

# "Salamati ni disha ma kutch na dag"

(The Safe District Initiative of KMVS)



Before we understood that road lights and other structures are important for safety but now I feel that the more sensitive people are towards girls they become more safe.

Amratben, Shivrammandap, Bhuj

A lot of people perceive that there is a fear due to ghost or darkness but we want to tell we fear humans who are not sensitive towards us. we want this situation to change and we will start from our homes only.

Girls from Devisar, Nakhtrana

I dialogue with each of my friend so that they understand value of equity between both genders. Real safety can be achieved only if both of us are equal.

Haresh, class 8th, Shivnagar school, Bhuj

Our panchayat used to discuss on lot of th. developmental issues but after understanding safety holistically, we started putting impetus on education of girls and providing for their transport so that they are safe while going to schools.

Kanku ben, Kukma, Bhuj



# **Evaluation Report**

Jan'2016 to Dec'2020

By

**Suneeta Dhar** 

# Contents

PART I:	3
1. Background of the Evaluation	
1.1 Project Context and Objectives of the Evaluation	
1.2 Nature and Scope of Evaluation	
1.3 Goals, Objectives, Approach	
1.4 Functional Definition of Safety	
1.5 Approaches and Programme Implementation Mechanisms	
PART II:	11
Current Realities and Context: Evidence of growing safety concerns of women	
and girls in Kutch	
	16
PART III:	10
3. Key Findings of the Evaluation (Sections 3-7)	
3.1 Quantitative Data: Findings from the Questionnaires	
3.2 Qualitative Data: Findings from Interviews, Questionnaires and	
Documents	
3.3 VAW and Women's Safety	
3.4 Good Practice 1: The Architecture of Support Services to end Violence against Women/Girls and Advance Safety	
4. Engaging with Caste based Communities on Pluralistic Cultures	
4.a. Emerging Practice 2: Sensitising and generating dialogue with Caste	
based Communities on Cultures of Safety:	
5. Work with the Urban Communities	
6. Women in Governance, and Voices of Elected Women and Male	
Panchayat representatives	
7. Creating Platforms for Youth	
7.a. Good Practice 3: Mobilizing Youth as Gender Champions on Safety	Ţ
PART IV:	
Conclusions and Recommendations (Section 8)	62
8.1 Relevance and Effectiveness	<u> </u>
8.2 Efficiency	
8.3 Sustainability	
8.4 Overall Impact	
8.5 Overall Recommendations	

# Part I II III IV

### 1. Background of the Evaluation

#### 1.1 Project Context and Objectives of the Proposed Evaluation:

KMVS planned to undertake an evaluation of its project – *Safe District Programme* - for the period 2015-2020. While this evaluation is part of their planned commitment to their project donor, it also serves a purpose for KMVS to reflect deeply on its concepts on safety, practices that have emerged and partnerships they have built over the last 4.5-5 years of the project period. It is also opportunity to learn and consolidate their learnings.

#### Geographical Area of the project:

KMVS's work is being undertaken in 10 blocks of Kutch (Bhuj, Gandhidham, Abdasa, Lakhpat, Nakhtrana, Anjar, Rapar, Bhachau, Mandvi, and Mundra). The core focus of their work in the last few years has largely been in the eastern part of Kutch: Anjar, Rapar and Bhachau.

#### 1.2 Nature and Scope of the Evaluation:

Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan(KMVS) has been working on the empowerment of women for the last 30 years. Since then, it has organized poor rural women to question and address gender inequities within their minds, their homes, communities and regions. The organization has touched lives of many women beyond its members by continually striving to re-align and redefine the gender paradigms of the region. They have led models like -'Jedle Jo Jatan' with PHC in Khavda region, 'Hello Sakhi' helpline with the DSP office in Kutch, and Information Centres in 6 block panchayat offices, which have served as unique pilot initiatives that have been institutionalized and that resulted in policy gains and impacts in the community.

In 2010, KMVS launched the Hello Sakhi helpline - a unique initiative withthe Kutch District police – with a women's police station - to address violence against women. Being the first of its kind, all the calls lodged with the helpline are mentioned in the police station diary and thus brings in an element of accountability to each caller. Women approaching the woman's police station also receive counselling support from the helpline operators of KMVS. The Helpline has become one of the most powerful mediums for women to raise their voice against domestic and other forms of violence.

Soon after, since 2015, KMVS articulated the need to work on Women's Safety as its core agenda, and envisioned the realization of a 'Safe District'. In doing so, KMVS was making a shift

in its core approach to not only bringing a nuanced understanding of what comprises women's safety issues, but also deepening their perspectives on how individuals, communities, and the eco-system could effectively respond to these issues and transform adverse gender norms.

KMVS has been working in a project context in Kutchregion that has varied demographic, livelihood, and land use patterns, representing diverse communities and social networks. They learnt about shifts taking place in the community in the last decade or so that included: women's limited access to resources, their lack of a sense of safety, an onset of new vulnerabilities within the home and at the work-place, a change in the world views of the community, as well aschanges in the nature of gender relationships within homes and communities.

With an increasing population of migrant labourers, including through marriage, into Kutch, new emerging class and gender dynamics between and across local and migrant communities has been shaped. This added further complexities to the current complex social set-up that prevailed in the rural and peri-urban areas of Kutch. The district's population itself has grown from 15.83 lakhs to 20.93 lakhs. The region was also host to more than 600 industries, largely ports, thermal power plants and mining companies. And the region was recovering from the devastating impacts of the earthquake in 2001.

While there was some progress in the status of women in the district, there were growing inequities, increasing sectarianism, an aggressive culture of commerce and consumerism, and perverse forms of patriarchy - which were manifest in the increase of violence against women and girls - within the home, and in the public domain. The intersectional nature of structural discrimination and violence has been seen across caste, class, ethnicity and geographic location.

The extent of gender-based violence - and its limited reporting - was particularly alarming, especially in the blocks near and within the industrialized zones (which is the South and South-East Kutch), in the peri-urban and urban areas, and in the rural areas of North and Western Kutch. Girls/women from certain communities have come under pressure from conservative social and religious parts of Eastern India to Kutch: a sharp rise in such behavior patterns.

Based on the recent work and surveys undertaken by KMVS, most of the women had shared with themthat they felt unsafe within their homes, in public transport, public spaces, work places, schools and colleges and cultural-religious spaces due to traditions and customs that discriminated against girls and women. KMVS data from studies revealed that only close to 25% cases of domestic violence were actually being reported.

#### 1.3 Goal, Objectives, Approach of KMVS

#### In this regard: KMVS formulated its new project in 2015:

The Goal of the new project was: Leadership of youth and community emerges to build a society which is safe for women, girls and marginalized sections and is equitable and respecting for all.

**Vision:** "To enable women to lead a gender transformative process within communities, citizens, youth and institutions; and to create a pro-active, safe and sensitive environment which fosters perspectives, actions, thought, and policies that are free of violence, patriarchy and gender based vulnerabilities". (RFP-EdelGive, 2015, KMVS)

**Organizational Mission:** "The overarching mission is to empower, conscientise and organize youth, community organizations and local governance institutions for addressing gender inequities and ensuring a compassionate and safe environment for women and girls".

#### The Specific Objectives of this Project were to:

- 1. Generate an eco-system where women's safety is prioritised at every forum.
- 2. Sensitise judiciary, justice and community systems so that they become responsive towards gender based violence.
- 3. Provide psycho-social and legal help to victims of gender based violence in ensuring their security.
- 4. Utilise the diverse pluralistic cultural of the region to generate dialogues on women's safety and allow society to become responsive.

The two key sets of stakeholders included:

#### a) Institutional Stakeholders:

District police, Rural and Urban schools, Kutch University; Helpline and its structures - 181,1098; DLSA; District Hospital/Sakhi One stop crisis management centre, Panchayats

#### b) Community level stakeholders:

Women, male members, adolescent boys and girls, EWRs (elected representatives – women and men)

#### Targets planned were:

Category	Direct beneficiaries	Indirect beneficiaries
Women	7000	23000
Youth	4500	9000
EWRs	900	600
EMRs	600	500
Men	4200	14000

KMVS has been preparing regular reports – three-monthly for the donor, annual, two-yearly, and other such, where some results of their efforts can be tracked. A table capturing their core results and outreach are available with them for the period: October 2016-September 2020.

#### 1.4 Functional Definition of Safety:

In a workshop held by KMVS<sup>2</sup> they discussed the concept of safety - major forms of safety would include - social safety, physical safety, economic safety, political safety, etc. They clearly outlined the thin line difference between 'safety' and 'security'. They addressed questions such as: 'How the context of safety has changed over time, especially in the Kutch region at the household level and the societal level in the wake of changes due to industrialisation, marketisation and globalisation'.

They further explored how the 'private' was being affected by factors such as markets, consumerism, technology, food insecurity, etc. while the 'public' was also undergoing changes due to global economies. KMVS's earlier approach to development was about the 'economic deficit' and how patriarchy plays a role in it. Since economic development of region was being undertaken, notions of mobility and empowerment have also changed.

Over time, this understanding has guided their work and development of strategies and partnerships. With further reflections, they have added other nuanced pieces and dimensions to their understanding.

#### Women's Safety<sup>3</sup> and how it is distinct from Security:

- It includes concepts of consent, sexuality and sexual choices
- It is inclusive and intersectional in nature one that includes the mostvulnerable groups, as well as helps redefine the parameters of safety based on their experiences and lived realities
- To deepen one's understanding of traditional concepts of safety and know their underpinnings so as to know how to transform it
- Identify comprehensive set of parameters and markers and re-contextualize safety guidelines
- The need to explore and have a deeper understanding of safety issues in public spaces
- The need to explore 'notions of safety' as a collaborative effort between different stakeholders and not one that is imposed

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> KMVS workshop report: August, 2015

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> KMVS ppt: Project Trajectory, October 2020

- The need to add to the list of critical stakeholders and other diverse constituencies - such as youth, representatives of castebased societies and facilitate their roles as catalysts of change
- The need to shift the focus and communications from -'women survivors' to those that are 'perpetrators'- in order to refocus the efforts towards structural change and transform cultural norms and practices and focus on prevention efforts.

### They defined **Safety as**:

'Safety with regard to Rights, Power, Resources and Respect. Safety in social, economic, physical, political spheres and during any disaster situation. They perceive safety at the family, community, systemic levels and in public places. That it needs an independent, equal, free and empowered environment for women where they feel secure and they don't need any external protection'.

'That there is need for a humane society that provides aspirations, feelings, acceptance of diversity, freedom to speak and life with pride to every person. Finally that women and girls of Kutch exercise their economic, educational, social, and political and health rights and develop systems and legal framework such that their fear gets reduced and they feel safe'.

In essence they see 'Safety as an internal feeling which is more sustained in nature and depends on external forces which are responsible for security'. (Annual Report, 2015-16)

#### 1.5 Approaches and Programme Implementation Mechanisms adopted by KMVS:

According to their project proposal their Programme was envisaged as a collaborative effort between the judiciary, civil society groups, community, district level service providers and other ethnic groups(RFP\_EdelGive, 2015). It would deploy following strategies:

- Collaborating with state machinery, service providers and community at large to build overall environment of safety for women in the district
- Building overall environment of safety for women by sensitising the panchayats and making them accountable to bring the issue in their ambit
- Involving caste based justice systems and leaders in understanding safety concerns and providing a space for dialogue on the issue in their public discourse
- Building a youth cadre which brings in transformation at individual and societal level so that varied stakeholders become responsive to women's safety needs

#### Key activities planned were:

- i) Providing legal aid and support to victims of gender based violence
- ii) Building para legal cadre at community level for addressing gendered violence
- iii) Utilising community media to voice concerns of society and ensure community articulation and participation on concerns of women's safety
- iv) Understanding pluralistic culture of the region and it's ethos for sensitising and generating dialogue on safety with caste based societies
- v) Sensitising local self-governance structures to imbibe concerns of women's safety in the purview of governance
- vi) Perspective building of young boys and girls on gender and gendered violence
- vii) Generating educational structures which evolve gender just pedagogy in education system
- viii) Building understanding on reproductive systems in adolescents
- ix) Capacity building of CBOs towards economic security of women
- x) Documenting and research on changes in socio political situations of the region
- xi) Awareness and access to health entitlements for women and girls

In their last report (2019-20), KMVS highlighted some key core approaches they have adopted over the years:

#### a.) Investing into building Informal Networks among various constituencies:

Since the past three-four years KMVS has been forming informal networks on issues such as: early and forced marriage, sexual violence, cyber stalking and issues of choice and autonomy that have been raised by the youth. These networksbring together cadres of youth, para-legals, panchayat members and community leaders. This helps build an enabling environment, as well as in converging efforts across geographical areas, so that the youth leaders feel empowered to take decisions.

