



SHAHEEN

WOMEN'S RESOURCE AND WELFARE ASSOCIATION

Annual Report 2018-19

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FOREWORD

SHAHEEN – Shaheen Women’s Resource and Welfare Association is an organization based out of Hyderabad committed to the cause of women’s rights and communal harmony. We were established in the year 2002 with an aim to work among the impoverished communities in the Old City area of Hyderabad city. Today, Shaheen through its incisive and community-based approach has been helping women across age groups to break social barriers, gain control over economic resources, and participate in community-level decision-making processes. We have been involved in over a decade and half long on-ground intervention for the rights of women and girl child among the most socially and economically backward minority communities of Muslims, Dalits and Other Backward Castes (OBC) in the area.

Shaheen is based out of Baqshi Bazar of the Sultan Shahi area in the old city of Hyderabad. This area is notorious for being the nucleus of several violent communal conflicts in the past and represents a continuous state of disharmony and tensions. When Shaheen first stepped in the area in 2002, the neighborhood was empty and desolate with remains of parched homes and shops.

The location of Shaheen is also peculiar because it lies at the cross point of three different communities of the Old City of Hyderabad - Muslims, Dalits, and Other Backward Caste Hindus. Notably, these communities live on the fringe and are excluded from interaction and participation with mainstream society. It is here that Shaheen steps in to provide a point of integration and contact, interaction and participation, visibility and articulation and an open space which the women and children can use to rise out of their vulnerability.

The Old City in Hyderabad has seen little development in terms of basic infrastructure such as sanitation, electricity, schools, and healthcare centers. Religious-based conflict, socio-economic oppression, inadequate education, early marriage, and restricted mobility are some of the challenges young women face. Shaheen has been able to provide a platform for women and young girls to break out of traditional barriers, pursue their choices and enhance their skill sets and gain control of their socio-economic rights. The presence of Shaheen over these years has normalized some amount of gender sensitization and gender rights in an otherwise conservative and patriarchal society.

The percentage of urban Muslim population is 92% in the Old city of Hyderabad. Increasing religious extremism also control the mobility of young girls and women. In one of our surveys, it was found out that more than 30% families in one particular area marry their daughters to aged Arabs from

Gulf countries. Yet another report of the State of Telangana highlights the following:¹ More than one-third of respondents stated family restrictions, poverty, and marriage as reasons for not pursuing their education. Higher incidence of drop-out among girls was due to poor infrastructure and concerns around the safety of girls, early and child marriage within the community, family responsibility and restrictions for girls. Only 1.1% Muslim women are involved in formal sector occupation whereas the Hindu community accounted for 12.8%. As per the study, most women are not allowed to go outside the home, their occupation is in the nature of self-employment and own account enterprises, often home-based activities.

Going forward, Shaheen seeks to capitalize on its presence and experience in the community to effectively deliver socio-economic freedom to the women in the area and sensitize the community against gender-based violence and oppression faced by the women.

Shaheen has also focused on creating an amenable and sustainable environment within the communities we work with. The goals we seek to achieve would not be tenable without an enabling environment which sustains the effort by itself in the long run. Towards this end, Shaheen is actively involved in promoting communal harmony among different communities in the old city by celebrating the various festivals (both of national and cultural importance) involving all the members of the community irrespective of their caste and religion.

Over the years, Shaheen has been able to garner support from multiple good wishers who have invested in our work and our communities with their time and resources. We extend heartfelt gratitude to our funders and donors such as Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives, EdelGive Foundation, Center for World Solidarity, American Jewish World Service, Action Aid, and Global Fund for Women, for having shown faith in our work.

¹*Issues in Minorities Development: A study of Muslims in Telangana State* 2016, Study conducted by Council for Social Development, Hyderabad to understand the socio-economic and living conditions of Muslims communities with a special focus on livelihoods and status of women in 19 slums covering 2354 households, in the old city of Hyderabad

OUR MODEL

The community we work with is extremely sensitive to external intervention. Accordingly, Shaheen has devised a successful model of community-based intervention wherein we work with the community to make the interjection and further, develop our programs in line with the requirements of the women and children living in the community without having any impact on their ability to be a part of the community. This aspect is crucial given the extremely parochial attitude of the community. Despite our limitations, we have been successful at gaining acceptance within the community and yet being effective at delivering our goals and forming a huge team of strong headed women volunteers who have ensured successful implementation of our programs.

In this report, we have sought to provide you with a glimpse of our model of work and achievements in the year 2017-18 and have set out our agenda for the coming year.

For SHAHEEN - Women's Resource and Welfare Association

Jameela Nishat

(Director)

WHY DO WE CHOOSE TO WORK AT SULTAN SHAHI?

Sultan Shahi is one of the poorest settlements of the Hyderabad city. The area has a dearth of public amenities and livelihood opportunities and has largely been bereft of the modern industrial development in the city. Most of the people are engaged in low-paying jobs and prone to the vulnerability of the informal sector. The area has also been a victim of widespread communal rioting in the past. This is compounded by overpopulation, illiteracy and absence of public amenities which contribute to the sufferings of the people in general and women in specific economically, socially and culturally. The community also suffers from an overbearing problem of child and women trafficking, forced marriages, sexual exploitation of girls which is endorsed by the mafia presence in the area. Religious fundamentalism in the community in the recent past has only made the situation more stressed with the community and the State becoming mutually suspect of each other thereby further isolating the population from the general social life of the city and the economic resources available to it have consequentially decreased. In this background, the worst victims, more often than not, happen to be the women and children in society.

