

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



**Shaheen Women's
Resource and
Welfare Association**

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THE FOUNDER-DIRECTOR SPEAKS...



*“Shaheen is a bird which
flies high
in the sky. The world
burned it alive, our goal
is to see this bird rise
from the ashes and soar
high in old city skies
and bring hope to 4000
families.”*

Covid-19 has been devastating for all of us in many ways, the material loss and the subsequent fear has pushed the image of an itinerant employee in the background, everyone is confined to a room and is made to go about their business via screens. Radical times require radical measures, hence Shaheen followed suit. The economy has become digital, as the context demands one to be technologically literate, we at Shaheen are trying to incorporate digital literacy as one of our priorities. Girls who have never used a smartphone, we are making them familiarise themselves with gadgets by helping them understand the mechanics of digital marketing. As most of the MNCs in Hyderabad have opted to work from home, it has given rise to an entirely new market network of delivery systems, though it was there before. With the advent of this virus, the focus of governments and private players has been to strengthen these networks. So, we at Shaheen have perceived this as a perfect opportunity for our girls and have started giving them two-wheeler driving lessons, so that they could become a part of this new emerging market and make themselves more independent.

Ms. Jameela Nishat



ABOUT SHAHEEN

Shaheen Women's Resource and Welfare Association is located in the Old City of Hyderabad and is mostly operational in this area. Shaheen is committed to the cause of women's rights and communal harmony. It was established in the year 2002 with the aim to work with women and children from the most orthodox and backward communities so that they can break/challenge their social and economic barriers in their environment.

Shaheen engages with women across age groups ranging from adolescents to middle-aged women helping them to break social barriers, gain control over economic resources, and exercise leadership at multiple levels.

Shaheen is also uniquely positioned to simultaneously support three backward minority communities including Muslims, Dalits, and Other Backward Classes (OBC).



OUR VISION

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.

OUR MISSION

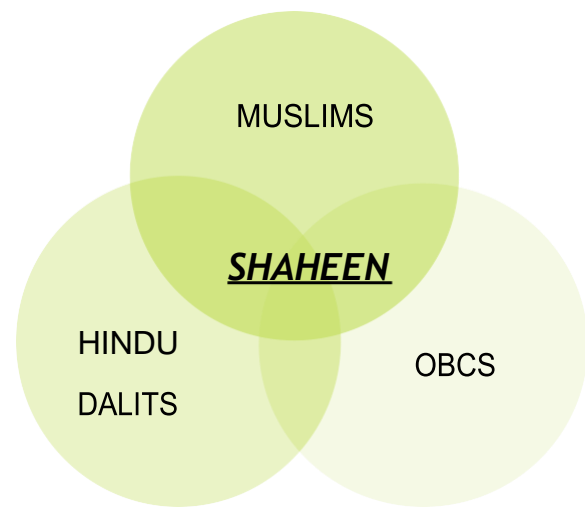
Our mission is to create a conducive and enabling environment for women to regain control over their minds, bodies, and resources.

We thrive to create greater consciousness of gender and promote socio-religious harmony in society.



WHERE WE WORK

We work in and around 20 slums in the Old City of Hyderabad. The area Sultan Shahi where the main office stands is known for communal disharmony and is also amongst the poorest settlements in the Old City area. The public infrastructure there is abysmal and most of the people are employed in the unorganized sector. The area is overpopulated with staggering illiteracy and school dropout rates. Child and women trafficking forced early marriages, sexual abuse, and incidences of incest are rampant in the area. We work at the interface of three



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distinctly vulnerable communities - the Muslims, the Hindu Dalits, and OBCs - which makes the area easily prone to rioting. The following are the areas in Old city where Shaheen is active.

