

**SHAHEEN WOMEN'S RESOURCE
AND WELFARE ASSOCIATION**



Shaheen – Women's Resource and Welfare Association often known as

Shaheen was set up in 2002, Sultan Shahi, Old city of Hyderabad. Ever since its establishment it has championed the cause of women's right and engaged deeply on the issues of gender based violence in the Old city area of Hyderabad. It has striven to work on two main goals of gender justice and communal harmony and continues to work with the Muslim, Dalit and Other backward castes (OBC's) communities for achieving these goals.

A brief background to Sultan Shahi-

Over one-third of Hyderabad's population resides in poor settlements, the area of Sultan Shahi mohalla, one such settlement, is a case in point. Lack of public amenities and livelihood opportunities, has kept this particular region of Hyderabad city bereft of the 'modern' new industries, where people continue to be engaged in manufacturing sector, carrying out informal work. Over population, illiteracy, poverty lack of public amenities all compound the problems faced by women. The area of Sultan Shahi has also been susceptible to widespread communal rioting. In some instances, rioting has exceeded to such extent that even government run transport system refused to ply their services in this area. All of the above factors jointly contribute to the sufferings of women economically, socially and culturally.

It is in this context that Shaheen has attempted to establish itself as a pioneering organisation working on women's rights. Over the last decade Shaheen has worked on various aspects of gender-based violence (physical, emotional, cultural and structural) among women and girls of marginalised communities of the Old City of Hyderabad. Women belonging to the minority and Dalit communities need to be viewed with the lens of intersectionality, where they experience structural violence as embedded in Institutions of the state and religion/ caste status, within communities owing to their patriarchal nature and thirdly at the household level where gender based discrimination manifests at multiple levels. The communally charged environment of the Old city area, further feeds into more control on women, creating it all the more difficult for them to exercise freedom. Shaheen has attempted to engage at all these levels by creating dialogues with various stakeholders.

Shaheen with a focus on creating spaces and resources for young girls and women has initiated unique educational and vocational training centers in Sultan Shahi. These resource centers have been able to create spaces for women to learn and acquire new skills, knowledge, they have also been able to create platform for women to articulate themselves. As a consequence of this engagement, women have started to understand and assert their rights both at a household and community level.

Over the course of time, Shaheen has been able to evolve its strategies to work with women, in its initial days Shaheen focused on creating awareness and building knowledge among women and girls. In the course of time, group discussions and individual counselling sessions on domestic violence, sexual and reproductive rights as well as communal violence have enabled women and girls, who seek support at Shaheen, to assert their identity as a woman and to stand up for their rights.

Achievements of Shaheen during the year 2015

- Shaheen identified 900 young women belonging to the age group of 15- 25 years for a programme aimed at building awareness and empowerment. These women were divided into multiple groups and are undergoing various training for vocational courses based on their areas of interest.
- 491 girls have found jobs in various domains and started to earn their livelihoods and lead independent lives.

- The counselling center at Shaheen reported 132 cases of domestic violence and among them 114 cases were settled through counselling.
- Shaheen filed twenty six RTIs in order to obtain basic information regarding the cases of child marriages reported in 17 police stations in South Zone.
- Awareness programs on life choice: Many women were able to share about the positive impact of life choices trainings in their lives as it has helped them make informed decisions in their lives.
- Vocational training has enabled women to eke out a living for themselves and become economically independent.
- Women from Valmiki Nagar (scavenging community) were able to challenge the centuries old oppression based on the hierarchy of caste system to enter 'new' professions such as tailors and receptionists etc.
- Shaheen has effectively contributed towards a 'safety audit' which maps safety of women in the Old city. The report has been able to identify different streets, spots and unsafe places in the old city.
- Shaheen celebrated the "International Domestic Workers Day" and the event saw participation of 115 women who are domestic workers.
- Shaheen has fought against child marriage vigorously and managed to stop 18 forced marriages of minor girls. It was able to do so by engaging multiple stakeholders including religious leaders, families as well as Sheiks.
- Shaheen collaborated with Tata Institute of Business (TIB) to put up an exhibition on the products made by Young Urban Women. Another exhibition was held at Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad.
- The confidence among the young girls has experienced significant changes and they have been able to change their attitude towards sexual harassment and eve teasing.
- With the help of Shaheen, the bankers approved the loans to 20 young girls as part of the self employment scheme.
- Shaheda recieved 'Naveena award' in the bravery section. She played a crucial role in Sting operation to identify a Sheikh who was trying to marry a young girl.
- For enhancement of educational goals, Shaheen took the initiatives to help enrol 35 girls in the open education system.
- Girls Hostel for orphans was opened in Siddiq Nagar by Shaheen's intervention along with the help of Madarsa and the State Government.
- Eight new ICDS centres were opened by the efforts of Shaheen.
- 1074 women and children have benefited by the health camps conducted by Shaheen.
- Shaheen staff visited *waqf* board to enquire about schemes in the Minority Board for women and young girls.
- Awareness programs were conducted on relevant schemes and entitlements provided for girls by the Government.