**b.**) Catalysing a Collective Approach: Since the last year or so, KMVS programme interventions have been designed in waysthat nurturing elected panchayat members, women members and adolescent groups. Such a process helps in collaboration amongst the community, and creates a space for learning from different quarters.

A continual nurturing and visioning process is deployed: This means undertaking basic and advanced trainings, exposure visits and building learning platforms for community and core cadres along with visioning exercises on a six-monthly basis.

**c.**) Re-defining Safety parameters: Following four years of programme interventions, KMVS has been re-visiting the issue of safety of women and girls in both public and private spaces. They wish to take into account how to address gender sensitive infrastructure, enhance community based information flow and analysis of relevant policies, build more communications, and address critical issues of vulnerable groups in specific locations. The pandemic has stopped some of the ongoing work. There are plans to undertakesafety audits once the situation improves and develop gender sensitive checklists and guidelines for advocacy with each government department.

#### **d.**) Efforts for Institutionalizing certain aspects of the programme:

- KMVS has been thinking about institutionalizing each of its core interventions/programmes in the last one year, such as the Hello Sakhi helpline, sensitization in schools, working with FSWs and with local self-governance institutions on safety.
- Further reflections have been internally held for each programme for sustenance and future collaboration.
- **e.**) KMVS has been responding to the C-19 pandemic by devising new responses and strategies: In the last few months things have been tough for KMVS and its partners, constituencies, etc. They quickly responded to providing ration kits, linking communities to ration supplies, especially for those that didn't have NFSA ration cards. They have also raised resources for cash support to the most marginalized and vulnerable.

Soon after the opening up of the lockdown, KMVS devised new means of engagement and developed strong guidelines to continue their ongoing work with communities. They initiated contact with all through phone calls, zoom meetings, and discussions in smaller groups to reach out widely to more community members. Webinars on sexual harassment at work place was also conducted for other CSOs.

**f.**) Responding to mental health issues: During the process of undertaking the survey KMVS realized that several staff members and community women were experiencing great anxieties, stress and depression – given the loss of livelihoods, increase in domestic violence and fear of the impact of the virus on health of family members. KMVS has immediately responded by bringing in a psychologist and convening regular sessions with counsellors, women members and staff members. Webinars with mental health specialists were also arranged for a safe space to talk about their feelings and plan for effective coping mechanisms.

- g.) Partnerships with Government Departments to reach a wider community base: KMVS has had an effective and sustained collaboration with DLSA, Education Department and District Child Protection Unit and has conducted online sessions to reach out to the entire Kutch area through them. Districtwebinars on early and forced marriage were also planned for panchayat members of various blocks
- **h.)** Synthesizing learnings and building upon current work: KMVS has spent the last several months in holding internal and external reflections and discussions on different perspectives of safety work undertaken so far. They have also been thinking through on how to take forward their work and strategies and continue to be relevant, innovative and unique.

## Part I Part II III IV

# **Current Realities and Context: Safety Concerns of Women and Girls in Kutch**

There has been much documentation about Kutch society and impacts following its reconstruction phase. It was noted that during the recent onslaught of pandemic times and state-imposed lockdowns, the greatest distress was faced by migrant and daily wage labourers, street vendors and other small traders, as well as farmers, fishers, pastoralists, crafts persons, forest-workers, who were unable to access their natural resources or markets where they used to sell their produce. Women in the informal sector, women home based workers, domestic workers, sex workers, migrant women workers, artisans and others also experienced major impacts on their livelihoods and access to entitlements.