Women in the area have been victims of structural violence embedded in the institutions of the religion, gender, caste, and State, and are insecurely placed in a conservative and patriarchal family set-up. Gender-based abuse and oppression range from sexual and physical violence to the deprivation of resources and opportunities and the absence of making choices. This is synthesized in a communally charged atmosphere of the Old City area, leading to issues of security to life and the state interface itself becoming suspect and violent.

It is in this context that Shaheen has attempted to establish itself as a pioneering organization with a focus on the rights of the women. We also work on various aspects of gender-based violence — physical, cultural, economic and structural, among the women and marginalized communities of the area.

At Shaheen, we have initiated dynamic educational and vocational training centers in Sultan Shahi with a focus on resource-creation for young girls and women. These resource centers not only create space for women to learn and acquire new skills and knowledge but also play an instrumental role in creating a platform for women to articulate themselves. The overarching aim is to make the women of the area assert their rights and identity as an integral part of society.

OUR VISION AND AIMS

Shaheen envisions a society in which gender, class, caste or religious status does not impinge upon one's resources, rights or freedoms - both in the private and public sphere. For this, we continuously strive to create a conducive environment for women to regain control over their minds, bodies, and resources. We also thrive to create greater gender consciousness and better socio-religious harmony in society.

The primary focus area of Shaheen is young unmarried girls - most of them being school drop-outs. We also work in local schools with teachers and administration to enlighten students about the importance of education in their roles as individuals of the society and citizens of the country.

We also organize training camps and awareness meetings on the issues of domestic abuse and violence. Our work has had a positive impact in the area which is reflected by the increased awareness of the different facets of domestic abuse among the girls and women of the area - which went unnoticed earlier. Most importantly, Shaheen has paved the way for an interactive community dialogue which is now spreading across the boundaries of the Old City involving both men and women. Our long term goals include-

- Eliminating domestic and social violence
- Enabling women to pursue education and control financial futures
- Working against trafficking more systematically
- Allowing women to express themselves creatively
- Ensuring the knowledge about the presence and exercise of fundamental right among its citizens.

THE TEAM AT SHAHEEN

A brave and spirited team is sine quo non for our endeavors. Shaheen is a community-based organization endeavor to work from within the communities to achieve sustainable transformation and enabling strengths. Our community mobilizers (field workers) are the 7 foundations upon which multiple interventions are woven. These field workers who are representative of the Old City communities are informed, motivated and sensitive. A few of them have themselves been victims of domestic and communal abuse and most of them still confront hostility from anti-social elements but, we instead draw our strength from such incidents which further fuel our dream of a more integrated society.

THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

Shaheen has always aimed at twin goals of gender justice and communal harmony. We do this by empowering women to gain control over their resources and assert their rights in a better fashion and increase cooperation and interaction among different communities to weed out their differences. Keeping this in mind, Shaheen organized a range of activities and camps throughout the last year to move a notch closer to our desired ends. Shaheen Women's Resource and Welfare Association is able to create spaces for girls and young women to voice their opinions freely and influence positive changes in their lives. Shaheen is keen on enabling women to gain control over their resources, livelihoods, and community-level decision-making processes. Shaheen's work is gaining ground which can be perceived from the increased acceptance and acknowledgment from the community we work in. This year we intensified and diversified our activities to build on the accomplishments of the previous years. The past year saw Shaheen concentrating its focus in the following broad areas –

- *ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE* - Shaheen has been actively employed to build a support system for young girls and women to take control of their resources and become self-reliant and economically empowered. A number of training camps on various economic activities, vacationing workshops, and finance management were organized by Shaheen to realize the women of our community to achieve economic independence.

- *SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT* - It is important for the women and young girls who are most vulnerable to both anti-social elements in the society and oppressive streaks within the family system to be in a position to assert their positions and rights better. We at Shaheen aim to construct a relationship of faith and confidentiality that provides space for the marginalized women to open up and share their grievances. We achieved this through the various training workshops, talks and demonstrations for spreading awareness among our beneficiaries.

- *POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT* - In our quest to provide space and relief to women, Shaheen has enabled a variety of women to be assertive about their rights and become politically involved in their community. We organized numerous legal and political training camps for the women of Shaheen to spread awareness about women rights, gender justice and legal protections guaranteed by the State and the Indian Constitution. Our plethora speakers included numerous politicians, philanthropists, doctors, policymakers and community members who spread knowledge in their area of expertise. Our work at Shaheen has also served as a catalyst for state intervention. The Central and State government has approached Shaheen for records in assessing the situation of the marginalized

communities in the area. We have also achieved to highlight to grim situation of the area through popular media. The detailed note on activities undertaken by Shaheen in the previous year is provided in the next chapter.

Strategic Priority I: Economic Empowerment and Vocational Trainings:

Vocational training enables adolescent girls and young women to earn an income and build crucial life skills. Adolescent girls, more than boys, lack access to financial capital and have limited opportunities to gain education, knowledge, and skills that can lead to economic advancement. Vocational training can play a key role in helping girls and women to get jobs. Vocational training typically includes the development of technical capacity, entrepreneurship, and business skills. Ideally, vocational training is demand-oriented and builds specific skills tailored to prospective employers' needs. Other vocational training programmes help girls build a wide set of soft skills, such as conflict resolution, team building, and communication, which they can use in a variety of jobs.

Shaheen has been actively employed to build a support system for young girls and women to take control of their resources and become self-reliant and economically empowered. A number of training camps on various economic activities, vocational skill training workshops, and finance management were organized by Shaheen to realize the women of our community to achieve economic independence.

Training for diverse courses is being held across five resource centers of Shaheen. Language classes in Urdu and English, along with Computer education classes are also being organized at Shaheen’s various resource centers across the area.