I. TRAININGS

a) Creating opportunities for economic empowerment of women- Skill development programs

As a grass root women organization, Shaheen recognises the importance of economic empowerment of women at grass root level. It has worked towards these goals building through technical education and skill building amongst women. Due to high levels of illiteracy, building economic independence has remained a challenge, as women continue to be engaged in underpaid, low skilled, treacherous jobs, making them susceptible to exploitation. Given these constraints, Shaheen has organized various programs to enable women acquire skills in fields such as tailoring, karchob (zari work), mehendi, knitting, fabric painting and bangle making etc. The aim of these programs is essentially to make women economically independent, so that they can support themselves. Shaheen has also helped women in establishing various market linkages to their products, so that they have access to markets. Shaheen also arranged stalls at various *mela's* for selling the products made by these women collectives.

Shaheen conducted various educational and skill development programs to women and children belong to the marginalized section of the society to improve the standards of their lives. These skill development programs provides women a space in the public sphere and such activities act as a platform for women to interact with each other, share their thoughts, emotions and achieve confidence. By creating opportunities for women from the lower strata to earn income Shaheen visualized economic empowerment as the backbone of fighting inequality. Apart from this, Shaheen conducted training on career opportunity for girls to help choose their career.

Shaheen also conducts computer classes for women with basic literacy, so they can build capacities in technical fields. Two eighty women attending the skill training programs found jobs and are able to support themselves.

In an innovative partnership, an interactive session was organised with Andhra Pradesh Industrial Training Cooperation. For building economic empowerment of women tailors, this discussion saw participation of 70 women. APITC has pledged its support towards Shaheen and women from the community, it intends to provide professional sewing machines to women.

For economic empowerment, Shaheen was also instrumental in facilitating bank linkages for women. 22 women have availed loan from SBI Bank and utilise this money for enhancing their income through the self employment scheme.

b) Awareness among the Young Urban Women in Slum Areas of Old City Hyderabad

This programme aims to address three core issues, trainings are given on three aspects, firstly it gives training on decent work, secondly it gives training on unpaid care work and lastly on sexual and reproductive health rights of young girls and women. Under this programme, intense discussions were organized on various issues such as unpaid care work, reduction and re-distribution of home chores,

Shaheen identified 900 young women from ten slums in old city of Hyderabad and divided them into 40 groups. Each group was further divided into two, based on the age range- from 15- 18 and 19- 25. 103 leaders were identified from these groups and given training so that they are able to lead their groups.

access and importance of decent work, sexual and health rights, empowerment, and life choices. These groups meet monthly and discuss about the issues related to sexual and reproductive health rights, unpaid care work and decent work. Group leaders have also been able to discuss with community leaders regarding basic amenities such as road, water, and garbage and sought assistance to effectively address these issues. Such awareness programs for girls were also conducted in religious institutions such as in Madrassa's.

Life choices and livelihood trainings complements each other. Life choice workshops focus on the right of women to have control over various aspects of their lives. The program has been able to infuse enthusiasm amongst girls and they are keen to learn more on rights and control over income. Awareness programs on SRHR, domestic violence has given confidence to girls to stand up for themselves. Women and young girls are coming forward to articulate their problems before several stake holders including officials from ICDS, Women's Commission, media etc.

Recognition of Unpaid work amongst women

Shaheen has organized awareness programs for young women regarding paid and unpaid work. 35 women attended this training, our programs were able to positively influence attitudes towards unpaid work carried out by women. They were able to reflect on the gendered division of household work and the challenges that poses to their ability to earn money. Through participatory training methodology, women have come to understand the importance of their work. All this has further helped them to push for redistribution of housework at the household level, hence freeing their labour to carry out

productive work. Making use of State institutions to share care burden of the household was also identified. Women were encouraged to make use of ICDS centers, where they can enroll their children when they go to work or vocational classes.

Shaheen has constantly tried to encourage participatory tools amongst women to help them locate themselves better in the power hierarchy of society. The usage of play methods along with games, helps women and girls to let go of their inhibitions and learn effectively from the programme. Also with high level of illiteracy such tools and trainings are very important

II. Legal counselling:

A key component of Shaheen's work is to provide counselling and legal advice to women in distress and those suffering from domestic violence. Such women are often identified on field visits conducted by Shaheen staff on a regular basis. Apart from giving counselling services, Shaheen also encourages women to start participating in Shaheen's programs such that they are able to take charge of their lives and overcome their often violent past.

Violence against young girls and women is a serious issue in the community, due to its intervention in several cases over the years, Shaheen felt the need to create awareness amongst girls on this issue. This has eventually led to the formation of children's club and they have been given training on issues such as good and bad touch amongst children. Girls are further encouraged to demand completion of education from their families as their right.

Shaheen registered 132 cases of domestic violence and abuse. 114 cases were settled through the counseling. One case was filed under section 498A and three cases were filed under domestic violence act.

This year Shaheen registered 132 cases of domestic violence and abuse. 114 cases were settled through the counseling and four cases brought to quasi office. One case was filed under section 498A and three cases were filed under domestic violence act in the collector's office. Basti women have also acknowledged that Shaheen's awareness programme generated legal awareness amongst them and gave them the strength to raise their voice against violence both in public spaces and at the house hold level.

Overcoming violent and abusive relationships

Sirisha got married in 2012, and belongs to Turkapally village, Vangoor Mandal, Mahaboobnagar district. Her parents gave Rs 80,000/- cash, 40 grams gold and other household items as dowry. Her husband was an alcoholic and over time he stopped going to work. He had a habit to bad mouth about Sirisha, to everyone, even her family members. He abused her physically, mentally and sexually, and was also guilty of raping her several times. She was harassed by her husband and in laws, he also tried to kill her twice. Her mother in law also forcefully separated both of them and constantly abused her verbally. Given her desperate situation and the need to support herself, she started going to work, but her husband snatched her money forcefully and tortured her. She came to know about Shaheen and approached us for legal aids to divorce her husband. We helped her file a case at Mahaboob Nagar court and necessary action is now being taken.

Creating awareness about laws and legal provisions-

Shaheen has also created awareness among women about the various laws and acts that exist to safeguard them both at the workplace and their homes. These include sessions on the Domestic Violence act, PCPNDT act, Nirbhaya Act, Vishaka guidelines, POSCO and others.

Through the medium of community meetings, discussions around abuse, sexual harassment at work place, domestic violence act, sections 498 and 498 A are discussed. Detailed orientation on women rights, Nirbhaya act, PCPNDT act and POSCO was also shared through these meetings which were held in Bhavani Nagar and Nasheman Nagar. These meetings saw participation of around 300 women.

III. PUBLIC EVENTS

a) Commemorating special days of the year-

- Be the change and global day of action: As part of the celebration of the global day of action Shaheen called an interaction with girls. Around one twenty girls attended the program and shared the views about kinds of changes to be happened to both their lives and society. Jamila Nishat urged girls to raise their voice and take the actions against the discrimination in the society.

As a grass root level NGO Shaheen keeps a keen interest in the government programs for women and children. As a part of this, Shaheen filed an RTI against the public information officer regarding the facilities given in government school and posted in educational department. International domestic workers day was celebrated by Shaheen by conducting a protest for the safety foe women.

- International Women's Day Celebration: International women's day was celebrated by Shaheen with an emphasis on the marginalized women in Telangana. Public meetings were organized in which we interacted with the public and put forward the problems of the minority women. Qawwali with the themes focusing on gender issues were performed in various venues as a part of women's day celebrations and Shaheen performed two Qawalis during the program conducted by Women and child welfare department.

Shaheen celebrated 'International Women's day' on 10th March, 2015 at Sultan Shahi. The speakers of this program were Mrs. Tripurana Venkata Ratnam, Chairperson, Women Commission of Telangana and Mr. Satyanarayana, South Zone DCP, and Sub Inspector from "SHE" team. They interacted with two hundred young girls and discussed about their problems. DCP discussed with them about legal provisions that women can use in case of issues of violence both at the workplace and at home, he also shared the police helpline number with the girls. Sub Inspector of SHE team appreciated Shaheen and the young girls achievements in the bastis and remarked that they have taken preventive actions against eve teasing.

- Celebrating Republic Day: At Sultan Shahi, Old city of Hyderabad 185 children participated in the program. Shaheen organized cultural activities in which children performed different items like, dance, and small skit on Sheikh Marriage. At Hassan nagar Shaheen celebrated Republic day and 77 children participated in the program.
- International Children's Day: 192 young participated in this celebration girls with an emphasis on child rights at Sultan Shahi.

b) Public Demonstrations-

Shaheen has been able to understand the importance of public demonstration, as a powerful instrument of protest to raise awareness amongst society. It has used public demonstrations to raise key issues affecting society especially those related to women's issues.