Sultan Shahi
Valmiki Nagar

Gowlipura

Hassan Nagar

Siddique Nagar 1

Siddique Nagar 2

Mecca Masjid

Chacha Garage
Patel Nagar

Ambika Nagar

Aman Nagar A

Aman Nagar B

Bhavani Nagar A

Bhavani Nagar B

Jahangir Nagar
Hanuman Nagar

Murad Mahal

Nasheman Nagar 1

Nasheman Nagar 2

Kaveli Kaman

WHY WE WORK HERE

We work in the Old City area of Hyderabad on issues of women and children. We feel that there is a pressing need to significantly improve the lives of women and children. The women in the area have been victims of structural violence embedded in institutions like religion, gender, caste, and State, and are living precarious lives in an environment which is deeply conservative and regressively patriarchal.

Gender-based abuse and oppression in Old City range from sexual and physical violence to deprivation of resources and opportunities and restricted choices. This is synthesized into the communally charged atmosphere of Old City, leading to life-threatening issues.

It is here that we wish to contribute to accomplish our vision and mission and intervene with the communities and with stakeholders at multiple levels.

We work with women and adolescents on gender sensitization, skill-based training, training on sexual and reproductive rights. We organize health camps and also organize workshops on leadership and life choices. We also work on violence against women by providing requisite counseling and enabling para-legal support to women in need.

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We work with multiple stakeholders including the family and community members, the state including the Police, WCD Department, Municipalities, DLSA, and also religious authorities so that women and children in need are able to exercise their rights.



OUR SUPPORTERS



OUR TEAM

A brave and spirited team is the sine qua non for our endeavors. Shaheen is a community-based organization that aspires to work from within the communities to achieve sustainable transformation and enable strengths. Our community mobilizers (field officers) are the pillar foundations upon which multiple interventions are laid. These fieldworkers who are the representatives of the communities of Old City are informed, motivated and sensitive.

Over the years, our team has trained themselves to develop leadership qualities, and have become role models for other young girls and women in the community. Their continuous efforts to engender capable women leaders in the community have been truly unwavering and praiseworthy.



Some of our interventionists have themselves been victims of domestic and communal abuse and many 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.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Economic Empowerment

Women in Old City experience multiple impediments in accessing basic livelihood opportunities. One of the major hurdles is the patriarchal notion that women belong to and in some cases are biologically disposed to the domestic sphere, held by the community leaders and shared by the majority populace. This retrograde and scientifically inaccurate sentiment is shared across the globe but is highly visible in the precincts of Old City and is performed daily in language by the populace. Men in the community lay claim on the idea of the 'Public Sphere' and in turn exercise control by manipulating political will. These gendered notions are then condensed into norms surrounding women's attire, mobility, and security.

Shaheen works on these performative aspects of an underlying ideology and believes in deconditioning these attributes. It believes in the power of capital and the importance of choice ushered by economic freedom.

Shaheen has been actively employing requisite resources to build a support system for young girls and women. To take control of their resources, to become self-reliant, and to become economically empowered are the main objectives of the participants. Several training camps on various economic activities; traditional and new generation vocational skill training workshops, and meetings with placement cells were organized by Shaheen in the year 2020 to meet its objectives.

Across five resource centers, the Shaheen team is incessantly working on diverse courses which includes Tailoring, Mehendi designing, and Embroidery work or Karchob classes.

Four-wheeler driving was introduced in 2019 and these lessons are already yielding successful results.

Hyderabad over time has developed into a cyber city, with fiber optic cables providing internet, and mobile phones serving as the one-stop-shop for all needs. It has become inevitable to inform oneself with digital vocabulary. Hence, Shaheen is consciously putting efforts to acquaint the girls with mobile applications and other portals of digital marketing. With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, people are pushed into their homes. Smartphones are not luxury goods anymore, people across classes have access to it and are seeking refuge or rather identifying with the community online, this is the beginning of a cyber collective. Phones have also opened economic opportunities and Shaheen is trying to tap into this potential of technology to make girls economically independent.