Table 1.0

<i>Livelihoods training</i>	<i>Number of Women Enrolled</i>
Mehendi	137
Karchob/Embroidery /Woolen	54
Tailoring	295
Computers	119



Figure 1.0



Fig. 1.1 Women Learning Embroidery/Karchob Work

Chronicles of a Strong Woman

Chandrika is a 28-year-old woman who belongs to a backward caste. She lives in a rented house in Gowlipura with her husband and their two children. She has qualified her matriculation and runs a ready-made garment shop with her husband. Chandrika came to Shaheen for the first time when she was a homemaker to enroll her daughter in a summer camp.

The staff at Shaheen motivated her to come along with her daughter to learn requisite livelihood skills which will be of service to her and her family in the future. She saw other women learning

different skills and decided to learn tailoring. She regularly attended her skill classes and during the course also participated in different workshops and training programs organized by Shaheen. During her time at Shaheen, she received significant understanding on an array of issues. For the first time in her life, she traveled alone to a different city to participate in a training program at Bangalore along with the Shaheen staff and other students that was an enriching experience for her. She celebrated her birthday with everyone on that trip. She said that “I will never forget those beautiful memories in my life”. She feels lucky to have a supportive husband and gives him the credit for successfully completing her course at Shaheen.

During her course, her family went through a tough time. Her husband lost his job, as he was the sole breadwinner of the family it became very difficult to manage things for a few days. Then Chandrika decided to do something about the situation and started stitching clothes at home. She continued stitching until her husband got a new job. And soon their financial woes were a problem of the past, they came out of the wretched penury and both were earning a modest income enough to sustain their family. After a few months, both opened a ready-made garment shop. Chandrika is successfully managing the logistics of the shop and feels strong and ever empowered, she doesn't want her children to go through the same difficulties what she had seen in her adult life. Chandrika has become stronger than ever and believes strongly in sisterhood and has also employed a woman helper for her shop. She pays her 1500/- rupees per month.

“I am very happy, I feel empowered and I want to give my children a better life,” she says.

There have been such several success stories where girls in the locality have been able to convince their orthodox family members to allow them to visit Shaheen centre regularly. Through Shaheen's awareness, there has been a significant increase in the mobility of young girls around the area.

Strategic Priority II: Health Awareness

The women in the Sultan Shahi and surrounding areas suffer from prevalent and recurrent health problems which are a result of poverty, deprivation and gross neglect. The problem is exacerbated for women in the age group of 18-25 years who not only record the highest level of anaemia but also the lowest levels of immunity and nutrition levels. Other common illnesses faced by the women in the area include upper respiratory infections, diarrhoea, dysmenorrhoeal, excess bleeding in

menstruation, irregular menstruation cycle, white discharge, early arthritis, osteoporosis, and other bacterial diseases. Shaheen has taken upon itself the task to filter in health knowledge and bust the myths and taboos surrounding health and nutrition.

Table 2.0

<i>Health Awareness Programmes</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>
Workshops for Adolescent Girls	281
Health Camps	167
Awareness Camps on Sexual and Reproductive Health	363

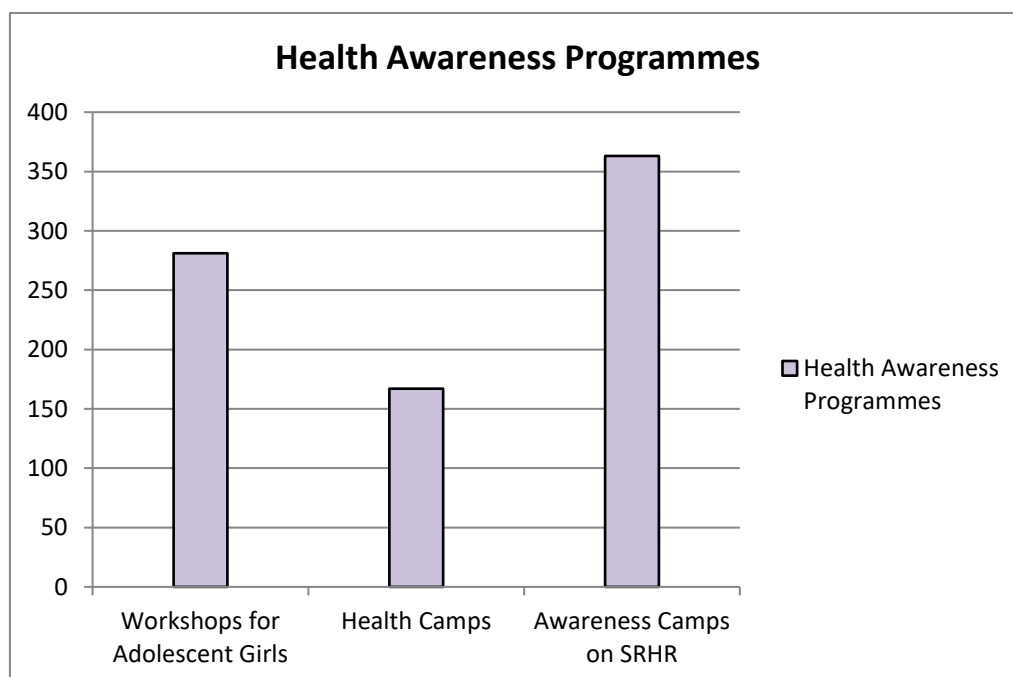


Fig. 2.0

In the month of January, Shaheen had successfully conducted more than one Health Awareness Programmes, where young girls and women were enlightened on maintenance of proper sanitation, preventive measures against mosquito-borne diseases. They encouraged open discussions on sexual and reproductive rights, menstruation, HIV AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and other related health issues. In many of the camps, free medicines were also distributed, thus widening its outreach.