While this highlighted the major fault-lines in structural inequalities prevalent in society, where some could continue to work from the safety of their homes and others were deeply impacted in the initial phases. Many hundreds of people did not have the social security and protection systems to cover them in their times of distress. However, it was noted that the post-2001 Kachchh society could tap on the potential of being able to re-build sustainable livelihoods, that is grounded in local economies and community governance systems as was done in the past. Among them were the efforts of the Kutch Navnirman Abhiyan (Campaign for Kachchh's Reconstruction) and several other groups that had come together to organise enormous relief and rehabilitation measures for hundreds of villages post-earthquake. They had surveyed Kachchh's 580 affected villages, to direct governmental and non-governmental relief measures. They worked with the marginalised communities, enabling self-reliance and empowerment of community institutions and built the capacity for self-governance and direct forms of democracy. One must note that the Kachchh story has its own cultural, ecological, and political uniqueness and roots<sup>4</sup> that can assist in these times of the pandemic.

The context of Covid-19 has impacted the economic and resultant social, political, public health arenas of people living in the Kutch area. The work of artisans and pastoralists and migrant workers, especially in the urban areas has been affected, as has the tourism industry. The timber industry bordering Kutch has also faced huge losses. Though many thousands had trudged back home in India during the lockdown, there were several hundred migrant labourers whose lives were miserable after they were stranded in the Kutch region. There did not have much support initially and the District Collector called upon Samerth NGO to support the migrant workers with rations for some period of time<sup>5</sup>.

In this context, one has also read in the newspapers about migrant workers attacking the road transport system and jamming roads as they were not allowed to travel despite having completed all formalities. This indicated the high levels of stress faced by the workers<sup>6</sup>. It was

later learnt that the industry especially the salt industry to overcome their losses, had to recall their migrant workers back from their homes, incurring extra costs for their return<sup>7</sup>.

The Federation of Kutch Industries Association (FOKIA) advocated with the Gujarat Chief Minister demanding provisions for upgrading quarantine measures and implementing interstate safe travel protocols, along with testing and medical treatment facilities for their workers. They added that Kutch industries urgently needed replacement for over 50,000 migrant workers who left the district due to the nationwide lockdown following the outbreak of Covid-19<sup>8</sup>.

The question that gets raised is: Can the pandemic be used as an opportunity to make some structural and other changes for people living on the margins. And how can fundamental changes be brought about in the overall economic and political functioning of the district.

Among studies undertaken by KMVS<sup>9</sup> during the **Lockdown period**(between March end -June 2020), it was found that the urban population faced distress with lack of cash flow, wages, access to food and health care. Women faced much anxiety, fear, had limited access to menstrual pads, cash flows, and experienced misbehavior(s) within their homes. Overall, about 59% of respondents experienced some form of stress and anxiety due to the uncertain tenure of the lockdown period and their limited access to primary utilities.

Among the small sample of migrant workers interviewed by KMVS, participants spoke about problems in accessing rations, food, health care for ongoing aliments in general (such as cancertreatment), as well as lack of work and wages, etc. A few participants shared their anxieties about running out of money. They earlier earned anywhere between Rs.100-600 per day. Some shared that they had not received any fixed remuneration from their employers during the lockdown period.

- (i) 66.67% respondents said they received some free ration support through the Anna Brahma Yojana scheme (for those that do not have a ration card).
- (ii) 33% had to borrow between Rs.1700-3000 to cope with the requirements of their family.
- (iii) Close to 89.5% of the respondents said that they would stay back in Bhuj even after the lockdown is lifted, due to various reasons.

Most participants had expectations from government and public service organisations once the lockdown was lifted up. Ration was a requirement from several families who experienced food shortages, besides other needs such as a requirement for a stable place to live in for migrant workers. Many were afraid that they did not have proper sanitation facilities and would be

 $<sup>^4</sup>https://the bastion.co.in/in-depth/lessons-from-another-disaster-revisiting-kachchh-amidst-covid-19/2012. \\$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>https://www.counterview.net/2020/05/stuck-in-lockdown-kutch-ngo-rescues.html.

 $<sup>^6</sup> https://www.national heraldindia.com/national/gujarat-migrants-block-highway-in-kutch-pelt-stones$ 

 $<sup>\</sup>label{lem:comparing} $$ \tilde{t} = \frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{1}{2} \right) + \frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{1}{2} \right$ 

 $<sup>{\</sup>rm ^8https://indianexpress.com/article/coronavirus/instead-of-14-day-quarantine-protocol-kutch-industry-body-demands-covid-test-for-migrants-returning-to-work-6433562/$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>KMVS study during Covid, 2020

more susceptible to the virus. Demand for work was a major problem, as migrant labourers have been one of the worst hit sections in terms of job losses. Almost all participants said they had little or no more resources left to support their families.