- Shaheen organised a demonstration at the Charminar bus stand to condemn the suspicious death of Sarika and her three children at her in law's house, Warangal. One sixty five women participated in the demonstration and asked for justice and punishment to the culprits. Jameela Nishat gave statement regarding Sarika's case to the media. She explained that Sarika had approached Shaheen and had also given a written complaint against her husband and in laws. Negligent attitude of the police, towards such victims when they sought help from police was shared as one of the key problems in such cases. Sarika had filed a complaint at the police station as well but the police had failed to take cognizance of her complain and she had to eventually face death.
- Shaheen organised a public demonstration against the ban by Government on the documentary titled 'India's Daughters' which is about the 2012 Delhi bus gang rape. This was organised along with other organisations such as Bhumika.
- Shaheen conducted a public demonstration at Charminar on the eve of "International Domestic Workers day" with 115 young girls and women participants. Safety of young girls and women at work place and in their households were the key points of demonstration.
- On August 15th, Shaheen organised public demonstration on the issue of rape and murder of 12 years old girl in Aman Nagar. 200 young girls participated in the demonstration and demanded the eradication of crimes against women, focus of the demonstration was on the issue of rape and murder. The main slogan on the demonstration was "where a girl is respected society will be respected".

c) Public Hearings and meetings-

- Shaheen organised a public hearing with the press along with victims of child marriage. They spoke about problems experienced by them and provisions regarding the age of marriage in Muslim personal law. Shaheen's interventions with the community encouraged victims of child marriage to speak about their problems to the media. Problems they face as single women due to this practice were shared with the Women's Commission, Telangana and the need for social and economic security for them was also emphasised.
- Shaheen invited and represented the issues of backward classes in the old city in a program organised by the Government at Public Gardens, Nampally. The chief guest for the program was Justice-V. Ashwariya, and speakers included Mr. S.K.Kadrinadhan, A.K. Mangathar, Dr. Sakeelu Zamaansari, Jameela Nishat and Mohd. Ali Shabbier Nishat. Jameela Nishat, Shaheda and Sultana from Shaheen participated and they spoke about the different issues of backward classes
- Shaheen organised a sensitisation program for religious leaders in their premises to create awareness about children's issues. District Collector Ms. Nirmala, Shyam Sundari, Deputy ACP from CCS And task force member, C.P.Ratan, Padmaja and Jameela Nishath etc. participated in the programme. The speakers discussed important issues like the necessity to save girl child, child rights, child education, child sexual abuse, declining girl sex ratio and the role of religious leaders to generate awareness about children's safety among respective religious communities.

- Shaheen organized a public meeting titled '*Bol ke lab azaad hai tere*' which saw participation from accomplished poets such as Jameela Nishat, Ms. Vasant Kannabiran, Ms. Qhamer Jamali and Ms Vimala. They expressed their anxiety towards growing culture of intolerance in the Indian society and the murder of famous veteran Kannada writer and Former Vice Chancellor of Kannada University, Mr. Kalburgi. They spoke about the shrinking public spaces and the importance of freedom of expression.
- Shaheen invited Dr Neal Hall, a renowned black poet and activist to talk about racial discrimination. In the gathering he shared his experiences of discrimination as a person of African origin living in the USA. His personal experiences motivated him to leave his medical practice and plunge into poetry.

IV. HEALTH CAMPS

Women and children in the old city have poor health, primarily due to lack of hospitals and other medical facilities. Shaheen wanted to address issues related to health and set up health camps to address health care needs of the marginalized sections in the old city. Shaheen also conducted health camps for the seasonal infectious diseases such as swine flue, dengue, etc.

a) Weekly medical checkup

Shaheen provides health check up for women and children by collaborating with different doctors every week. Both general and camps focusing on specific diseases are organised under this program.

b) Health camps and workshops

- Shaheen conducted health camps with focus on eye and ear diseases.
- At the Madrassa, Siddique Nagar a health camp was organized and 42 young girls were given body check up and awareness classes.

V. AWARENESS ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (SRHR)

Shaheen understands that there is a huge gap of knowledge amongst women especially pertaining to their sexual, reproductive health and rights. Most of them have some issues regarding their sexual and reproductive health which they are unable to share with anyone. Moreover, women belonging to minorities and dalits also report high maternal mortality rates and unsafe abortions.

To address these pressing issues, Shaheen organised several training programs to create awareness among women about their sexual and reproductive rights. Such that women are able to make decisions regarding reproduction, have control over their bodies, have safe sex, plan their pregnancies and also experience a life free from sexual violence. In these trainings, participants were encouraged to share their experiences and also given medical consultation. Through these interactions Shaheen was able to identify various reasons behind poor reproductive health of these women.

- Apart from giving trainings at the community level, Shaheen also understands the lack of awareness amongst Government workers. Along with Aanganwadi workers who are at the interface of various services for mother and children, Shaheen organised awareness program on menstruation cycle, and personal hygiene at Siddique Nagar. 25 Aanganwadi workers participated in this training. They shared that attending this program had changed their long held superstitious beliefs regarding menstruation and helped them understand the importance of keeping their body neat and clean.