Fig. 2.1 Distribution of Free Medication at Health Camp

Apart from this, two doctors from Bangalore visited Shaheen and interacted with the staff. They enquired about the major health problems of women in the community, and the availability of doctors, health centres, hospitals, pathology centres in the area.

Delivering from Ignorance

Shabana is an 18-year-old girl and has nine siblings, with seven sisters and two brothers. She studied till the 5th standard after which her parents pulled her out of school. She comes from a very poor and conservative family where girls are not allowed to do normal things like, to go out for school. Her orthodox parents restricted her mobility severely which took a massive toll on her social skills. Her limited exposure to the world made her reticent and socially awkward. The family with their bizarre traditions like marrying young girls before they hit puberty because not doing so is a sin rendered Shabana dysfunctional. Shabana because of her lack of choice internalized this thought process.

Shaheen changed her for good completely; Once ignorant about body rights, Shabana now knows the importance of women's health and menstruation. Initially, she cried a lot it was all too alien for her but after repeated interactions, she realized the significance of knowledge in general and especially about her own body. She shared these new learning with her sisters, mother, and friends in her community. Learning new things piqued her interest and she started attending other programs, workshops, group activities, legal sessions on women's rights and empowerment at Shaheen.

Shabhana is a different self altogether now; one could never say that this effervescent girl, curious about life was once unconfident and diffident to express herself. She is setting a positive precedent for her younger siblings; she is traveling all by herself and is also confronting her parent's archaic conventions boldly. She took up tailoring at Shaheen and over time has become a very skilled tailor.

In the future, she wants to grow into an independent working woman who can take her of herself and her family. She wishes to get married but not anytime soon. First, she wants to make a successful career out of tailoring. With the help of counseling at Shaheen, she has helped her sister out of a toxic marriage by using the Domestic Violence Act of 2005 which she got to know through Shaheen. Shabana is a beacon of hope for thousands of young women fettered with the shackles of ignorance, poverty, and traditions. She is the light that dispels the darkness.

Strategic Priority III: Gender sensitization ensuring Violence-free Life

The primary focus of the work at Shaheen is a dedicated commitment towards gender sensitization. Shaheen aims to construct a relationship of faith and confidentiality that provides space for the marginalized women to open up and share their grievances. Its members actively strive for gender justice and their interventions at multiple levels and are geared up towards achieving a more pluralistic and integrated society. They have now created communication channels within the communities which are both holistic and participatory.

The activities geared towards gender sensitization have also become more inclusive with young boys of the community stepping in and talking to the men of the community about the various atrocities faced by the women. Although it is hard to reach the men of the community who are impregnable and unresponsive, but Shaheen has wedged into closed areas and is now beginning to spread its influence in the community. Their community dialogues have become more inclusive and integrated and the evolution continues as Shaheen discovers newer areas of communication and transformation by reaching out to a larger ambit of beneficiaries.

Table 3.0

<i>Gender Sensitization</i>	<i>Number of Participants/Events</i>
Focus Group Discussions	438
Exposure visits	129
Safety audit and safety mapping	242
Number of sting operations conducted	3
Campaign on child marriage	739
Number of girls rescued/ prevented from child marriage	48