- i) The study among the Panchayat areas indicated that there were impacts on women, and the family as a unit- with cases of domestic violence having increased (almost an 11% increase).
- ii) 7.3% Gram Panchayats had registered a case of domestic violence during the one-and-a-half-month-long lockdown period.
- iii) 14.5% participants were of the opinion that job losses during the lockdown had increased mental pressure as well as physical violence against women of the area. The panchayat was making available access to resources as far as possible.
- iv) The lockdown requirements were strictly followed by the locals in more than 81% of the villages. In cases where there wasn't as much co-operation, help was sought from police officials.
- v) 76.4% of participants shared that there was an influx of returnee migrants and other people in their village from outside Kutch.
- vi) A whopping 92.7% participants said that they had evidence of addiction problems within families in their villages; however during lockdown, 87.3% of substance abuse cases came down due to sheer unavailability of substances.
- vii) 10 villages out of 55 had patients with serious health concerns. These families were provided assistance by doing check-ups and providing medicines at the community level.
- viii) Ambulance services were also set up in 3 panchayats to help patients commute to hospitals, in collaboration with GMDC.

This brings us the context of what Kutch was like prior to the pandemic. The region had more than 600 industries, with large ports, thermal power plants, salt and mining companies. Industrialisation had brought in rapid economic, socio-cultural changes and led to large numbers of incoming migrants and also to the availability of cheap labour of the local indigenous and settled communities, thus building an exploitative nature of relations between the outside contractors and local communities.

In terms of what was happening in the local panchayats - the Sarpanch of Kuneria Gram Panchayat of Bhuj district, said that most panchayats in the district were able to respond quickly to the pandemic with community kitchens, home quarantine and announcements of correct information about hand washing and social distancing on loudspeakers. This was possible due to strong institutional mechanisms in place post the earthquake in  $2001^{10}$ . Documentation of women's participation in Panchayats show that over the last 20 years, there has been an increase in women's representation. However, it is through KMVS's work that a process of awareness and political awareness is being built around issues of gender and safety.

 $<sup>^{10}</sup> https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/trust-empower-panchayats-to-respond-to-covid-19/2009.$ 

Other news items in the media during this year, indicated that an intense spotlight on gender based discrimination and violence. In February 2020, 68 girls from a college in Bhuj, run by a religious body, were allegedly stripped by the authorities who wanted to check their "menstrual blood." The girls alleged that they were asked to parade in the college and forced to remove their undergarments in the washroom one-by-one in front of four women teachers including by the principal. They were emotionally blackmailed to not complain against the teachers, and to not demand legal action<sup>11</sup>. In an undated video, Swami Krushnaswarup Dasji of Swaminarayan Bhuj Mandir, who runs the Bhuj Institute where 68 hostellers were forced to strip, is seen saying, "If menstruating woman cook the food, they will be born as bitches in the next life. 12"

Even as NCW probed the Bhuj hostel case, it also took serious note of the lack of redress mechanisms such as ICCs (as mandated by POSH Act, 2013) that were not in place in the institution and the region. Fear of stigma associated with sexual harassment, and fear of retributionhave led to women and girls not coming forward with their complaints. The NCW held meetings with 44 colleges and with the apex institution - Kutch University - as a follow-up of this case. Meanwhile, women's groups including KMVS along with the Gujarat Mahila Manch issued media statements to ensure that action be taken against offenders as it amounts to criminal intimidation and that all measures should be put in place.

There have been other such instances reported in the media. A woman was robbed of her gold bangles by thieves pretending to be police for not wearing a mask. She has filed a case and included the CCTV footage that captured the crime. In Gandhidham recently (October 2020), a Tanishq store was targeted as their ad was unacceptable to a certain community. This led to a withdrawal of the ad by the Tatas. The store was asked to post an apology on their showroom to pacify the protestors. A FIR was filed against a local channel for misleading content covered in their TV show about this episode.