- Regular awareness programs on SRHR were organised in the resource centers with an emphasis on nutritious food and its importance for healthy reproductive health. 168 women have benefited from these awareness programs and the diet chart discussed in these sessions, emphasises on cheap and affordable food items having immense nutritive value for young girls. Shaheen staff members provided detailed training about the needs of the body through body mapping activities.
- Another workshop was organised at Urdu Ghar, Charminar on SRHR among 35 women. Mirror activities were used for women participants to articulate positive and negative behaviour regarding their health and food intake. This was then developed into a larger discussion on gendered nature of households and the sexual division of labour. Through this training, the importance of eating healthy food was emphasised and various myths around menstruation were clarified.
- A campaign on girl's sexual and reproductive rights was organised in Sultan Shahi. Dr. Janaki Srinath, Gynaecologist, Ms. Kamalak Shetty from Child Welfare committee and Ms. Rafia from ICDS department attended the meeting. They contributed to the discussion by raising discussion on issues such as nutrition, discrimination of girls etc. The importance of girl child was stressed throughout the discussion.
- Shaheen is committed to supporting the marginalised, and participated in a protest to express our solidarity with the sexual minorities and LGBT community. It further argued for justice for these minorities and their rights to be recognised as respect worthy civilians. Trainings were also conducted by Shaheen and seventy nine participants benefited from these. These trainings/ programs engaged deeply with the subjects of gender and sexuality. They further emphasised the importance of sexual rights of individuals, their right to decide their sexuality and sexual orientations. It further pressed for equitable rights of lesbians, gay and transgender community.

VI. EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF EMPOWERMENT

- Shaheen conducted a workshop for women on the importance of education. Fifty two women participated in this workshop with Prof. Shareef as the resource person. He encouraged women to form groups, educate each other and work together. He also emphasised on the linkage between education and empowerment and how good education can translate into lucrative career opportunities.
- Summer camps for children- During the camp children were given classes in drawing, and training in Mehendi and Qawwali. This was a unique experience for children to develop their aesthetic and artistic qualities and also have fun during holidays.
- Tenth class coaching- Majority of lower caste and minority women fail to complete formal education due to poor socio-economic condition and cultural constrains. Committed to the goal of education, Shaheen acts as a platform to facilitate these girls to pass the Tenth Standard examination by conducting free tuition classes. 22 young girls were supported in this effort, and necessary approvals sought from the Director/ Joint director open school education department. All the girls have been permitted to appear for class tenth examination in the Government high school at Sultan Shahi.
- Awareness programmes in schools- discussions on topics such as patriarchy, importance of education, unfair sex ratio, importance of RTI and child labour were conducted at Government high school. Eighty five children participated in the discussion meeting.

- Fifty three students and their parents were given training on the topic of ‘Good touch and Bad touch’ in Rose public school at Siddiq Nagar. Impact of gender discrimination among boys and girls was also discussed.
- Topics such as PCPNDT act, Nirbhaya act and POCSO were discussed in schools at Bhavani Nagar and Siddique Nagar where 150 students participated.
- Awareness programs on Nirbhaya act and sexual harassment at work place provide opportunities to girls to interact with police officers including those from the ‘She’ team. This has helped built confidence amongst young girls to fight against eve teasers and abusers through the formal legal process.

VII. ACTIONS AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

- Shaheen through its awareness programs urged the people of Hyderabad to fight against child labour. It has further insisted on prompt action on behalf of officials and police department to address this issue. With Shaheen’s intervention, police raided different places of the old city and rescued 330 children from child labour and sent back them to their native places such as Bihar, UP, and Chattisgarh.
- Shaheen celebrated “World Child Labour day” by conducting an awareness program. Advocate Rehana Khanum explained about the child labour act and RTE to the girls. Fifty eight girls participated in this celebration. Girls were also given information about distance mode of education.
- Through the medium of community meeting organised in Nasheman Nagar, women from the community interacted directly with the Police authorities. With the help of this interaction, 423 children were rescued from child labour.

VIII. CULTURAL PROGRAMS

The issues that Shaheen has engaged with in the last many years are very serious in nature and need different mediums to be communicated. The director of Shaheen, Ms. Nishat is a poet and activist, she has worked tirelessly to communicate messages of equality and peace through her work. Shaheen takes every opportunity to communicate its work through the medium of music, qawali’s, mushaira and skits to a larger audience. Issues of gender are also communicated through cultural mediums on various platforms.

- Young girls from Shaheen participated in a ‘mushaira’ organised by Goethe Zentrum Institute.
- Shaheen performed Qawali on the eve of “Salaam Telangana” organised by the Department of Language and Culture Department.
- Shaheen also participated in making documentaries, it has engaged with the subject of divorced women. It also helped in making ‘He for She’ a documentary which captures role that men can play for empowerment of girls and women.
- Shaheen has also started photography classes for girls from the community.

IX. CAPACITY BUILDING OF STAFF

Capacity building and leadership development among staff members is an important work ethic at Shaheen. Since Shaheen staff is in constant touch with women from the community, nurturing their communication and leadership skills is of great importance.

- Trainings on sexuality was given by Ms. Mamata Raghuveer, where topics such as menstruation cycle, bodily changes post puberty, use of contraceptives, importance of safe sex and STD’s was discussed.
- Shaheen organised three days training programme on disability rights. Mr. Pawan and Sajid from “*Chaitanya vikalangula hakkula vedika*”, Mahaboobnagar gave training to Shaheen staff. The training was very interesting and also introduced sign language.

- One day training was organised to share “Rights of the disabled” and Mr. Rameshwer Rao gave training to staff on “Constitution law of India” and also the laws related to women.

X. STATE LEVEL CONSULTATIONS

Consultations at the state level are often instrumental in directing concrete action towards various issues. Shaheen has actively contributed towards these discussions and even organised some consultations.

a) Consultation on Child Marriage, 10th and 11th July 2015

Shaheen organised two days consultation at state level along with eleven organisations and 69 people, from different districts of Telangana. The effort was directed towards sharing of experiences and efforts to stop child marriages. Speakers for the consultation were Ms. Jameela Nishat, Executive Director of Shaheen, Archana Dwivedi and Arunima Bose from Nirantar, Srinidhi from Asmitha and David from UNICEF. Srinidhi shared excerpts from the survey carried out by Asmitha and highlighted poverty as the main cause for persistence of this practice. The study showed that girls are married within six months of attaining poverty in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Poverty amongst families pushed the girls towards early marriage, unable to educate young girls, they were often discouraged from completing their education. Poverty also pushed households to depend on young girls for their labour- such as contribution towards house work, care work and even paid work. Poverty and lack of state infrastructure, such as absence of schools in the neighbourhood were both seen as contributing factors towards early drop out from education which subsequently leads to early marriage.

Findings from the National level survey on child marriage were shared by Nirantar. This study was conducted in 2014 by Nirantar Trust with the support of American Jewish World Service (AJWS). Nineteen organisations spread across the states of Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and New Delhi helped in data collection. One finding was that, the average age of marriage has risen from 6-8 years to 13-17 years. The causes of child marriage also came to the fore through this study, these include poverty, fear of girls getting in relationship with a person from a lower caste, pre-marital sex, pregnancy and arrangement of dowry. The point of universality of marriage and its non-negotiable nature was also discussed as societies are unable to imagine individuals independent of this institution.

Interlinkages between education and empowerment were also discussed and the importance for girls to complete their education was emphasised. The repercussions of early marriage for girls are grave, and they experience reproductive health issues. Customs and beliefs where the bride is expected to ‘prove’ her fertility to the family exist and put additional burden on the bride to conceive. With early child birth and inability to negotiate contraception women experience issues such as abortion, miscarriages and maternal deaths. All these events also have a long lasting impact on the mental health of women. Thus it is important to make note of the gendered repercussions of this practice.

Though child marriage may be recognised as problematic, rarely do organisations work on this issue. Even if organisations have attempted to address this issue, a holistic way of addressing child marriage remains a challenge. To effectively address this issue, there is a need to engage with young girls at three levels, firstly they need to be trained on SRHR, secondly, they should be encouraged to complete their education and lastly, organisations should focus on women empowerment.

b) Consultation on Child marriages and Customary laws, 28th & 29th November, 2015

Shaheen organised a two-day consultation focused on the issues around child marriage and customary laws. The consultation saw seventy participants each day, with the activists and experts from the academia.

Consultation began with a group song about daughter’s rights sang by the Shaheen’s staff which shed light on the relevance of the theme of consultation. The consultation was enriched with the contribution of distinguished speakers from

organisations dealing with various issues. Chairperson of Women Commission, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Mrs. Tripurana Venkata Ratnam, Director Tarunee NGO and Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee , Warangal district, Dr. Mamatha Raghuvver, , Director of *Divya Disha*, Mr. Isidore Phillips, Director *Chitanya Vikalangalu Hakalu Vedika*, Mr. Abdul Sajid, Associate Professor, Centre for Inclusion and exclusion, HCU, Dr. Ajailu Niumai, Professor, Department of English, Delhi university, Dr. Rukmini Bhaya Nair and Jameela Nishad, Neeraja Batnagar, regional manager, Action aid were the main speakers.

Chairperson of Women Commission, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Mrs. Tripurana Venkata Ratnam in her opening remarks acknowledged Shaheen for the its efforts to work on women empowerment, especially amongst socially and economically deprived communities and caste groups. She took this opportunity to assure the participants that Government and Women’s commission of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana is committed to stop the child marriage and save the girls. She discussed about various legislations that exist to stop child marriages and also emphasised on the importance of awareness among people regarding the consequences of the child marriage on the lives of the girls. Each individual and the entire community need to be sensitized on the issue including the Public health institutions and the Police. She reminded the necessity to bring various institutions and people together on one platform to end the practice of child marriage in the society. Mamatha Raghuvver talked about the various causes of the child marriage and its impact on the girl’s life. Isidore Phillips shared about the link between child rights and child marriage. He also spoke about safe touch and unsafe touch. Abdhul Sajid discussed about various problems experienced by disabled women. Dr Ajailu Niumai presented a paper on customary rights of Naga, tribal women in north east India. The customary laws of Naga community support child marriage and patriarchal relations in both family and community. She argued for changes in customary laws regarding rights of women especially in family property and representation of women in the village councils.

Neeraja Batnagar discussed the reasons behind child marriages and expressed that persistence of this practice is rooted in the patriarchal and patrilineal structure of our society. She emphasised the importance of feminist lens to engage and address this issue.

The consultation called for group discussions regarding factors related to child marriage at ground level. Starting a state level forum to combat child marriage was planned as the next plan of action. Neeraja Bhatnagar urged the participants to discuss about action plans for the forum with Shaheen. The consultation program ended with the Qawali performance by Shaheen staff.

“I was too young”: Voice from a survivor of child marriage

Wasim, a survivor of child marriage narrated her story. “My name is Wasim. I am from Sultan Shahi. When I was studying in seventh standard, I came to know that my marriage was fixed to an Arab man. I was taken to a hotel and the marriage ceremony was performed, when I was barely twelve years. After four days, my husband left me and I came back to my home. I got pregnant and delivered a girl. Giving birth to a child while myself being a child, was the most painful experience of my life. I was married at a time when I did not have the slightest idea of what marriage is. After the delivery I locked myself in a room and led a lonely life till I met the Shaheen staff. I am thankful l to Shaheen for providing me training in tailoring and extending me with support during the hardest days of life”. This narrative of the survivor revealed the intensity of crisis of child marriage.

- c) Meeting on “Issues of Minority women” was organised in collaboration with Women Commission. Ms. Sameena Shafiq from the National Commission and Ms. Tripurana Venkata Ratnam interacted with minority women. 200 minority women including representatives from various non government organisations participated in the consultation. The main issues faced by women were of child marriage and triple talaq (Divorce). Women expressed their anxiety about divorce and problems with the Muslim Personal Law. Ms. Sameena and Tripurana ensured the women that they will take this issue to national level and work towards welfare of minority women.
- d) Shaheen participated in a Consultation meeting organised by Government of Telangana in drafting the ‘State Plan and Action for Children’ (TSPAC). Department of Women Welfare & Child Development invited Shaheen to participate in the program. Purpose of the meeting was to develop an action plan, such that interests of children are at the center of planning.
- e) Shaheen participated in a State level consultation organised by Action Aid. The meeting was organised in collaboration with DFYWA on women’s unpaid care work. Findings from the research study, which mapped unpaid work amongst women from the fishing community, Visakhapatnam district were shared. Activists, researchers and practitioners from civil society organisations came together to deliberate on the subject of unpaid care work. Women’s right to education, skills building, decent work, health, social security and access to resources was emphasised. It was further emphasised that women will be able to contribute to the economy effectively only if their care burden is reduced and it is the responsibility of the state to provide infrastructure which lessens women’s care burden. Further policies and programs of the state should be planned with a ‘Care lens’, only such planning can effectively lead to women’s participation in various aspects of life.
- f) Shaheen participated in a consultation organised by Child Welfare Department, Government of Telangana. Hyderabad district collector organised a sensitisation program aimed at religious leaders on ‘*Beti Bachao and Beti Padhao*’. The collector, Ms. Nirmala spoke about issues such as female foeticide, infanticide, unfair sex ratio and female illiteracy. Ms. Jameela pointed out towards problems faced by young girls from the minority community and emphasised on the need for them to complete their education.
- g) Shaheen participated in a State level consultation on issues of single women. This consultation focussed on the laws and legislations that exist for single women both in the state of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

STRATEGIES

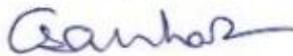
- Sensitization on RTI , RTE and Protection of Girls Against Sexual Offense Act
- Advocacy with bureaucrats and State Government Officers to prohibit child marriages
- 15 days activism on violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Workshop with school students on girls’ rights and POCSO
- Vocational training to girls
- campaign on SRHR and PCPNDT Act
- Advocacy with Labour department and enrolling basti Domestic Workers and informal workers, get them ID cards and entitlements. (A large number of unorganized sector workers having access to space and other social security benefits)
- Workshops on Provision of health services and create awareness on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights.