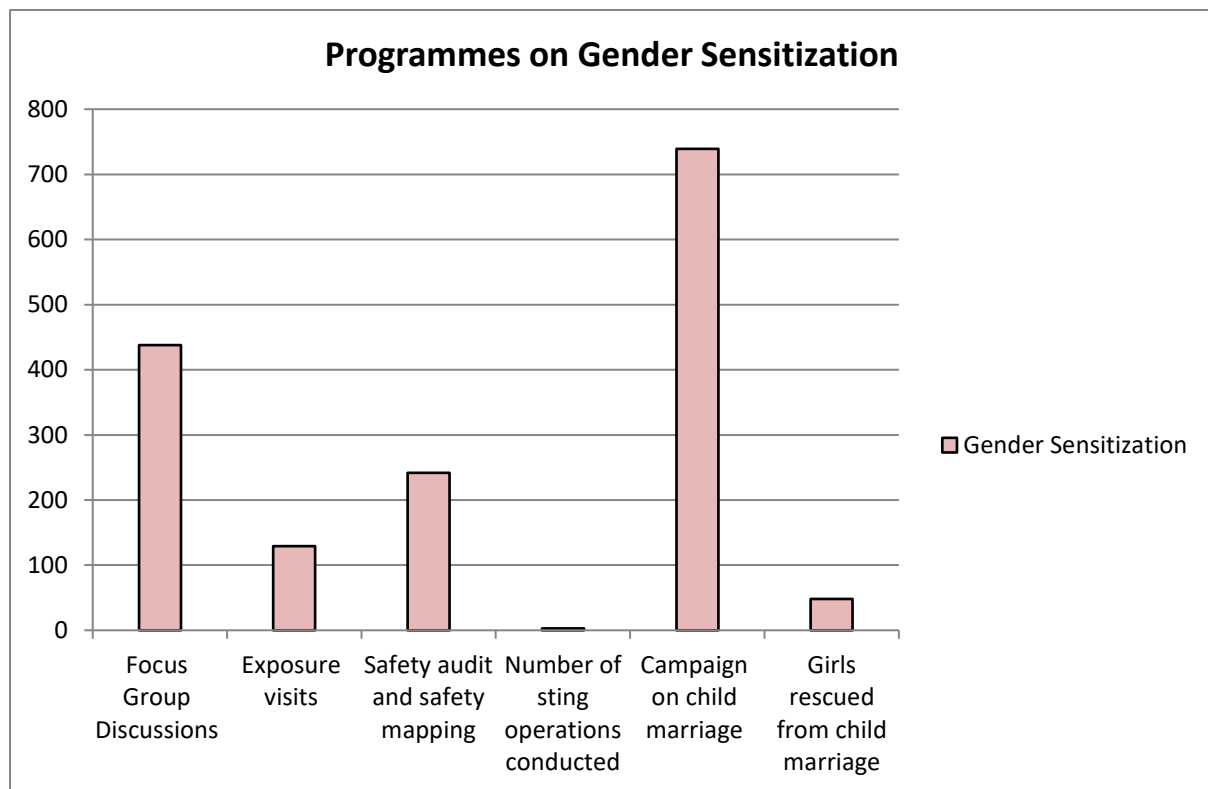


Fig. 3.0



Fig. 3.1 Safety Mapping Session

In the year 2018, Shaheen conducted several awareness programmes addressing relevant issues such as child marriage, gender discrimination, good touch and bad touch, equal pay for equal work, trafficking, gender-based violence, and so on and so forth.

On 20th January 2018, Shaheen organized awareness program on POCSO Act and showed “Komal”, a documentary film based on the same act. The program was conducted in Moghalpura-2 and 26 members participated in the program. After watching the documentary the staff of Shaheen enquired a few questions on POCSO act and their learning from the documentary. The participants were very active and shared their views and observations from the documentary.

Parent-Staff Meetings – Shaheen had also conducted a meeting with parents on “No Silence against Violence” on 21st March 2018, where they discussed the issues of gender discrimination and sexual abuse, and emphasized on the importance of education. The parent community took an oath to end violence within the domestic sphere and not violate the rights of their children.

The issue of Sheikh Marriages is extremely rampant in the Old City of Hyderabad. As per the statistics provided (refer Fig. 3.0), 48 girls were rescued from child marriage and drug trafficking and much of it had been possible due to the conduction of successful sting operations with the help of media, police personnel and/or victims and survivors of these gender crimes. As compared to last year statistics, 2018 witnessed a significant drop in the number because a large group of perpetrators involved in this racket had been arrested by the police towards the end of 2017. Shaheen conducted a total of 3 sting operations, lasting for more than a couple of days, including the arrest of middle men involved, eventually and effectively exposing the reality to the society.

Campaigns against Child Marriage – This is an activity which is carried out round the year with multiple stakeholders especially targeting women from different communities. In the year 2018, Shaheen was able to partner with District Legal Services Authority and one of such campaigns for the beneficiaries was carried out along with the officials of DLSA. Shaheen also organized Safety Audit and Safety Mapping sessions with the girls of the community, where the places where child marriage occurred were identified, marked and updated on a regular basis.

Dismantling Ideologies

Irfana Begum is a 25-year-old woman living in Amaan Nagar. Irfana got married in the year 2017. Before marriage Irfana was a regular at Shaheen resource center. She learned knitting there and regularly participated in the awareness programs. She learned about the body and reproductive rights. She was very happy to start her new conjugal life.

Her husband Irfan happened to be a disappointment or rather a dream killer. He was an ultra-masculine, ignorant, misogynistic brute. From day one of the marriage, he tortured Irfana, both physically and mentally. During her time at Shaheen, Irfana had grown into a confident individual. Irfana questioned everything from superstition to heathenism practiced in the form of culture, This assertiveness irked Irfan. She would profess about body rights to her sister in law and Irfan was revolted by the idea of a woman's agency. Irfana's mother in law hated her guts and she fanned the flames of Irfan's insecurity. Irfana's mother in law wanted a subservient meek as a wife for her son but Irfana's non-compliance perturbed her, she would mentally harass her with incessant rebuke.

Even after two months of her marriage she faced continual reproach from her husband in-laws. Her husband never fulfilled his part in the sanctimonious relationship called marriage. One day they locked her up in a room and took pictures of her while asleep. The torture pushed her to the edge and she was contemplating suicide.

Irfana said "NO" to this extreme mind-numbing violence by going back to her maternal house. There she received divorce papers from her in-laws – they didn't want her in the house. Irfana wanted to get back her belongings but thought of waiting for some time instead. But the next day her husband issued triple talaq without consulting her in February 2018 which is legally invalid.

She was not ready for a divorce yet, so she approached Shaheen and narrated her account. Shaheen helped her file a complaint; they also wanted to talk to her husband so that he would understand the gravity of the situation. The counselors at Shaheen called her husband for counseling; he agreed to come for counseling but did not show up on the decided date and kept on postponing. So the counselors visited his home instead and they counseled the entire family but the husband went to the police station to complain against Shaheen and the counselors. The Police officials did not take his complaint of trespassing and asked him to attend the counseling session. Shaheen then approached the police and filed an FIR against him under IPC 420, 490 and 498. Even then he did not agree to counsel. Shaheen with the District Legal Service Authority started the divorce proceedings which were agreed by both the parties. Her husband agreed to pay a total amount of 1,50,000 rupees as alimony.

Irfana is happy with the divorce and is living an independent life. She regularly comes to Shaheen to hone her skills and is trying to focus on other positive things to change herself and her life. She is grateful for Shaheen's help.

Strategic Priority IV: Working With Children

Children are the future of the nation. They are, in fact, the foundation on which a strong, energetic and dynamic society shall be built. Children are exposed in their formative years most to their parents and community, who have a tremendous responsibility towards inculcating in their young minds a sense of values, discipline, dedication, and commitment to the nation.

One of Shaheen's focuses is to provide awareness to children and adolescent girls, sensitizing them about their rights and, giving them identical recognition, and working for their welfare.

