

Report on the Inaugural Function of Women Helpline.

The Women Helpline, a project of the Odisha State Commission for Women, Govt. of Odisha has been inaugurated by Dr. Jyoti Panigrahi, the honb'le Chairperson of State Commission for Women yesterday. Smt. Arti Ahuja, IAS, the Secretary, Deptt. of Women and Child Development, Govt. of Odisha, Smt. Sulata Deo, the Chairperson, Odisha State Social Welfare Board, Smt. Lopamudra Baxipatra, the Chairperson of Mahila Vikas Samavay Nigam, all Members of State Commission for Women, Mr. K. Viswanadham, IAS (Retd.) President Lion's Club and former Helpline apex committee member, Smt. Namita Pattanaik, State Coordinator Scout and Guide and former Helpline apex committee member, Mr. Gourang Charan Tripathy, Former District Judge, Mr. Anil Patnaik, former District Judge and many other social activists and NGO workers were present and graced the occasion.

Prof. Narayan Rao, Secretary, RSSO welcomed the guests, Mr. Benudhar Senapati, Program Manager, RSSO presented the operation module of Helpline and Mrs. Snigdha Panigrahi Member, Women Commission gave vote of thanks. Dr. Jyoti Panigrahi, Smt. Arti Ahuja, Smt. Sulata Deo, Smt. Lopamudra Boxipatra, Smt. Namita Pattanaik and Sri K. Viswanadham addressed the gathering. Everyone promised to extent all possible support to make the Helpline a success.

Smt. Ahuja, the Secretary, W & CD wanted the Helpline to work for all the women of the state through different NGOs, Swadhar homes and short stay homes working in different districts, and police. The Helpline number 10920 is now only available from land lines. She would write to all private telephone operators to make it accessible from all mobiles.

The program is covered by all major television channels and in some newspapers. Television coverage timings – Doordarsan – 7.00 p.m., OTV – 6-30 twin city round up, Naxtra TV – 6.30 Citi Plus, ND TV, S TV, MBC TV etc. Govt. is also interested to publicize the telephone number in the newspapers and give a scroll in the television channels. The Chairperson wants to issue an identity card to all our Helpline team.

The team members, project officer and counselor have already joined and have started their work. Uniforms have been made. Telephones have been installed. Office is set. Yesterday we also have received the first case.

The following write up was shared with all the participants.

Write up for participants

WOMEN HELPLINE

(A Project of Odisha State Commission for Women, Govt. of Odisha)

To be run by

RUCHIKA SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANISATION

The question I asked was simple: "Was there any time in your life when you said to yourself 'I wish I had been born a boy'?" The majority of the uneducated women reply: "Yes - I could have studied and earned a degree.... I could have gone out of the house and seen the world around;" The reasons they gave had nothing to do with wishing to be males per se, but simply denoted their desire to be able to participate in society as do the males around them. One young woman who had been abandoned by her husband remarked, "I would like to be a man so I could take care of my wife and family better than we are living now."

If the women generally are a neglected lot, the women living in distress specially the women who do not have any support system are worse off. Their life is hundred times more vulnerable, exploitative and oppressive. The women in India today even after 65 years of independence are discriminated against and denied their legitimate rights, with the result that their social development is stagnant.

As advocated by the *Beijing Platform for Action, 1995*, "Women have the right to the enjoyment of highest attainable standards of health, where health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. It includes their right to make decisions concerning reproduction, to be free from gender discrimination. Neglect of women's reproductive rights severely limits their opportunities in public and private life, including opportunities for education, economic and political empowerment. Governments should, therefore, pursue social development, education and employment policies to eliminate poverty among women in order to reduce their susceptibility to ill health and improve their own health"

In the wake of high incidence of crime against women and to address the problems of these neglected, disadvantaged and vulnerable women Helpline was initiated as an experimental pilot project with full support from the Department of Women and Child Development Govt. of Orissa. Hon'ble Chief Minister of Orissa inaugurated it on 26th January 2004 on the auspicious occasion of Republic Day. It was started to extend a helping hand for women by setting up a round the clock telephone service with an easy telephone number - 10920. The program continued till 2009.

30 year old Kuni Das was abandoned by her husband when during her pregnancy he left her for another woman. In labour, she was taken by some university students to Capital Hospital. She delivered a boy child. By this time the students informed Helpline. A team member and counselor immediately went to hospital and helped her with medication, food and counseling. After 3 days she was referred to Kanas, a short stay home where she is presently residing.

