

UTTARAKHAND STATE LEVEL CONSULTATION & FOLLOW UP

Ek Saath National Campaign

Background

The Ek Saath Campaign for Promoting Men's Involvement for Changing Gender Social Norms is progressing across ten states in India. State level consultations have been planned and accordingly are being conducted in the states with the state network organization involving media persons, donors and other stakeholders in the consultations. The objectives behind holding such consultations are sharing of the campaign's rationale, strategies, expected outcomes, potential partnership, exploring social norms and developing steering committees for leading campaign activities in each state.

Consultation

On 28th October, 2016, a one day state level consultation was held at YMCA Bhimtal, Nainital, Uttarakhand on the EK Saath Campaign. It was co-organized by Vimarsh and the network Men's Action to Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW) Uttarakhand, with support of Reliance Foundation and Centre for Health and Social Justice. There were total 28 participants in the consultation including representatives of fifteen MASVAW network members from five districts and other organizations.



Important points of discussions that emerged during the session are mentioned below:

Jagdish Bhandari from Vimarsh organization started the consultation with greetings. He welcomed participants and talked about Ek Saath Campaign. He also detailed the work being done in different districts by ten MASVAW members.

Ms Suneeta Sahi, representative of Mahila Adhikar Manch (MAM), introduced participants to the history of this women's group which has been working in the state for over eight years. There are 51 women members in the Manch as core group and another 2500 women members are from villages. They have meetings from time to time on issues of women's concerns and take collective action on issues raised before them and on matters covered in the media. Ms Sahi said that Mahila Adhikar Manch is also part of several committees formed by the state government. She said MAM has struggled to make a strong place for itself in the state and is now in a position to influence policy and programme.

Ms Heera Jangpani from Udham Singh Nagar also highlighted instances where members of this Manch took up matters of gender discrimination proactively and relief was given to aggrieved women appropriately. MAM representatives said it was necessary to stand together for gender equality.

Ms Kanchan Bhandari from Vimarsh talked about how the organisation has been focusing on men's involvement for ensuring gender equality. She also spoke on association of MASVAW and the Manch on engaging men for gender equality. Ms Bhandari discussed several stories of change and emphasized on need to increase the efforts and streamline the work of organizations with the agenda of engaging men.

Mr Abhijit Das from CHSJ appreciated the work of Mahila Adhikar Manch in Uttarakhand state. He spoke of efforts taken by organizations' present and networks like Mahila Adhikar Manch which have been working for many years; still there is gap in adopted approach. He emphasized on involving men folk who are never been part of any target group of interventions for achieving gender equality. There is need to work with men also, if there is vision of gender equality and justice. Without men's involvement, gender equality is not possible as men and their thought of being privileged in terms of rights and entitlements and gender social norms are one of the major obstacles. In addition to giving importance to the work with men, he also highlighted that there is need to work with young mind who are still undergoing socialization. He emphasized that the Ek Saath campaign has to be one that is people-led and they should be the change makers.

Ms Rimjhim Jain and Mr Jagdish Lal from CHSJ shared about Ek Saath Campaign, through power point presentation. There was discussion about Ek Saath campaign's core values, objective, structural mechanism, strategy and reach in different states. It was discussed about gender equality champions who will be known as Samanta Ke Saathi. There was sharing about consultations that have been conducted in other states which are also in the initial phase of the campaign and are planning the implementation of mobilisation activities. The campaign would go ahead through mobilisation activities implemented by partners in respective states. The strategy is that gender equality advocates would be identified as those who would undertake

activities to take ahead the campaign for changing social norms. At a later stage, there would be creation of a community of such men or Samanta ke Saathi.

Mr. Bahadur Ginval from Kumaon Vani community radio spoke about their work for changing gender discriminatory social norms through preparing and broadcasting episodes on discriminatory gendered proverbs. He told participants how old proverbs prevalent in the Kumaon region and elsewhere in the country create gender inequality. The proverbs leave a lasting impression among people particularly young men as they learn social norms from them and abide them in their lives. Such proverbs get transferred from one generation to the other.

There was active discussion among the participants on the Kumaon Vani programme and it was decided to initiate a process of campaign partners taking feedback from communities on the programme. A listeners' group would be set up. This feedback would be discussed in a meeting scheduled to be held on 3/11/2016. Vimarsh said it would share feedback with all partners.

In the next session, participants divided into four groups and discussed social norms prevalent in their areas. Each group made a presentation on social norms. The participants then listed all the norms discussed by them. These were:

- Domestic Violence
- Unequal opportunities to boys and girls
- Discriminatory practices followed during menstruation
- Early Marriage
- Sexual harassment
- Declining sex ratio
- Gender biased sex selection
- Restrictions on women and girl's mobility
- Unequal distribution of Property
- Dowry
- No decision making power even in the matter affecting women



During presentations, sexual harassment and domestic violence emerged as common social norms in all four groups, so there was unanimous decision that these two social norms would be taken as the two core social norms by the campaign in addition to other social norms so that there is focus on changing attitude on the social norms on priority basis.

As a major outcome of the consultation, the Uttarakhand Ek Saath campaign's State coordination and communications committee comprising six members from the participants present was formed. The decision regarding venue and time for meeting was taken that meeting of committee would be held on 3/11/2016 in Vimarsh Office.

State Coordination and Communications Committee Meeting

All six members of the committee set up on Oct 28 met at the Vimarsh office in Nainital on November 3, 2016. State partner organisations working in Pithoragarh, Udham Singh Nagar and Bageshwar took part in the meeting. There was discussion on the following three point agenda:

- Discussion on process of identification of Samanta Ke Saathi under Ek Saath campaign
- Finalization of the mobilisation activities and an implementation framework to identify Samanta Ke Saathis
- Deciding on the communities and educational institutions where campaign will be implemented, along with implementation timelines

During the meeting, a mapping of activities to be done in the regions where campaign partners are working was done. It was decided that mobilising of communities needs to be initiated from 25th November during 16 Days Activism. Discussion was also held that the Uttarakhand network will complete mobilization activities by the end of March, 2017.