Table 4.0

<i>Activities with Children</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>
One to one counseling in schools	920
Group activities (importance of education and other training programmes)	619
Re-enrolment of Drop-outs	25

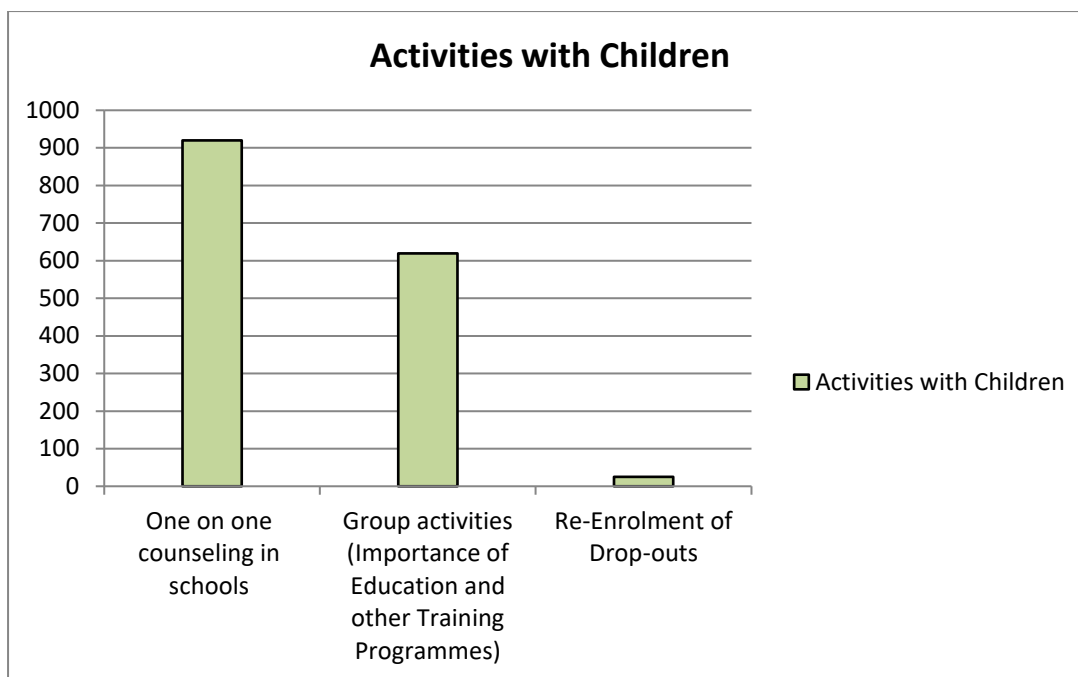


Fig. 4.0

Many dropout students were re-enrolled in the schools with efforts of Shaheen staff. The Shaheen staff motivated the children and counseled the parents to continue their wards' education.

Education Melas – Shaheen conducted education *melas (fairs)* in several schools of old city. The purpose of these melas was to facilitate discussion on issues such as the importance of Girl Child Education, Gender Equality, Sexual Reproductive Health Rights, Legal laws related to Women, RTI, and so on and so forth. This programme involved various games, student interactions and group discussions to spread awareness and equip the children with the basic knowledge about their rights and the importance of education in their lives.

Shaheen also conducted various awareness programs in different schools on schemes and entitlements. The purpose of conducting awareness programs was to help students to understand the provisions Government has made for young girls and women through various schemes and legal entitlements.

Guided Imagery Sessions – were also introduced into the curriculum of Shaheen as an effective method to identify the incidence of violence in the lives of young girls and boys. These sessions were conducted in the schools and proved to be very effective. Several children, especially girls, confided in the facilitators and opened up, sharing their stories of abuse and violence. Shaheen has been working on these high risk adolescents individually through counseling sessions.

Counseling Sessions - During this period, Shaheen conducted one to one counseling with 75 children in 10 schools. During the course of counseling, and door to door community visits, the counselors were able to identify four girl children who had dropped out of school. They counseled the parents and explained the importance of education to them. After multiple interactions with their family members, parents agreed to enroll them back in school. They also spoke to the school headmasters and helped them enroll early in school.

During such a visit, one of the counselors identified a case of stalking. The counselors called the boy's parents and shared the case details with them. They explained to them about "SHE" teams and punishments under the POCSO Act. After explaining to his family, they took agreement from the boy as well as his parents that he should not indulge in such behavior again. The girl was relieved after this intervention and shared that

"Shaheen is doing great work for girls like me. If such support continues then in future I will help other girls who are facing such problems. Thanks to Shaheen for making me strong and confident."

On 3rd April, at Hasan Nagar resource center, two members from Shaheen staff conducted one to one counseling sessions on Gender with 19 girls. They wanted to understand their perspectives on gender; this helped the staff members to understand the need of Gender and their parent's attitude towards them. They observed that out of 19 girls, around 8 of them were aware of topics/ issues such as discrimination at the household level, especially towards pursuing education, restrictions in life choices, decision making, food, and health etc.



Fig. 4.1 One to One Counseling Session

Group Activities – Shaheen conducted focus group discussions in four schools on the topic of 'Are we safe in our society.' A total of 136 students participated in the discussion, the FGDs helped to understand the student's perspective on the safety of girls in the community. On 23rd March 2018, Shaheen team members conducted group discussions with women and girls between ages 18 yrs to 25 yrs. 35 members participated in the discussion. The purpose of conducting this discussion was to provide a platform to all the women and girls to exchange their ideas on their dreams and desires in life. The facilitator further steered the discussion towards, what the participants could do to achieve their goals and dreams in live.

Strategic Priority 5 – Advocacy with Stakeholders and Recognition of Solidarity Rights

Advocacy works to improve the system to the benefit of individuals. Advocacy helps to define the problem, identify and map the concerned stakeholders to resolve the problem. It also helps to develop the message and strategies by engaging the stakeholders and to influence them in a very effective way.