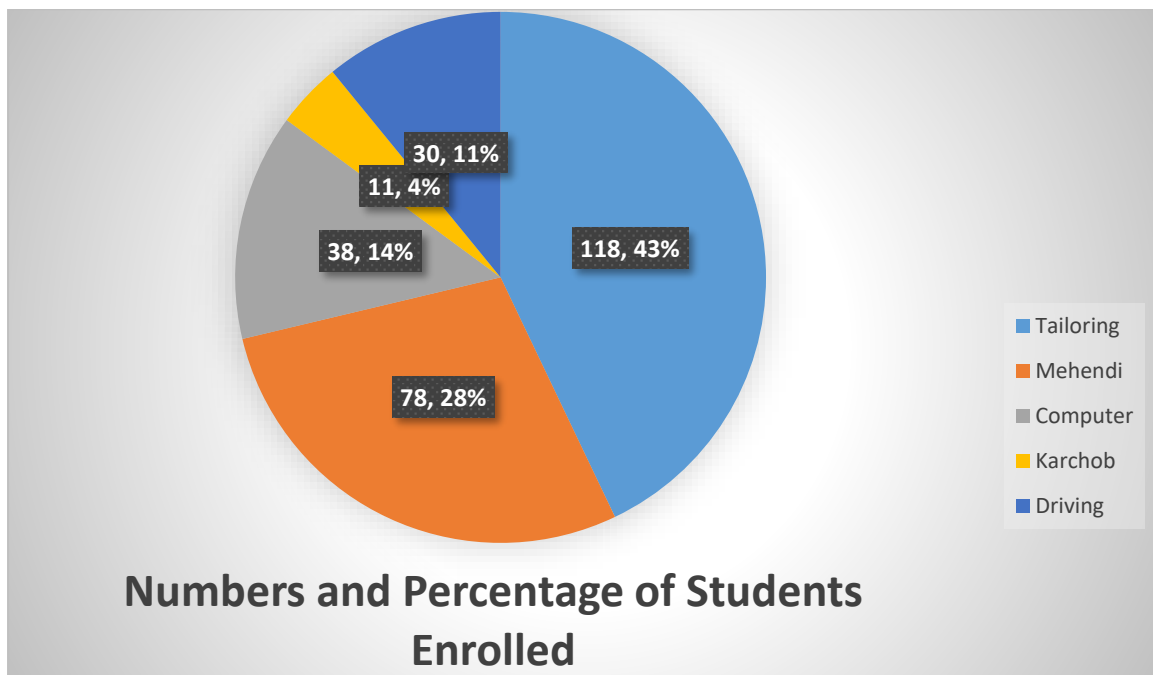
Shaheen has also started teaching girls to drive a two-wheeler. The digital economy needs a smooth delivery network to function efficiently. Governments and private players both are investing in streamlining and strengthening these delivery networks. Shaheen believes these networks are opportunities for girls to become economically independent. Shaheen believes by learning a two-wheeler a girl is better positioned to negotiate for association with Multinational companies like Amazon, Flipkart, Zomato, etc.

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Language classes in Urdu and English, along with Computer classes are also being organized at Shaheen's various resource centers across the area.

The following table represents the number of students enrolled in different courses and the number of students who are in income-generating jobs after completing the course.

Livelihood Training Course	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Students Generating Income
Tailoring	118	82
Mehendi	78	42
Computer	38	22
Embroidery/Karchob	11	8
Driving(Four&Two-wheeler)	30	-



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In 2020, 8 girls participated in training at ICICI skill academy and all of them got job placements. Another 8 girls got job placement in digital marketing. 30 girls were trained in driving a two-wheeler to apply for jobs in Amazon, Flipkart, and DTDC courier services. All of them have applied for a license.

Shaheen organized a workshop in Aman Nagar in September for young girls to allow them to engage with the ICICI Foundation. The foundation under the aegis of the national skill development corporation worked to provide skills to youngsters. The resource person from the ICICI foundation spoke at length about the job-oriented courses like chartered accountancy, Electric work, AC repair, office administration, and other technical courses offered by the foundation. The courses were online and the duration of the course is for 2 months after which the participants would be given a completion certificate attested by the foundation which would be helpful in gaining employment. The speaker also spoke about the organizations' sensitivity towards women and the role of capital in alleviating poverty. Approximately 200 of the participants attending got enrolled in the programs of their choice. This collaboration of Shaheen and ICICI Foundation is to bear rich fruits.



Innocent Virtue!