Child Rights two day consultation programme held by Shaheen Society at Hyderabad <http://www.newswala.com> : Child Rights two day consultation programme held by Shaheen Society at Hyderabad Author: Rayees Azam For more information and update: [Click Here](#)

Shaheen Women's Resource and Welfare Association, Hyderabad
Balance Sheet as on 31st March 2015

Liabilities		Amount	Assets		Amount
Capital fund:			Fixed Assets		2,975,952
Opening Balance	3,882,455		(Schedule Enclosed)		
Add: Excess of income over expenditure	<u>2,514,963</u>	6,397,418	Deposits		9,000
Unsecured Loan		23,826	Advances		40,851
TDS Payable		155,393	Tax Deducted at Source		14,863
Sundry Creditors		8,000	Fixed Deposits		2,429,463
			Cash at Bank		1,007,909
			Cash in Hand		106,600
		<u>6,584,637</u>			<u>6,584,637</u>

As per our Report of even date attached
For **Sankar & Raja**
Chartered Accountants



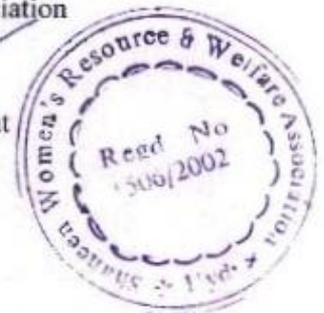
C.V.P.Uma Sankar
Partner
Membership No. 029371

Secunderabad, 15th October, 2015



For Shaheen Womens' Resource and
Welfare Association


Jameela Nishat
Secretary



Shaheen Women's Resource and Welfare Association, Hyderabad
Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st March 2015

Expenditure	Amount	Income	Amount
To Expenses of AJWS	1,521,827	By Grant from AJWS	2,739,900
To Expenses of Action Aid	10,427,976	By Grant from Action Aid	10,677,325
To Expenses of R D Tata Trust	1,239,852	By Grant from R D Tata Trust	1,347,000
To Expenses of National Foundation for India	636,500	By Grant from National Foundation for India	538,225
To Expenses of Nirnaya	11,886	By Grant from Global Fund	1,197,372
To Expenses of Global Fund for Women	412	By Grant from Nirnaya	204,000
To Expenses of Local Fund	105,107	By Donations	30,000
To Depreciation	444,708	By Bank interest	169,409
To Excess of Income over Expenditure	2,514,963		
	16,903,231		16,903,231

As per our Report of even date attached
For Sankar & Raja
Chartered Accountants

C.V.P. Uma Sankar

C.V.P.Uma Sankar
Partner

Membership No. 029371

Secunderabad, 15th October, 2015



For Shaheen Womens' Resource and
Welfare Association

Jameela Nisgat
Secretary



Shaheen Women's Resource and Welfare Association, Hyderabad
Consolidated Receipts & Payments Account for the year ended 31st March 2015

Receipts	Amount	Payments	Amount
To Opening Balances:		By Expenses of AJWS	1,521,827
Cash in Hand	55,034	By Expenses of Action Aid	10,427,976
Cash at Bank	798,401	By Expenses of R D Tata Trust	1,243,852
Fixed Deposit	2,637,423	By Expenses of National Foundation for India	636,500
To Grant from AJWS	2,739,900	By Expenses of Nirnaya	11,886
To Grant from Action Aid	10,677,325	By Expenses of Local Fund	105,107
To Grant from R D Tata Trust	1,347,000	By Expenses of Global Fund for Women	412
To Grant from National Foundation for India	538,225	By Fixed Assets Purchased	3,016,505
To Grant from Global Fund	1,197,372	By TDS Deducted	246,407
To Grant from Nirnaya	204,000	By TDS	9,579
To Donations	30,000	By Advances	148,605
To Bank interest	169,409	By Closing Balances	
To TDS Collected	386,950	Cash in Hand	106,600
To Advance	131,589	Cash at Bank	1,007,909
		Fixed Deposits	2,429,463
	20,912,628		20,912,628

As per our Report of even date attached

For Sankar & Raja
Chartered Accountants

C.V.P. Uma Sankar

C.V.P. Uma Sankar
Partner

Membership No. 029371
Secunderabad, 15th October, 2015



For Shaheen Womens' Resource and
Welfare Association

Jameela Nishat

Jameela Nishat
Secretary