Table 5.0

<i>Advocacy with Stakeholders</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>
Community meetings	693
Interaction of basti leaders with community	166
Community melas	1848
Sharing of schemes and entitlements	124



Fig. 5.0

Shaheen conducted several community meetings and community melas on the importance of education in the community. These had a great outreach level in the year of 2018. As a part of different projects, Shaheen involved the basti leaders with the community to extend their support to avail the benefits provided by the government under schemes and entitlements to the community.

Advocacy with Religious Leader, State and Media Houses: Shaheen in collaboration with the Women and Child Welfare Department, organize a meeting on 11th April 2018 with religious leaders and other concerned stakeholders on the issue of rampant child marriages. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the extremity of child marriage in Old City, Hyderabad and the strategies to prevent them. A total of 73 participants attended the meeting. The participants from the community raised poignant questions on the age of marriage, disparities in framing rules for men and for women in Nikhanama and issues of women post Talaq. Two positive results were visible post meeting – the Chief Qazi agreed on restricting the age gap between the bride and groom to 10 years maximum, and the age for marriage for a girl to be at least 18 years.

Shaheen through various channels has been spreading the information about its work and drawing attention towards the miserable situation of the community in the old city area of Hyderabad. Shaheen directed the channels towards different audience and stakeholders to garner maximum attention to its endeavours.

Through a series of short films capturing individual stories of child marriage, sting operations and violence which were aired on television, Shaheen's work received immense coverage and acknowledgement from various Government Departments and the communities they work in. Women started reaching out to Shaheen for assistance or to prevent/report such marriages and other local media channels too got in touch with Shaheen to cover this issue.

Gender Responsive Public Fairs: Shaheen conducted community mela in Nashemann Nagar on 12th May 2018. Shaheen works in the 20 slums and planned to conduct mela in each slum to make the community women aware of their rights. Total of 207 members participated in the mela. The purpose of conducting mela is to reach a wide range of age groups and have knowledge on Shaheen's work and to create awareness in the community members about various issues of women's lives and help them reflect deeply on their experiences and life choices through games and fun activities. One of the young boys whose age is 12 yrs old had a strong argument for girls' safety by taking the example of Asifa who was raped and murdered in Khatau Village. According to him, the girl has to always accompany by male irrespective of age. Shaheen staff counseled him and finally changed his perspective toward girls. One of the participants said,

"For the first time, we have understood the issues of women which are very complex in a very simple manner. I am requesting Shaheen to conduct such Melas frequently in the community."

Shaheen organized another community mela on 18th July at Hassan Nagar and total 92 members participated in the mela including men. The purpose of the conducting mela is to create awareness to community women and men about various issues of women's lives and help them replicate intensely on their experiences and life choices through games and fun activities. Shaheen continued conducting melas and community meetings in the 20 slums to spread the importance of education. There is a visible change in the perception of parents towards their children's education. Some of the families are not in a position to send their children to school hence shaheen enrolled their names through Open school education and are able to achieve their goal. Shaheen is providing tuitions to them so that they can successfully complete their exams.



Fig. 5.1 Stall at Gender Responsive Public Fair

Recognition of Solidarity Rights

Since the dawn of civilization, man has given special priority towards the commemoration of special events and occasions. These events provide an opportunity for us to connect to our humanity and commonality that we share with different sects, communities and castes all over the world. It not only instills in us a sense of reverence and appreciation for the gift of life but also plays a significant role in realizing us the importance and significance of such events in the history of shared mankind. Apart from the ones mentioned otherwise, Shaheen also celebrated the following events:

- **International Girl Child Day:** A medium of music is one of the best strategies to spread the message on topics which are otherwise difficult to bring up these range from issues such as child marriage, the importance of education and situation of the girl child. On the eve of International girl child Day, Shaheen performed Qawali at Sundaraiah Vignana Kendram. 285 members attended the program. The theme of the program was “ With

her, A Skilled Girlforce". Ms. Shobha, an activist was the chief guest for the program. She spoke on the girl's existing opportunities in the work area and how to expand more opportunities and find new pathways towards a successful transition into the world of work.

- **International Women's Day:** On the eve of International Women's Day, Shaheen organized celebrations in three different places, i.e. Manghal Ghat, Sultan Shahi and Siddiq Nagar on 8th March 2018. Mr. Sudershan, Secretary of District Legal Services Authority was the chief guest at Manghal Ghat and he explained the importance of International Women's day and acts related to women. At Sultan Shahi and Siddiq Nagar, Ms. Jameela Nishat and three staff members spoke on the importance of International Women's day and discussed on Gender discrimination.
- **International Human Rights Day:** On 10th December 2018, Shaheen participated in the celebrations of International Human Rights Day organized by the state of Telengana.
- **Independence Day:** On 15th August 2018, Shaheen team raised cultural awareness through their Qawwali performance. Police personnel from Rajendra Nagar were invited to hoist the flag. At Hassan Nagar, 75 members from the community including adolescent girls participated in the program. At Sultan Shahi, Moghalpura Police personnel were invited as guests to conduct the flag hoisting. 110 members participated in the program. They also organized for an interaction with the Basti (slum) leaders on gender awareness and the like.
- **Children's Day:** Shaheen organized a cultural program on the eve of "Children's Day" on 14th November 2018 in three schools on the subject of "No to abuse and violence, respect & protect innocence". 163 students participated in the program. Through this program, children were educated about good touch, bad touch, and child abuse. POSCO was also introduced to the children.