Asra Sultana (pseudo name) is from Hassan Nagar, she completed her intermediate education but due to her family's financial condition, she had to drop out of formal education. For few years she was idle at home but after spending some time in solitude she got introduced to Shaheen. First, she used to come to Shaheen out of boredom and later out of curiosity. She was drawn to colors and wanted to learn fashion designing. At Shaheen, she was introduced to a world replete with colors. She would attend her designing sessions but would also hang around to see what the awareness sessions were about. Her withdrawn curiosity and her taciturn approach made her listen to people talk on topics ranging from child marriage to sexual abuse. Its been a year since she has been a part of the Shaheen family. She has near-perfected her technique in tailoring and started stitching her own clothes. Moreover, she is taking orders from other people and is earning around 1200 rupees per day. Her financial condition has improved drastically and she has also enrolled herself in degree college with the help of Shaheen staff. All along her journey Shaheen has been her guide watching over and she is grateful for that.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Health Awareness

The Pandemic has curtailed frequent home visits of the Shaheen team. Home visits are interesting rapport building as well as insight-inducing exercises. The team since the beginning has relied heavily on this mechanism to gather data on a range of issues from the community. But Covid-19 has restricted mobility of the staff. The staff has followed covid protocols and organized few intermittent vigils to access the condition of women in Old City. The staff has adapted themselves to changing times and are relying on technology to collect data for effective intervention. The staff is using a specifically designed application on their mobile devices to get information on probes relevant to health and gender violence. Camps have been set up nearby for Covid testing.



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On the eve of valentine Shaheen initiated a week-long campaign involving 75 young urban women on love, care, and self-motivation in Hassan Nagar. The campaign was headed by one of the staff members. She discussed the basics of self-care with the participants and established the difference between self-care and self-indulgence. Later on the following days, interactive activities like role play and using charts and other pictorial tropes to understand the topic were used efficiently.



Shaheen with DLSA organized a free health camp on world cancer day. The objective was to spread awareness and demystify the disease. 38 young women attended this camp and got a free health check-up they also got free medicines. The concerned doctors including debunked the myth surrounding cancer.

Shaheen has organized workshops on mental health, the pandemic has had distressing effects on the mental health of the girls. It has organized guided imagery sessions for young girls with a history of violence. Both the expert and the shaheen team agreed on the diverse effects of guided imagery on mental health. The expert explains that it becomes necessary to purge out emotions

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by living the horrific tale because often it happens that the subconscious represses the memory of such incidences and denies closure which then has long-term effects on both the physical and mental health of the survivor. The session guide who is a professional makes the young participants sit and with their eyes closed guides through their memories and helps them make peace with them.



Shaheen is using digital media to influence young girls, it is organizing health meets and awareness sessions on reproduction and safe sex online. Pandemic has imposed rules on physical proximity and has fostered an ambiance of intimacy but with this comes the concern of an understanding of practicing safe sex. Hence keeping this in mind Shaheen has been taking regular online sessions mostly attended by young married women on reproductive and sexual health.

A workshop headed by a palliative care physician was organized by Shaheen in November. The expert explained to the young participants about the functioning of the human reproductive system and focussed the session on sanitary hygiene. She discussed in length on various gynecological problems and encouraged girls to voice out their concerns without shame. An in-depth analysis on puberty and menstrual cycles was enthusiastically received by the young participants and most of them discussed their doubts and fears with the expert. The girls after the session felt much comfortable discussing the issues at hand, they even repudiated their class teachers for skipping the reproduction chapter in their biology class. The expert said that the taboo around women's reproductive and sexual health is much more insidious than what meets the eye and is patriarchal, this archaic male notion she said can only be overcome through incessant vocal inquiry and empathetic solidarity. The participants were grateful for the expert and Shaheen's efforts in alleviating their fears around the topic.



