

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES RAISE AWARENESS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

INTERVENTION BRIEF

SAMVEDANA PLUS: PREVENTING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE



Samvedana Plus engages with local community leaders, residents, family members and self-help groups to design sustainable ways to prevent violence, raise awareness about domestic violence, create networks of support and action within the community and advocate for women's rights. Community dialogue, street plays, folk shows and stakeholder meetings increase awareness of relevant rights and laws.

How does the programme reach the community?

As they organise community events, the programme's outreach workers (ORWs) and members of the sex-worker community-based organisation (CBO) engage with the broader village community.

Who does the programme engage with in the community?

The Samvedana Plus programme engages with local community leaders and members, self-help groups, youth groups, school headmasters and the families of female sex workers (FSWs).

How does the programme raise community awareness?

1. Community dialogues

As part of general community outreach in the intervention villages, Samvedana Plus holds open forum discussions, called Community Dialogues (CD). Some celebrate particular events such as the International Day of the Girl Child or World AIDS Day. Others are organised specially by the programme.

Typically, the ORWs, along with the FSWs in a village, map out the specific needs of the village, and the date and time for holding the event, in consultation with the key influencers in the community. This process helps to build rapport between the FSWs and other community members.

In addition to the financial contribution from the project, the programme mobilises resources from the community in kind and cash. Local government officials, together with ORWs and FSWs, announce the upcoming event.



COMMUNITY WOMEN INTERVENE

The women in Jagadal village in Bagalkot district had always kept their stories of violence a secret. However, street plays by the CBO broke the silence around violence against women in their community. Legal awareness camps held by the CBO in their village made them aware of women's rights. The plays and the camps also brought them into contact with the FSWs in their community. Through newfound knowledge and friendships, the women came together to help Devamma, a FSW in the village, to stop violence from her family and gain her rightful share to family property.

Devamma was severely beaten by her own brothers in a dispute over family property. When the women in the village came to hear about this, they:

- went together to the village *panchayat* to report the issue
- met with Devamma's brothers to inform them about the law that entitles her to an equal share in the property
- publicly stated their support for Devamma and her fight to get her share

Faced with a strong, mobilised women's group, the brothers agreed to give Devamma an equal share. They made this commitment in front of prominent village leaders. Today, Devamma is no longer beaten by her brothers and has her rightful share of the family property.

Discussion focuses on issues such as HIV and AIDS, general health, legal awareness of formal structures (police), violence against women (the Domestic Violence Act), women rights and facilities and support from the Departments of Women and Child and of Health.

At the end of the event, participants walk through the village carrying banners with slogans on the rights of women and girls to raise awareness in the community.

In 2015, Samvedana Plus held 13 such community events with participation by local government representatives, school children and teachers, FSW CBO group members, other self-help group members and others from the village.

2. Street plays

Street plays can raise awareness about violence against women and laws to protect women, and encourage critical thinking about gender and the social norms that sustain the unequal status of women. The Samvedana Plus team develops scripts to focus on issues such as gender discrimination and stereotypes, female foeticide, eve teasing and domestic violence.

In each village, the team identify a street theatre group to perform the play, review their performance and give feedback to modify the language and the props.

ORWs along with FSWs from the CBO gather support for the event by meeting with the village leaders, self-help group members and school management members. Together, they choose a venue and spread information about the play in the community. Evenings are the most convenient time for the community to attend plays. Community members pitch in with resources such as snacks for the actors, mic set, carpets and chairs. At the end of the play, the audience are invited to ask questions and the ORWs and CBO members respond.

In 2015, street plays were held in 20 villages.



Acknowledgements

Project Samvedana Plus is funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) as part of STRIVE, a 6-year programme of research and action devoted to tackling the structural drivers of HIV (<http://STRIVE.lshtm.ac.uk/>), the University of Manitoba (UoM) and also funded by UK aid from the UK government via the What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls? Global Programme. The funds were managed by South African Medical Research Council. The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the UK government or UoM.

This brief was prepared by Sreeparna Ghosh, Priya Pillai and Kavitha D.L. with inputs from Lata Kulkarni, Parinita Bhattacharjee and Raghavendra T. Special thanks to Chaitanya AIDS Tadegattuwa Mahila Sangha members and outreach workers for supporting the data collection. Thanks to Priya Pillai, N P Jayan and Annie Holmes for photographs.

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