In October 2020, the body of an unidentified woman was found buried on the outskirts of Guneri village of Lakhpat taluka in Kutch district. In another case: a 16-year-old student from Kutch district was arrested for allegedly giving rape and murder threats over social media to the daughter of former captain of Indian cricket team Mahendra Singh Dhoni in Ranchi. (ANI).

In addition, after the death by suicide of a 20-year-old woman, her family members allegedly hacked her lover to death in Balasar village of Rapar Taluka of Kutch district on his agricultural farm. <sup>14</sup> Another incident took place in Kotda Jadodar village in Nakhatrana Taluka. A 40-year-old married woman from Moti Virani village in Nakhatrana was offered a

<sup>11</sup> https://www.deccanherald.com/national/north-and-central/68-girls-forced-to-strip-in-kutch-colleges-menstruation-check-804516.html

 $<sup>^{12}\</sup> https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/videos/city/ahmedabad/bhuj-sects-swami-stirs-controversy-says-if-menstruating-women-cook-food-they-will-be-born-as-bitch-in-next-life/videoshow/74194676.cms$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Read more at: https://ahmedabadmirror.indiatimes.com/ahmedabad/others/no-complaint-in-yrs-kutch-collector/articleshow/74182568.cms? utm\_source=contentofinterest&utm\_medium=text&utm\_campaign=cppst

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>https://indianexpress.com/article/india/gujarat-kutch-woman-suicide-family-murder-lover-6509381/

lift in a car by a man known to her." The accused offered to take her to Mata no Madh temple but instead took her to a shopping complex in Kotda Jadodar village, and along with four other friends, raped her. She managed to escape and filed a complaint with Nakhatrana police station<sup>15</sup>. In October 2020, a family refused to accept the body of a murdered woman: it was suspected she was killed by her husband<sup>16</sup>.

Two more cases of rape were registered in Kutch. In the first case, a woman in Anjar was raped by her father in Sept 2019. Another rape of a teenage girl was by her boyfriend on promise of marriage<sup>17</sup>.

The Mumbai police recently arrested a man from Gujarat's Kutch for allegedly stalking a female doctor since February 2020. In her complaint, the victim said that in February 2020, she had gone for a music concert in Todi Mill, Lower Parel where she first met the perpetrator in a restaurant and he has been stalking her ever since <sup>18</sup>.

The reports above indicate intense and gruesome forms of harassment, sexual assault and violence that have come to the attention of the media and have seen the response of the district and other agencies. However it must be noted that there may be many more cases that have not been reported, including of young girls who have been trapped within their homes.

This points us to the fact that the Safety of Women and Girls is indeed a critical issue key that needs a coordinated multi-sector response, a political will at the highest level and far more work to transform institutions and mindsets.

https://www.firstpost.com/india/woman-in-gujarats-kutch-district-gangraped-by-five-persons-efforts-on-to-arrest-accused-5374441.html

 $<sup>{\</sup>it http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/78436098.cms? utm\_source=contentofinterest\&utm\_medium=text\&utm\_campaign=cppst}$ 

<sup>17</sup> https://ahmedabadmirror.indiatimes.com/ahmedabad/crime/married-woman-accuses-father-of-raping-her-in-kutch/articleshow/71040590.cms?utm\_source=contentofinterest&utm\_medium=text&utm\_campaign=cppst

 $<sup>^{18}\</sup> https://www.mid-day.com/articles/mumbai-crime-37-year-old-from-kutch-arrested-for-allegedly-stalking-malabar-hill-doctor/23023245$ 

### 3. KEY FINDINGS:

#### 3.1 Quantitative data: Findings from Questionnaires

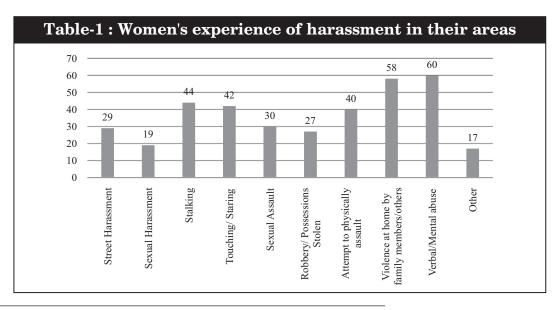
A rapid study was undertaken to understand the forms of violence and lack of safety that women and girls experience in today's context, especially in their areas and how do they respond to it. It also aimed to understand how the eco-system of redress mechanisms operated and who did the girls/women and men go to for support and resolution. Further it gathered data to understand how society values women and girls and the challenges and barriers they face as a result. And their response to KMVS support and vision for the future (*The questionnaire was adapted from WICI, Jagori, UNIFEM study in 2009*). <sup>19</sup> (**Appendix III A**)

