

#LPRD# A Field Worker's Diary [#Part](#) 24 # 24 June 2020

Gender had been a key aspect in our Rural Poverty Elimination Project. As I had already mentioned, our work in the Project was to facilitate the members of poor households to form into Self Help Groups (SHGs), federate them into various levels and implement our project schemes to eliminate poverty through these groups. Apart from our main work, in order to work on diverse facets related to poverty, we had set up various committees at Village level Federations and Mandal level Federations. The Social action committee was one of them.

This committee mainly worked on the social issues at the village level. For eg:- identifying out-of-school children of school-going age and sending them to school, curbing the practice of child marriage, etc., Apart from these, one of the major issues the committee focused on was domestic violence.

Many of the rural women face domestic violence frequently; however, due to not knowing where to seek help, these women continue to lead their life in pain. Our Project identified that this problem was not only impeding rural women's empowerment but also proving to be a stumbling block to our Project in achieving its targets. Thus, our higher-ups came up with the idea of establishing Community-managed Family Counselling Centers (CmFCC) to combat this menace.

As I had worked for some time as a Gender Program Coordinator at that time, I had not only worked towards establishing these centers in assigned mandals, but also provided trainings to the social action committees, Village and Mandal level Federations on the programs to be taken systems and procedures, implementation, etc.

I and my team would allocate some time to educate members about these centers at all Mandal level Federations' meetings.

The incident I am about to recount happened at the Krosuru Mandal level Federation meeting. After we had finished our awareness program on these Centres in the meeting, everybody had left, except 1 member who had stayed back. She came to me and said she wanted to talk to me alone. So, after we both went to the office room and sat down to talk, she showed me a wound on her head. Her husband had hit her around a month back. She had bled profusely. But her husband had left immediately after hitting her. There was

nobody to help her even as she lay wounded except for her little children, who didn't know what to do. Her SHG members had taken her to the hospital and to get treated. After recovering, she had called up her parents, narrated what happened and asked them to take her with them. But they refused saying that she had to learn to adjust to these "small" quarrels and that if she came back to her maternal home, the society would talk ill of them. With no other place to go, she had to go back to her husband. He was fine at times, but if he ever felt she disobeyed him in any way, he would go into a blinding rage and hit her. "I am not able to bear this hellish life, madam," she started crying.

I asked her if I could do anything for her. Truth be told, even I didn't know what to do in such a situation. I was just about 24 years old then and hadn't seen much of life. Even our counselling Centre had just started. So, we didn't know what sort of things we could achieve through it.

"What can you do, madam? When my own people have abandoned me after pushing me into this hell," she said hopelessly. "But after I heard you speaking today at the meeting, I felt like venting it out to you, that's all. Anyways, it is not new and I have gotten used to it." As it was getting late, she said she would leave. I asked where she was from and if I could stay at her house the next time I came to her village. She agreed happily and said that she would make me fish curry with her husband's fresh catch (he was a fisherman) and left with a smile.

Seeing her going back to her "hellish life" with a smile on her face, I stared after her, surprised! "How can people call victims of domestic violence weak," I thought to myself.

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