattern discernable in the cases of violence reported to the helpline
- Are the support system and networks available with us sufficient to address the complex issues of women
- Does the skill or lack of it reflect in the way the cases are handled
- Do we need provide counselling even on Sundays and midnight
- Are there any regional variations in the cases reported
- What are the possible areas of growth and improvement

The current report attempts to answer the above in light of the data available from the calls. Confidentiality and anonymity are two pillars around which the phone based support is provided. Hence as a matter of routine no personal demographic details are asked except those which get divulged during the course of the counselling session. This limits the possibilities for a comprehensive data analysis. All calls are documented in a register as soon as the tele counselling session is over. The purpose of the documentation is not as much for data analysis as for proof of conversation (offline help, to improve quality of advice/guidance given or followup calls). Counsellors are expected to ask only questions which are relevant to the issue being discussed, hence data provided by the callers is not necessarily very consistent. The data analysis hence focuses on some broad trends, points which are emanating. For the following parameters there is a reasonable data available for analysis:

- District,
- Gender of caller,
- Relation of caller to survivor,
- Nature of violence experienced by survivor (Sexual, Physical, Psychological, Economic, Enquiry, Follow up)
- Time of day when call received
- Cases for reference (nature of guidance given which in some cases might require offline help)

- Nature of complaint (divorce, second marriage, husband's harassment, in laws harassment, property etc)

**District from which called:**

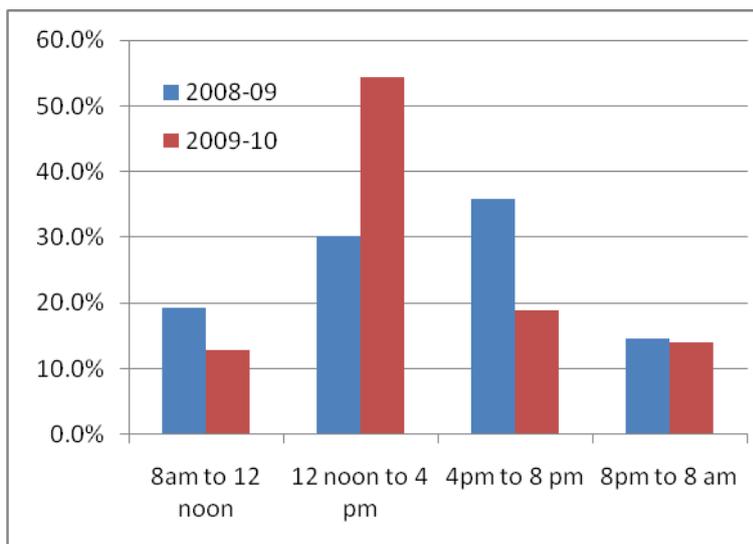
Since inception the share of calls from the top 5 districts has gone from 70% every month to 50%. The total number of calls have gone up from close to 90 per month to approximately 150 per month. The maximum number of calls are from Hyderabad (close to 35%) and during the four years the top 5 districts have included Ranga Reddy, Krishna, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari and West Godavari. The bottom five have included Adilabad, Srikakulam, Mahboobnagar, Nizamabad, Vizianagaram, Medak and Cuddapah. These happen to be the underdeveloped districts in terms of typical development indicators. The reasons for lower number of calls could be lower telephone access and lack of awareness about the helpline.

Comfort levels with phone usage are a function of education and degree of urbanisation. Our estimate is that most than 60% of the calls are from urban centres (like Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Warangal, Tirupati etc). On an average a call is received every month from outside the state. All cases from outside the state are those pertaining to people of Andhra Origin who are staying outside. The cases are invariably more serious in nature and also in some cases require immediate interventions.

Overall the helpline has done remarkably well in terms of spread of awareness about the helpline and while initially they rarely received calls from some districts, now they receive at least 2 calls from each district every month.

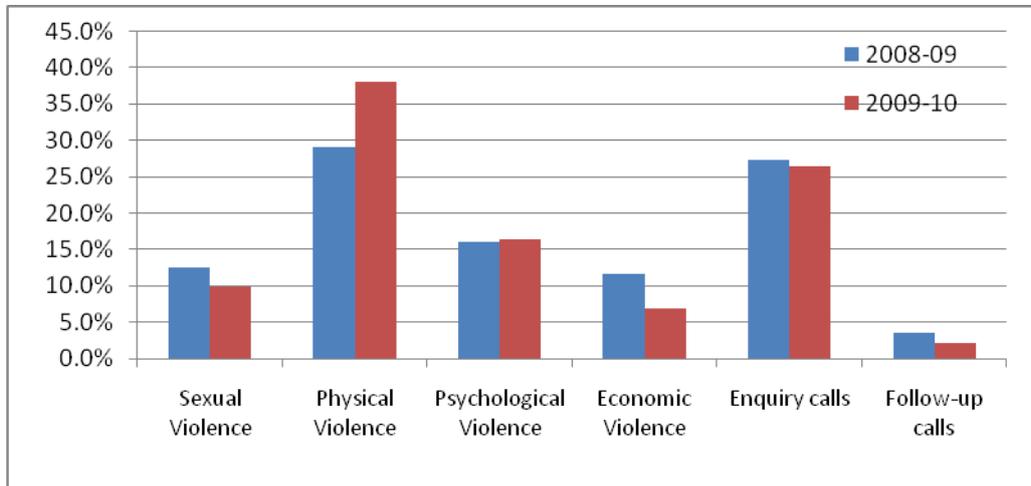
**Time of the day:**

During 2008-09, more number of calls (37%) were received between 4pm to 8pm, however during 2009-10 more number of calls (54%) of the calls are between 12 noon to 4pm. This trend is especially visible from April 2009, possibly due to the appearance of the Bhumika helpline scroll in some afternoon women's television based programmes. Interestingly the proportion of calls between 8pm to 8am has remained the same during the two years and the proportion of calls between 12 noon to 8pm has also remained around 66-70%.



**Nature of Violence:**

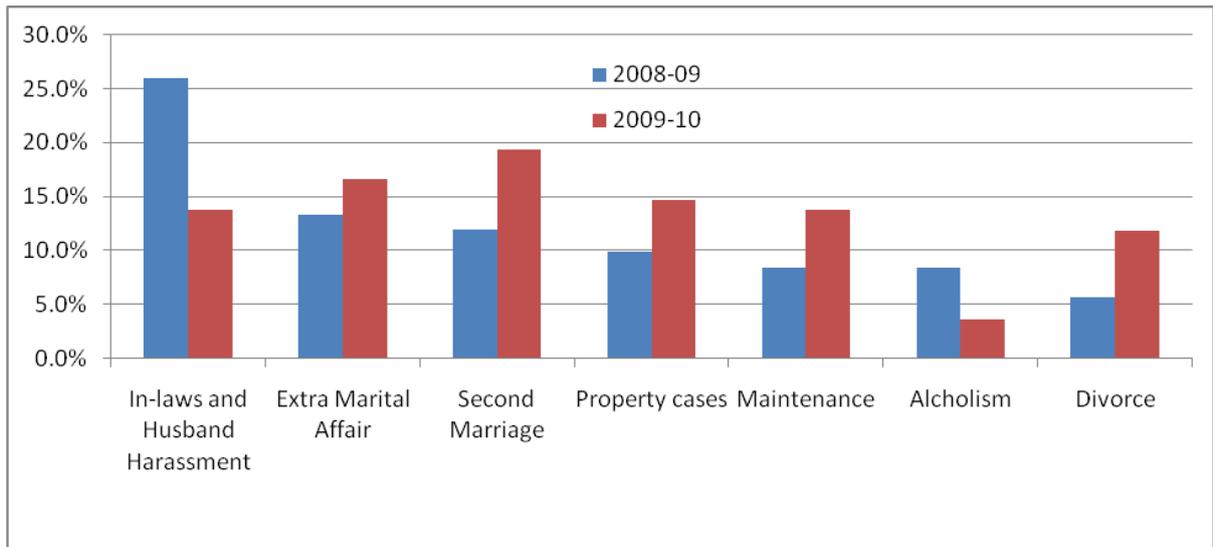
In both the years, Physical violence, followed by psychological violence continue to be the most common nature of violence experienced by the survivors. Enquiry calls are calls where the caller is either interested in knowing the address or phone number of an appropriate support agency or where people call up just know more about the helpline and its activities. These are generally in spurts and happen most often after the helpline has been highlighted in the media.



Physical violence calls have gone up substantially in the last one year (from around 28% to 37%), whereas enquiry calls have remained more or less stable at 26% (this is true for the four years of operations). Followup calls have remained around 5% right from the beginning of the operations of the helpline.

### Nature of Complaint (Categorisation)

In 2008-09 25% of the callers called regarding the harassment they are facing from either their husband or in laws, which dropped to less than 15% in 2009-10. The proportion of calls related to second marriage and extra marital affairs went from 24% to 30%. Even the property related cases are more than the in-laws and husband harassment cases. The increase in Property cases, divorce and maintenance related calls in the last one year (2009-10), potentially reflecting the useful legal counselling/guidance the helpline is able to provide.



As seen from the above graph there are no specific patterns (as such also two data points would be insufficient for drawing any major patterns). Another way of looking at the above is the public perception that might be getting formed around the purpose of the helpline (i.e., most of those who call expect and experience the helpline as providing legal support and guidance).

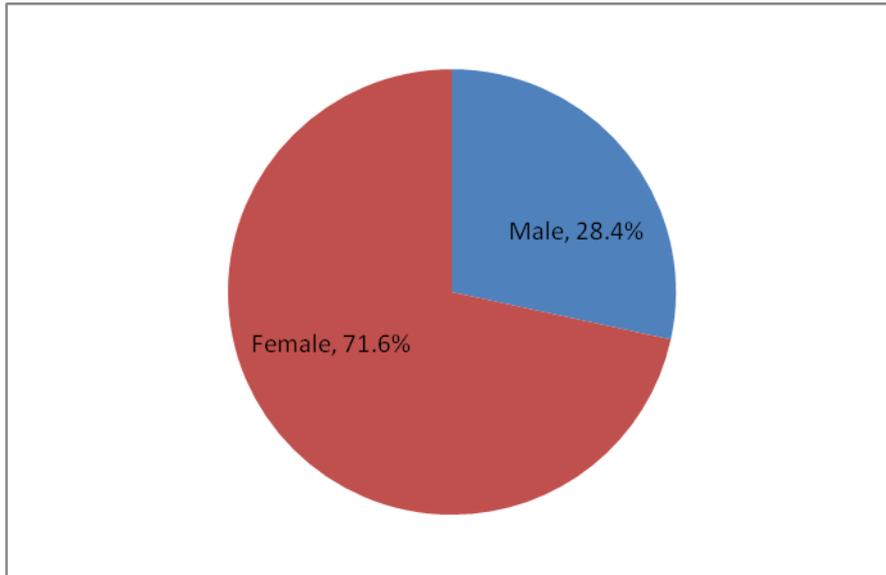
Is it a deliberate strategy or just something which is evolving based on the current support base of the helpline or a growing sense that ultimately it is legal recourse which can solve such problems or is it just a reflection of the fact that the helpline is able to provide a legal counsellors once every week?

Property cases seem far higher than what would one would assume is actually prevalent in the general population. This is probably due to the property boom in Andhra Pradesh which has made sharing of ancestral (or parental or earned) property a point of dispute between siblings or couples.

It might also be worth looking into the categorisations to see if they are suitable or need to be further sharpened. The definitions and categorisations should be standardised and documented and all counselling officers should be provided training on the same on a regular basis. This would ensure that data is consistent, comparable and the analysis that much more sharper.

### **Gender:**

Despite that fact that the helpline is run by a women's collective and targeted at issues of women, every fourth caller is a male. This is an interesting factoid. Most such callers are either worried fathers or brothers seeking guidance and information on either their daughter or sister facing domestic violence. Close to 30% of the callers are either parents (22%) or brother (7%) of the survivor.



**Relationship with caller:**

During the first year of the helpline operations, 76% of the times the caller themselves was the person suffering domestic violence or abuse. i.e., every one out of four cases is reported by someone else (most often immediate family members in the following order: father, mother, brother, friend and sister). This proportion however has tended to vary sporadically going to 45% in 2008-09 and to 54% in 2009-10. Ideally the person who is suffering the violence should call as the exact nature of support and help can be better ascertained rather than being understood from the perspective of a sympathetic relative or friend. The counselling officers encourage this in all their calls and need to continue to do this.

**Cases for Reference:**

The counselling officer also classify the various cases they receive in terms of the advice or guidance they have suggested (i.e., what have they referred the caller to?). This in most cases is a reflection of the nature of the complaint.

	2008-09	2009-10
Protection Officer	27.7%	32.6%
Family counselling centres	19.0%	15.6%
Legal Help	16.9%	23.6%
Family courts	16.3%	11.0%
Psychiatric problem	8.6%	8.5%
Health	6.8%	2.0%
Shelter homes	3.8%	6.7%

As the above table indicates, legal referrals have gone up (correlating with some other points made earlier). Health related referrals have reduced indicating that people are more aware of the purpose of the helpline. Increase in referral to shelter homes is potentially indicative of the increase in gravity and severity of the violence being faced. The table also indicates that ultimately a lot of the support

has to come from the existing government infrastructure, which has to be made responsive and sensitive to the needs of the survivors.

### **Conclusions and Suggestions:**

Bhumika Helpline has made tremendous progress in making the helpline and its activities relevant and appropriate to reach out to the women in distress. Awareness levels have gone up manifold during the last four years and this is evident from the fact that they are receiving calls not just from all the districts of Andhra Pradesh, but also in some cases from outside the state. Some salient points from the analysis:

- Calls are coming from all districts and the regional variations seem to be a function of degree of urbanisation, education levels and access to telephone. Good progress has been made on awareness generation so much so that calls are being received from outside the state also.
- Calls between 12-4pm are maximum, indicating potentially the time period when women are free (from household chores) to call and discuss their situation
- 25% of the callers are men.
- Legal cases or those requiring some form of legal followup have gone up.

### **Suggestions:**

- Understand better why the legal related cases have gone up. Is it something which the helpline team would like to see increase?
- While Sunday and night shift are worthy of consideration based on the reality of the helpline team, it is difficult to assess from the data analysis alone. It is more of a strategic and moral decision. There is a strong case to increase the number of counselling officers to ensure that quality of advice and documentation does not suffer as the volume of calls are increasing day by day.
- Support systems and networks available are probably not sufficient and with the increased guidance from the helpline the pressure on the support systems would only increase. It is important to simultaneously work on improving and making the support systems more responsive and sensitive.
- There is a need for a more consistent data format. While one is already available, it needs to be revisited and improved, in light of the ability to document the salient features of each call. Counsellors need to be provided training on documentation in the data format. A monthly summary sheet needs to be generated so that data analysis can be simplified.
- It might be worth investing in a software to ease the data entry process. Current process is lengthy, prone to errors or memory recall etc.

Ends