Helpline has been assisting women like Kuni and many others like her. In addition it offers any woman who calls a chance to talk about her feelings fearlessly, assured of complete confidentiality, without being judged or dismissed.

Helpline responds to the calls immediately either by reaching the distressed woman or requesting her to reach the Helpline centre. The woman is listened to attentively and suitable assistance is provided.

The Second Phase of Helpline was started from 1st August 2012 as a project of Odisha State Commission for Women, Govt. of Odisha. The Govt. supports the project through Mahila Vikash Samavay Nigam.

Partnership

Helpline believes in the partnership approach to work. It was working with the effective partnership of Govt. of Orissa, Indian Red Cross Society, Police, Short Stay Homes, Old age Homes, Health Care Systems, Free Legal Cells, Women Commission, Women Taskforce, Telecom Department and a number of development NGOs and Net works. It is looking forward to partnership with other philanthropic organizations and individuals for outreach work.

Objectives

- To reach out to every woman in distress and in need of care and protection in the city by responding to emergency calls – for medical, legal advice and guidance, rescue, missing cases, shelter / short stay home, protection from abuse and exploitation, counseling, emotional support and guidance.
- To link the women in crisis who are in need of immediate care and protection to the nearest service providers.
- To provide short term shelter facilities till they are rehabilitated / restored.
- To work together with the allied systems to create a women–friendly system in the city. These systems are State Women Commission, Women and Child Desks of police stations, health care system, legal system, Women Taskforce, NGOs, other government and non-governmental agencies working with women issues.
- To advocate for services for women that are inaccessible, non-existent or inadequate and to advocate proper implementation of PWDV Act in the city.
- To strive for excellence in quality service to women in need of special care and protection and to ensure that the best interests of the women are secured / protected.
- To provide a platform for net working amongst organizations and to provide linkages to support systems which facilitate the rehabilitation of women in need of care and protection?
- To create a family of NGOs and Government organizations working within the framework of a national vision and policy for women.
- To enable them to gain confidence, self esteem and self worth.
- To train them in short, job oriented courses to help them sustain themselves on their own.

Our Client Group

- a) Women in distressed conditions, abandoned and without any support system.
- b) Women on the street.
- c) Women who are denied their rights especially women who are abused.
- d) Missing and run away women.
- e) Differently abled women and Mentally ill women

- f) Women whose families are affected by conflicts/disasters.
- g) Women who are affected by HIV/AIDS or are stigmatized in the society for any other reason.
- h) Single women / widows without family support

Service to be Delivered

a) Medical Assistance

Both short term and long-term medical assistance will be provided depending on the case received.

b) Legal Assistance

Legal advice and services will be provided to all the women in need by practicing advocates. The Odisha Judicial Officers Association has promised to help us for the same. It will also seek the help of police for legal proceeding on behalf of the clients.

c) Short Stay Home

Short stay home facilities will be provided to women without a home / abandoned / mentally ill / run away by the Swadhar Homes and Ujjala homes, old age homes.

d) Emergency shelter

Emergency shelter services will be provided to the women in need at the Ruchika shelter home for about a week time. If the client needed this service for more than a week then she will be transferred to a Swadhar home.

e) Restoration

Any run away / missing / rescued woman will be immediately brought to the Helpline centre . As soon as possible her family will be identified with the help of police / any other means and she will be restored. If required counseling services will be provided.

f) Rescue

Women in any abusive condition or threatened will be rescued immediately. She will then be either restored or sent to a short stay home. The Helpline will take the help of Protection Officer appointed under PWDV Act and Member organisations of Task Force on Violence Against Women to rescue the women from the abusive condition and do the needful.

g) Missing Women

Attempt will be made to locate missing women with the help of police or the networking system of the organizations. As soon as a case comes to the notice it will be referred to the Women Cell operated in the DCP Office and the local SP offices for identification and restoration.

h) Emotional Support and Guidance

Emotional support and guidance will be provided to all the women who call for help. They may be counseled on telephone or in person. Wherever possible the women will be called to the Helpline Office for counseling.

i) Referral

Referral service will be provided to all the women who desire assistance from Helpline. The women from other cities, districts will also be provided referral services.

We expect the support of all the allied system to address the needs of women in distress and crisis.

**ODISHA STATE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN AND
RUCHIKA SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANISATION**