

EK SAATH CAMPAIGN'S RAPID RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING COVID PANDEMIC

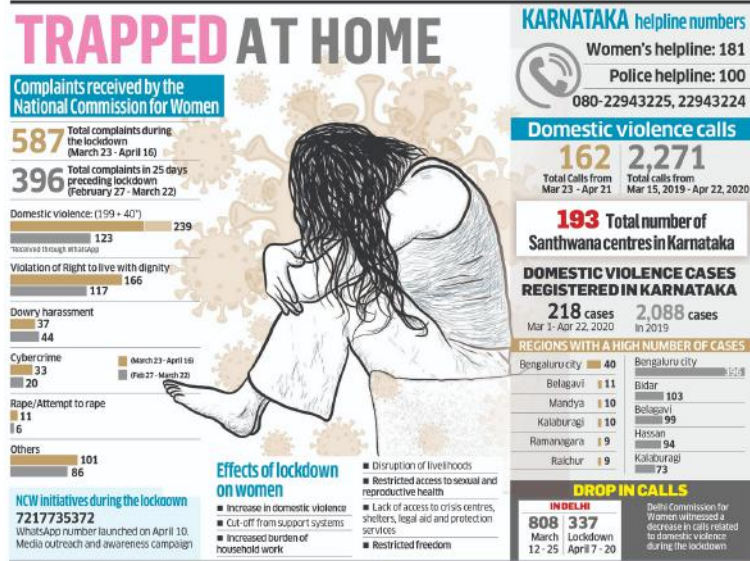


The Problem

As a health emergency was declared globally and also in India, a silent emergency in the form of violence and discrimination against women and girls started brewing in private and public spaces. The increase in domestic violence was noted by the National Commission for Women which recorded a more than two-fold rise in violence against women and girls. In the public domain as well, women's access to essential services and resources were reduced and restrictions placed on their freedom and mobility were exacerbated.

The impact on women took place in the face of growing anxieties and insecurities experienced by men and the prevalence of masculine norms allowing men to channelize their stress by inflicting violence against women, girls and children.

The lockdown 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.



The foundation of a Gender Hub

Ek Saath Response

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 Samanta Saathis were found interacting with service providers and public systems to seek provisions and accountability from them and maintaining community vigilance.



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.



Samanta Saathis seek support from the Police



District Gender Hub Meeting



Website: www.mitraindia.org
Email: mitra@mitraindia.org

EK SAATH GENDER HUBS

COORDINATED ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING COVID PANDEMIC

REACH OF GENDER HUBS

133

VILLAGES

27

DISTRICTS

3

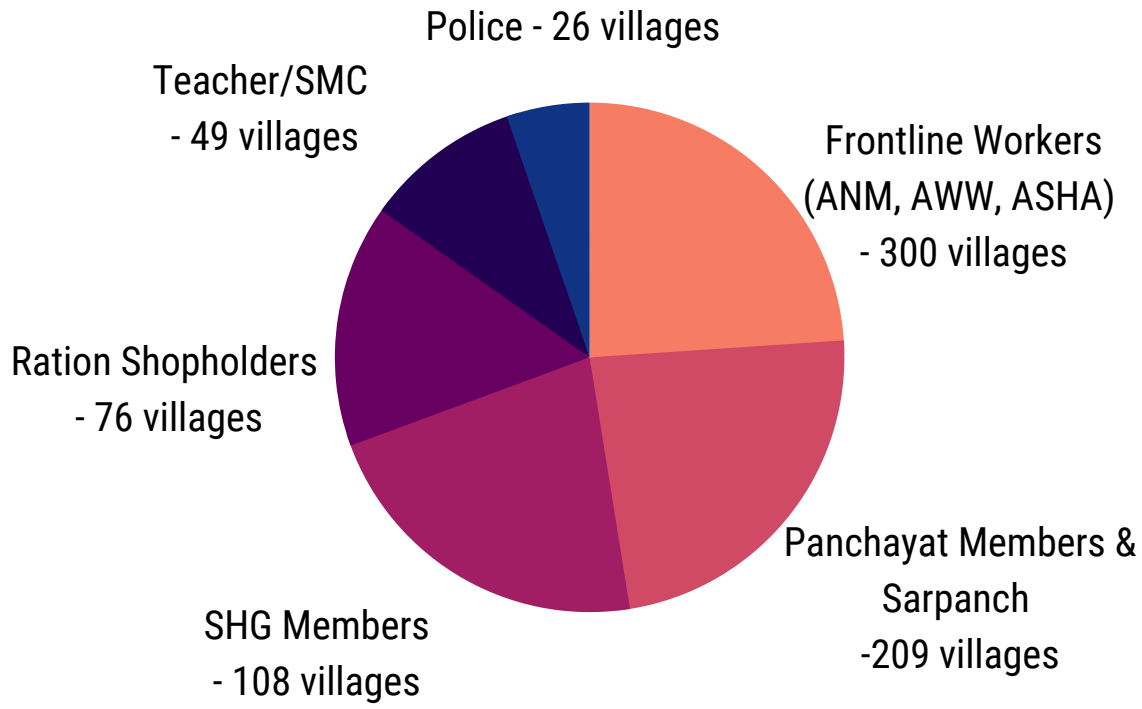
STATES

**UTTAR PRADESH
MADHYA PRADESH
UTTARAKHAND**

2000

SAMANTA SAATHIS

Interactions with stakeholders at village level



ISSUES DISCUSSED

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- 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

HEALTH

- Sexual and Reproductive Health, Child Health and Nutrition
- Maternal and Child health including immunisation
- Contraceptives
- Safe abortion services
- Adolescent menstrual health
- Supplementary Nutrition Services

FOOD SECURITY

- Security for most marginalised (widows, migrants)
- Ensure adequacy in distribution
- Address corruption in public distribution

JOB SECURITY

- MGNREGA
- Priority for women and migrants
- Ensuring timely payment
- Equal pay to women

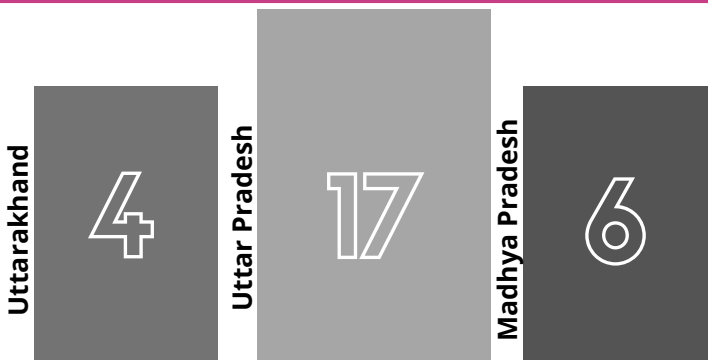
WOMEN'S AUTONOMY

- Women's role in local governance
- Women's mobility
- Equal education for girls
- Ensure girls do not drop out

COVID PREVENTION

- COVID Awareness
- COVID Prevention
- Management of Migrants
- Ensuring non-discrimination

Total Number of District Gender Hubs



Madhya Pradesh

Coordinator: HARD

- Anuppur
- Shahdol
- Chhindwara
- Satna
- Sidhi
- Rewa

Uttarakhand

Coordinator: Vimarsh

- Nainital
- Udham Singh Nagar
- Champawat
- Pithoragarh

Uttar Pradesh

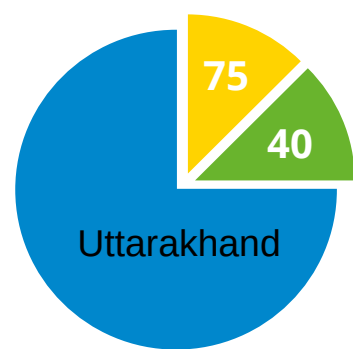
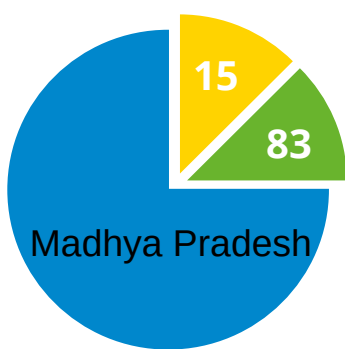
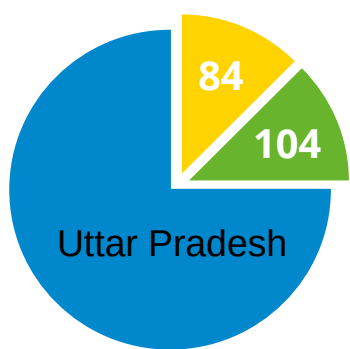
Coordinator: SAHAYOG

- Azamgarh
- Basti
- Chandauli
- Jalaun
- Jaunpur
- Lalitpur
- Gorakhpur
- Pratapgarh
- Hamirpur
- Kanpur Dehat
- Varanasi
- Sitapur
- Ambedkar Nagar
- Lucknow
- Siddharth Nagar
- Barabanki
- Ayodhya

COMPOSITION OF A GENDER HUB

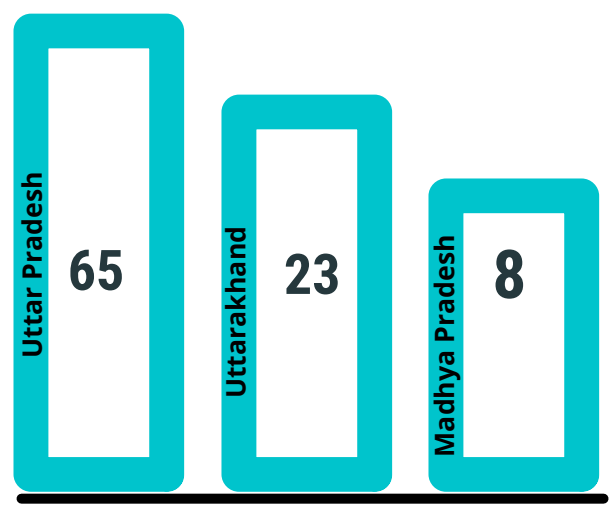
- Samanta Saathis
- Ek Saath Partner Organisations
- Local CSOs & Networks
- Women's Groups
- Panchayati Raj Members
- Service Providers
- Government Officials and Departments
- State/District Representatives
- Police/ Law Enforcement Agencies
- Media

Government and Non-Government Stakeholders in District Gender Hubs



■ Non-Government Stakeholders
■ Government Stakeholders

Number of District and State Gender Hub Meetings



Sample of Stakeholders

- Social Workers/NGOs
- District Probation Officer
- One Stop Centre Representatives
- Village Development Officer
- Ward Member
- District Officer
- Block Development Officer
- AFHC Counsellor



Decisions Taken by the Gender Hubs

- 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



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

CASES IDENTIFIED & ACTION TAKEN AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL

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

CASES REFERRED TO THE DISTRICT AND STATE LEVEL

UTTAR PRADESH

68

MADHYA PRADESH

26

UTTARAKHAND

43

Conclusive Actions taken at District and State Level

49

Uttar Pradesh

25

Madhya Pradesh

17

Uttarakhand

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 Saathis
- 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

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.