The young married women attending sessions are moreover educated about the importance of 'consent' in a sexual relationship, their right over reproductive choices, measures of safe sex, and the issue of rape in a conjugal relationship. Shaheen has

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distributed 500 hygiene kits for marginalized women who couldn't fetch the needful in lockdown. The kits included health products like sanitary napkins and handwash.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Gender Sensitization and Child Rights

Shaheen is tirelessly working to ensure every woman to have a violence-free life. Shaheen believes' that it can change the lives of women only to an extent if it focuses just on strengthening the existing institutional linkages. Therefore the primary focus of the work at Shaheen is a dedicated commitment towards gender sensitization. By working on the roots of the disease rather than to only attend to the symptoms is a conscious choice taken by Shaheen. Sensitivity engenders empowerment. Though legal vocabulary enables one to combat evils like child marriage, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and other everyday forms of violence, it does not necessarily stop violence in its tracks, it has been proven time and again that it manifests itself in other forms only to prevail over the helpless and marginalized. Shaheen believes in inculcating sensitivity. By creating holistic and participatory communication channels in the community it has laid the foundation necessary to build an inclusive, pluralistic and integrated society.

Shaheen organized a workshop on mapping child marriages in the Siddique Nagar area. The workshop was designed in such a way that it could extract as much information as necessary for an effective intervention without being intrusive and unethical. The staff conducting the workshop established rapport and trust before delving into the activities. The participants were made to answer questions on schooling, reasons for dropping out, the financial situation of the family, and parental pressure. Each participant was given a chart to write their heart out. After writing the staff opened the platform for discussion and the participants went on sharing and adding to their experiences. The organizer also introduced legality by enumerating specific laws on child marriage and emphasized their role in quelling the social evil.

Shaheen has always used mobilizing the masses and mostly the stakeholders in creating awareness over women-centric issues. But due to the pandemic processions and gatherings have been suspended indefinitely. Though there have been times when it became necessary to come on the streets but even then Shaheen followed the general protocol of the pandemic. After the horrific incident of rape of a minor child, Shaheen staff mobilized around a hundred girls and demonstrated their disconcert over the failure of state machinery in the streets of Old City.



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On International Women's day, Shaheen organized a cycle rally starting from Charminar to seek gender equality. The rally was also an homage to the female Covid-19 warriors. The rally was both simultaneously metaphorical and literal in delivering its message as the organizers said it was about mobility for the young women of Old City who were shackled by patriarchy. The rally was covered by the Times of India.



In the year 2020 with the world reeling with the pandemic, Shaheen came up with innovative ways to tackle the 'Women's Question'. It organized a 'meet to sleep' campaign where the participants responded to the fear of unsafe public spaces in creative ways.

Irrespective of the challenges posed by COVID-19, Shaheen continued its counseling services at the center in compliance with the safety guidelines issued by WHO.

A workshop on Domestic violence was conducting in Hassan Nagar. The shaheen staff presided over the session they discussed

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the new amendments in the Domestic Violence Act with the participants. They emphasized the need for timely calling out against violence and informing it to requisite authorities for swift justice.



Shaheen conducted 20 dump box activities at three resource centers Aman Nagar, Hassan Nagar, and Sultan Shahi. 451 young women participated in these events. These activities were facilitated by the staff members. The objective of the activity is that domestic care work carried out by women is often marginalized as '**non-productive labor**'. This negligence of women's contribution to household activities has an impact on their bargaining and negotiating capacities. The traditional Indian conception of a household almost takes it for granted that certain jobs performed within the household are to be done by only women, this activity

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aims to contest this patriarchal assumption of women's work as an 'invisible unpaid work'.

The girls at Shaheen celebrated National Girl Child Day with much enthusiasm and vigor. The girls decorated the office with balloons, and the office exuded vibrance similar to a sacred space on a festivity. Everyone distributed sweets and congratulated each other for their journey. Sessions on awareness and fun activities centered around the girl child were organized.



Immovable Resolve!

Muskaan (name changed) is a 17-year-old girl. She is a computer student in one of the centers at Shaheen. She has 3 sisters and 2 brothers, a family of that size is hard to manage on a meager sum like the income of Muskaan's parents. Two brothers and a sister have already been married and the parents believed that it is hard to take care of the family in the current situation. Muskaan dropped out of school after class 8 because citing poverty as her reason. Parents would often call her out and reproach her for sitting idle at home.

