The response of the Ek Saath Campaign to the increasing cases of VAWG was to use its existing resources and systems to mobilize communities to take up leadership by creating local support systems, mapping vulnerable populations, strengthening solidarity and coordinating with local authorities among other things.

From the beginning of the lockdown, through interactions and discussions the Campaign’s partner organisations and mentors observed that the Samanta Saathis or male gender champions were showing far more resilience and coping strategies both at the family and community level in comparison to the mainstream responses of other men and boys.

The lock down resulted in violence prevention and redressal systems becoming out of bounds for women. Moreover violations of women’s maternal and reproductive health rights were taking place due to the non-availability or denial of SRHR services. Early marriage, sex-selective procedures and other forms of gender-based discrimination have also been on the rise.

In view of this, the Ek Saath Campaign set up a rapid response system engaging Samanta Saathis in 133 villages in 27 districts of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh. Ek Saath Gender Hubs have been set up in these districts comprising civil society organisations, service providers, state representatives, government officials, media and others.

The Gender Hubs have initiated a coordinated response between multiple stakeholders at the village, district and state levels on the issue of COVID related VAWG and help in developing a systematic response to address the provision of services and protection system for survivors of violence and those at risk. The Gender Hubs are functioning as a crucial link between community work and authorities by strengthening networking and advocacy for women’s rights.
Frontline workers 23.9%  
Panchayat members 23.5%  
SHG Member 21.9%  
Ration Shop Holder 15.4%  
Teacher/SMC 9.9%  
Police 5.3%  

COVID PREVENTION  
WOMEN’S AUTONOMY  
EK SAATH GENDER HUBS  
COORDINATED ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING COVID PANDEMIC  
Frontline Workers (ANM, AWW, ASHA) - 300 villages  
Panchayat Members & Sarpanch - 209 villages  
Teacher/SMC - 49 villages  
Ration Shopholders - 76 villages  
SHG Members - 108 villages

Issues discussed:  
- Domestic Violence  
- Public Space Harassment  
- Forced/Early marriages  
- Reporting of case and follow up with police  
- Men’s role in stopping domestic violence  
- Role of SHG in addressing domestic violence  
- Sexual and Reproductive Health  
- Child Health and Nutrition  
- Maternal and Child health including immunisation  
- Contraceptives  
- Safe abortion services  
- Adolescent menstrual health  
- Supplementary Nutrition Services  
- Security for most marginalised (widows, migrants)  
- Ensure adequacy in distribution  
- Address corruption in public distribution  
- MGNREGA  
- Priority for women and migrants  
- Ensuring timely payment  
- Equal pay to women  
- Women’s role in local governance  
- Women’s mobility  
- Equal education for girls  
- Ensure girls do not drop out  
- COVID Awareness  
- COVID Prevention  
- Management of Migrants  
- Ensuring non-discrimination  

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Total Number of District Gender Hubs  
Uttarakhand: 6  
Uttar Pradesh: 17  
Madhya Pradesh: 4  

COCOMPOSITION OF A GENDER HUB
Samanta Saathis  
Ek Saath Partner Organisations  
Local CSOs & Networks  
Women’s Groups  
Panchayati Raj Members  
Service Providers  
Government Officials and Departments  
State/District Representatives  
Police/ Law Enforcement Agencies  
Media  

REACH OF GENDER HUBS  
133 VILLAGES  
27 DISTRICTS  
3 STATES  
UTTAR PRADESH  
MADHYA PRADESH  
UTTARAKHAND  
2000 SAMANTA SAATHIS
Supporting girls’ education
Letter to be sent to the Chief Minister of UP to discuss the problems facing girls’ education
Assisting women in application for MGNREGA job cards
To take up the issue of increasing unemployment and discrimination in employment
Supporting women and girls to access health services and provision of nutrition services
Meeting to be held with the Samudayik Swasthya Kendra to discuss women’s health
To campaign against violence against women
Preventing early marriage and child marriage
To provide legal aid to survivors of violence
Support in filing complaints and taking action in physical and sexual violence cases
Family considered violence as a personal matter and resisted the interference of outsiders.

The victim was hesitant to take action in the face of family pressure, especially when the abuser was a family member.

Traditional and patriarchal mindset of the family and community.

Men resisted any efforts to engage with stakeholders and Samanta Saathi.

Police and other service providers were not always supportive.

Difficulty in organising community meetings due to the pandemic and lockdown.

Many times abusers are from influential families and hence it gets difficult to get support from authorities.

For the media, violence against women cases are normal and hence they don’t write about it.

Lack of knowledge and awareness about laws for women.

Giving time during crisis situation for participating in gender hub meetings.

### CASES OF DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS ADDRESSED BY GENDER HUBS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASES IDENTIFIED &amp; ACTION TAKEN AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL</th>
<th>CASES REFERRED TO THE DISTRICT AND STATE LEVEL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>UTTAR PRADESH</td>
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<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women’s Mobility</td>
<td>MADHYA PRADESH</td>
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<td>72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Security (MGNREGA)</td>
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<td>78</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls’ Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avail health services</td>
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<td>128</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAW in Public Spaces &amp; Workplace Harassment</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women in Local Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early/forced marriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trafficking</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CASES IDENTIFIED & ACTION TAKEN AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL

- **Uttar Pradesh**
  - Domestic Violence: 58
  - Women’s Mobility: 72
  - Work Security (MGNREGA): 78
  - Girls’ Education: 90
  - Avail health services: 128
  - VAW in Public Spaces & Workplace Harassment: 37
  - Women in Local Governance: 13
  - Early/forced marriage: 9
  - Trafficking: 1

- **Madhya Pradesh**
  - Domestic Violence: 68
  - Women’s Mobility: 26

- **Uttarakhand**
  - Domestic Violence: 43

### CHALLENGES FACED BY GENDER HUBS

- Family considered violence as a personal matter and resisted the interference of outsiders.
- The victim was hesitant to take action in the face of family pressure, especially when the abuser was a family member.
- Traditional and patriarchal mindset of the family and community.
- Men resisted any efforts to engage with stakeholders and Samanta Saathi.
- Police and other service providers were not always supportive.
- Difficulty in organising community meetings due to the pandemic and lockdown.
- Many times abusers are from influential families and hence it gets difficult to get support from authorities.
- For the media, violence against women cases are normal and hence they don’t write about it.
- Lack of knowledge and awareness about laws for women.
- Giving time during crisis situation for participating in gender hub meetings.

### Conclusive Actions taken at District and State Level

- **Uttar Pradesh**: 49
- **Madhya Pradesh**: 25
- **Uttarakhand**: 17

### Action taken against Domestic Violence

**Mentor: Lakhichand Yadav**

Anguri Sirsam was abused and beaten up by her father-in-law in the absence of her husband when she asked to visit her family for Rakshabandhan. Ek Saath mentor, Lakhichand Yadav from Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh after consulting the District Gender Hub held a meeting with the husband and the father-in-law. He explained to them that women have the freedom to take decisions and should be respected. Yadav’s intervention resulted in the father-in-law apologising to Anguri.

### Action to Mobilise Police

**District Gender Hub: Varanasi**

The Varanasi District Gender Hub received a case of domestic violence. The woman was hesitant to file an FIR against her husband and family. However when everyone got together to support her, she agreed to file an FIR. There were many challenges in this process as the Police was refusing to lodge a complaint. Many people came together and surrounded the police station to pressurise the police in filing a complaint. With support from the media and advocacy of many stakeholders, an FIR was lodged.

### Distribution of Sanitary Pads

**Samanta Saathi: Inder Singh**

Inder Singh from Nainital, Uttarakhand actively engaged in discussions with ASHA and Anganwadi workers for the distribution of sanitary pads to women and girls during the lockdown. He also raised this issue with the village head with whose involvement this was made possible. Singh raised the issue of caste discrimination in his community and despite resistance opened up a barber shop.

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*Gender Hub actions from July to September, 2020"