Strategic Priority 6: Awareness through Cultural Programme

Although Old City of Hyderabad is a Muslim dominated area, there is a mixed population of Dalits and other regional identities occupying these communities. Shaheen secularly works with all individuals, adhering to each and everyone's needs and requirements. Shaheen celebrates all the important festivals irrespective of caste and religion with an aim to promote communal harmony and peace. The celebrations have also witnessed the active involvement of all the community

members. An awareness session was held at Valmiki Nagar by Shaheen staff, where about 25 girls and women were enlightened about the issues of communal harmony and equality.

Cultural Awareness

Qawwali is a Sufi form of music wherein the soul of the singer and audience ecstatically becomes one with the Almighty. Shaheen has successfully adopted *Qawwali* for its activities for twin reasons – firstly, to break the stereotype of *Qawwals* (singers) to be only men and secondly, to create awareness in the community through *Qawwalis* on women’s rights. *Qawwalis* are focused to protect and educate girl child, ‘Beti Bachao Beti Padhao’, discrimination against girl child & child marriage among a host of other women and child rights issues. The lyrics of the *Qawwalis* that are performed by the Shaheen team members have been poignantly penned down by the Founder-Director of Shaheen, Ms. Jameela Nishat, who is an activist and poet herself. The children are also actively participating in these cultural programs.

Shaheen found the opportunity to spread cultural awareness through their unique performance many times round the year.



Fig. 6.0 Qawwali Performance at Shaheen Centre

ACHIEVEMENTS OF SHAHEEN IN 2018

Shaheen has been working tirelessly for the upliftment of the most vulnerable section of the society in the area of Hyderabad. We have hit several road-blocks on our way but our team has continuously reflected perseverance, commitment and dedication to overcome any challenge which obstructed our way towards a more egalitarian society.

Shaheen's work has gained notable visibility in the past few years, both tangibly and intangibly. The following information pertains to the few achievements we have been able to achieve in the past one year. We realize that the path is long and deterring but these contributions keep us fuelled and dedicated towards our greater goal.

- Shaheen staff identified dropout students during the door to door home visits and motivated parents to continue their children's education and encouraged the children to continue their education. They explained the importance of education in brief to them. Shaheen staff identified 153 dropouts including boys out of which 106 were re-enrolled in the schools and 8 members gave their examination through open school education and continued their education.
- Four girls from the community started coming to Shaheen to enroll in a computer course. After two months, when they came to know about some vacancies in a well-known private bank as data entry operators, not only did they approach the bank for details all by themselves, but all four of them managed to convince their parents and now they are working as trainees in the bank. After the completion of the training, they will be provided with placement opportunities. This is an example that speaks how girls and young women are building their career by convincing their family members and trying to achieve their goals.
- Shaheen's interaction with religious leaders had been successful, in a way that, the Chief Qazi made two positive recommendations – first, restricting the age gap between the bride and groom to 10 years maximum, and second, the age for marriage for a girl to be at least 18 years.
- With the help of the Child Welfare Committee, Shaheen was able to prevent 48 child marriage cases in Old City.
- Exposure visits paved the way to adolescent girls to articulate their issues like public toilets, Identity cards for home based workers with departments like G.H.M.C & labor department.

- Safety mapping and safety audit created an opportunity for young girls to identify unsafe zones and sharing vulnerable spaces with concerned departments. This activity brought confidence among themselves and safety too.
- Around three thousand two hundred and fifty CCTV cameras were installed for the safety of girls and women in the 20 slums of the project area.
- The continuous running of awareness programs on Violence Against Women created space for reporting against VAW at Shaheen, in the police stations.
- Shaheen has been continuously receiving cases of DV and others from different places (online as well as media).
- Shaheen has conducted a survey on (Gender Public Responsive Services) in communities and made a report. The report was shared with the Zonal Commissioner of GHMC department and he responded positively.
- Shaheen made a women group called Basti vikas Manch (BVM). Two Self Help groups were formed through Shaheen's initiative. One of them, the Mahila Mazdoor Committee received a loan to initiate its programmes.
- Shaheen made 10 BVM groups consists of 20 members in each group. These 200 women started identifying issues in their community and articulating them with concerned officials.

Staff Achievements

- The success stories of 2 staff members were exhibited in an exhibition on "Women and Public Spaces" by Goethe Zenthum in Hyderabad.
- Shaheen developed rapport with various government departments and in collaboration with them, is able to conduct community meetings in the slums. Their rapport with the District Legal Service Authority gave Shaheen an opportunity to send few selected staff members for a 3 day extensive paralegal training organized by DLSA. Post training, these staff members are eligible to work as paralegal volunteers now.

THE FORWARD MARCH

- Shaheen has come a long way since its inception in 2002. We could engage in only awareness lead campaigns in the initial years due to lack of resources, community assistance and absence of credibility in the area. We were additionally faced with hostility from the anti-social elements in the society who wished to continue their oppressive regime while trampling upon the liberties of young women and children in the area.
- In the later years, we began to diversify our areas to work to not only bring a variety of people under the ambit but also offer diverse activities for overall enrichment of our members. Today Shaheen is making huge strides towards its twin goals of gender justice and communal harmony.
- Through a range of programmes, we have set the process in motion to help reach the desired goals. The incidents of communal related violence have drastically plunged down in the areas while other indicators like education, sanitation and health are now headed north. We have also played an instrumental role in tackling the menace of girl-trafficking, child labor and child marriage in the area. Thousands of children and women are benefitting from our programme today and breaking away from social barriers while asserting rights over their resources, rights and liberties.
- Shaheen has today emerged as a beacon of hope for the most vulnerable section of the society. The people of Sultan Shahi are finally waking up to realize their rights and freedoms. Their dreams which were once crushed, have started taking shapes now and we will not stop until the last person is rescued from this vicious cycle of oppression, discrimination and hatred.