Muskaan started to come to Shaheen to learn the art of Bangle making. Only after joining did she realize that life had different plans for her. At Shaheen, she understood the importance of education. One day overwhelmed by her inner turmoil she poured her heart onto her mother, sensitive to her daughter's cries the mother pleaded with the father to let Muskaan study. The father was reluctant to her pleas and instead would disapprove of her intent by saying 'earn your own study'. It was like God had spoken through the devil, it hit Muskaan somewhere deep and she started learning Bangle making with a zeal equivalent to a mad man. She started earning and she also financed her 10th class studies. Her resolve was like a crucible, a fire burning underneath shaping her, making her. Her change was perceptible, people started noting that in her gait, in her smile, and obviously in her work.

Muskaan had dreams, dreams to escape the grasp of misery that had clutch her and her family's life with such firm hold. She wanted to become an IPS officer, she wanted to change the justice system, the one which turned a blind eye to her state of affairs, which was insensitive to her tears.

During Lockdown a marriage proposal came to her and the family agreed to marry her off. Her father was keen on it and her elder sister was coaxing Muskaan to consent. But Muskaan had great resolve, unlike other girls who succumb to pressure. Once her father beat her up for not giving in to his demands but that did not waver her. She took the issue to Shaheen and with the help of Shaheen the marriage was prevented. Now Muskaan has been awarded a scholarship for her untoward resolve and tenacity and she is using it to fund her education. Her family is very proud of her now. Though asked about her family's shifted position she says that 'they were ignorant but not evil'.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Advocacy with Stakeholders

Advocacy helps manufacture consent. The firmer the belief in a notion the greater the impact on reality. Advocacy works to improve the system for the benefit of individuals. Shaheen has been incessantly working to build its relationship with the stakeholders. Apart from catering to the needs of young girls and boys, creating awareness among men and women in the community, Shaheen has also essentially affected change by approaching government departments for gaining requisites support necessary to bring positive change in society.

Shaheen organized an exposure visit to District Legal Service Authority, especially for the children. The objective was to bring awareness on legality, legal proceedings, and existing aids at their dispense. The resource person explained the functioning of a court to the curious children and shared with them the basic social etiquette. They also gave the children information like helpline numbers, necessary in an emergency.

Shaheen organized an exposure visit to the Bhavani Nagar Police station. The 5 participants tagging along with Shaheen staff were going through a mixture of emotions, a concoction of fear and surprise before the visit. Due to the pandemic, the visitors were not allowed to enter the precincts but the inspector was polite enough to acknowledge the young pupils' interest. The inspector shared his team's modus operandi in dealing with daily crime and also new methods used to curb violence against women. He also explained to the girls about the newly initiated 'Chabutra Mission' to stop eve-teasing. The inspector also shared recent statistics on the incidence of violence against women and the forthcoming narrative from the numbers was hopeful.

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Shaheen organized an exposure visit to Rajendra Nagar police station. The requisite authority showed the students around explained the functioning of a police station. The Assistant Commissioner offered her expertise to children visiting and vouched for their safety.

Shaheen organized an exposure visit in collaboration with the secretary of the District Legal Service Authority (DLSA). The Honorable secretary welcomed the participants and explained to them the duties of the legal service authorities. The HOnble secretary emphasized the fact that legal services provided by the authorities are free and people from the community should not hesitate to avail it to the fullest of their benefits. The honorable secretary spoke at length on the functioning of the DLSA and how it ensures that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen because of economic or other disabilities. The HOnble secretary delineated regulation 25 of The Andhra Pradesh State Legal Services Authority Regulations 1996.

Shaheen organized a meeting with the local complaints committee members at Valmiki Nagar. The meeting was organized to give information about their rights in workplaces and relevant actions performed when confronted with a tragedy in such a context to the young girls. The meeting included dignitaries from reputed hospitals, NGOs, and members from the collectorate. The participants were made to understand their workplace rights and were informed about the existing legal provisions.

Shaheen organized a meeting with the ASHA workers at Sultan Shahi. As the pandemic spread, creating hurdles for women to access medical aid. It was decided in the meet that provisions be made available to people in need by Shaheen staff with the help of ASHA workers.

A meeting with ICDS was organized to discuss the growing incidence of domestic violence and sexual harassment in the

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region of Aman Nagar. With the help of the ICDS center and ASHA workers, five victims of domestic abuse were brought to Shaheen for legal intervention and counseling.

A meeting was organized with the ICDS center at Patel Nagar to discuss and combat the growing incidence of child marriage during the pandemic. The members reiterated the need to map the areas prone to conduct child marriages.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6

Culture and Harmony

Shaheen enjoys its unique position by not only working for gender justice and livelihood problems but by going beyond the prescribed role. Shaheen works mostly instinctively and rather than being a reactionary prefers to respond. Shaheen dons the role of a guardian, and always in time of need delivers.

Shaheen dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic situation effectively. The team ascertained the situation in the Patel Nagar area and engaged with the stakeholders at a personal level. The team also expedited services provided by the Telangana government like delivery of medicines and oxygen cylinders.



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2020 has been a hard year for people of the world and people in Old City. The pandemic still going out of control, Hyderabad had to deal with flash floods.

Shaheen team did a recce in Nasheeman Nagar, Patel Nagar, Lalitha Bagh, and Gowlipura all of these were flood-affected areas before direct intervention. "The sights of the field were horrendous" a staff member would recollect. Rainwater and sewer water inundated people's houses. As the water level increased people have to take refuge in nearby high rises. There was no electricity for 2 days straight. People used anything they could get hold of to drain, including buckets and battery-powered motors. Some buildings collapsed under the strain of the deluge. With the virus on loose, the situation seemed scarier. The Staff after coming to the office devised an action plan in collaboration with the civic authorities and did their best.

Kits which included basic sanitation, clothes, and food were circulated to people who were severely affected.





By understanding the subtle ways in which culture affects society Shaheen has consciously invested its energies in activities like Qawwali, Iftar Parties, Dandiya, and Ganesh Puja.



ACHIEVEMENTS

With the advent of the pandemic, the idea of a physical space for meeting and creating is relegated to a secondary position. In that context, Shaheen has successfully used digital platforms to carry out its work. Online platforms are being efficiently used to continue with the empowerment programs.

Health camps were successfully organized in collaboration with the government hospitals mostly to facilitate COVID testing during the crisis.

In addition to workshops on breaking gender stereotypes, Shaheen successfully conducted workshops related to methods that prevent transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

Qawwali was successfully organized in accordance with safety guidelines issued by WHO and the Health Ministry.

Webinars with placement cells were successfully conducted.

100 child marriages have been stopped by Shaheen since lockdown.

Shaheen staff has received capacity-building training in technical skills like handling digital media and technology. This skill was later extended to collect data using mobile applications during home visits.

WAY FORWARD

Shaheen has come a long way since its inception in 2002. We could engage in only awareness-led campaigns in the initial years due to lack of resources, community assistance, and an absence of credibility in the area. Additionally, we were subjected to hostility from the anti-social elements in the community who wished to continue their oppressive regime while trampling upon the liberties of young women and children in the society.

In the later years, we began to diversify our areas of work to not only bring a variety of people under our realm but also offer diverse activities for the 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 programs and initiatives, we have set the motion to help reach the desired goals. The incidences of communal related violence have drastically plunged in the area, while other parameters like education, health, and sanitation are now being considered as peak priorities. We have also played an instrumental role in tackling the menaces of child trafficking, child marriages, and child labor in the region we work in. Thousands of women and children are benefitting through our interventions – breaking away from social barriers and stereotypes while asserting rights and liberties over their resources.

Shaheen has today emerged as a beacon of hope for the vulnerable population of society. The people of Sultan Shahi are finally waking up to realize their rights and freedoms and respect for themselves and others. Their dreams once crushed have started shaping up, and we will not stop unless the last person is freed from this vicious cycle of oppression, discrimination, and hatred.