The analysis below is very brief; further details and granular data analysis is attached. (Appendix III B)

#### **Background of Respondents:**

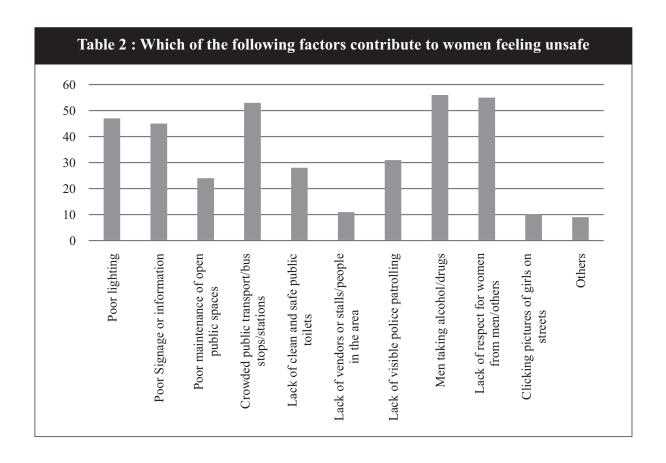
Out of the 81 respondents that participated in the study (selected by KMVS) from diverse communities, 69 were female and 12 males. In terms of education: 24 had studied up to 7th and below, including 3 who were not schooled; 25 were in the category 8th-10th; 10 had studied up to 11th-12th. And 11 were within the undergraduate levels and above.

Of the 81 respondents,19 were Muslims and 62 Hindus and from diverse ethnic groupings. 12 respondents were from women headed households. The larger numbers of households considered themselves as joint families. Most women and men have lived in their current areas for very long time.

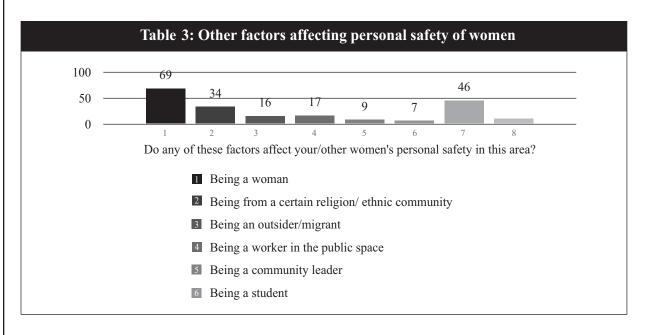


 $<sup>^{19}\</sup> https://femmesetvilles.org/downloadable/tools\%20 for\%20 gathering\%20 information\%20 en.pdf$ 

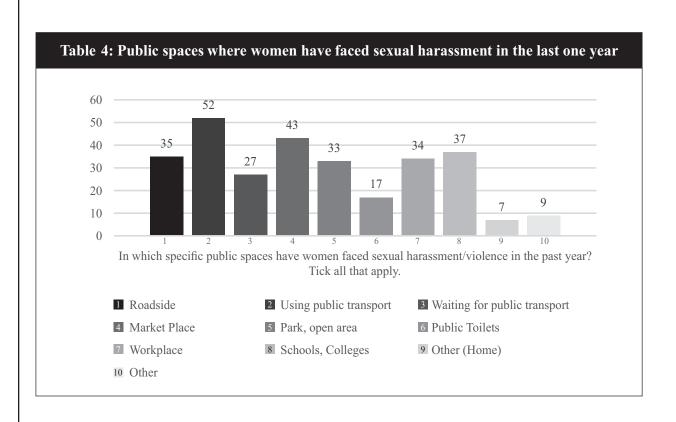
Of the total respondents, *more than 50*% shared that women experience the following forms of harassment in their areas: stalking; touching/staring; attempt to physically assault; violence faced at home by family and other members followed by verbal/mental forms of abuse. The other forms included: street harassment, sexual harassment, attempts at sexual violence, robbery and other such.



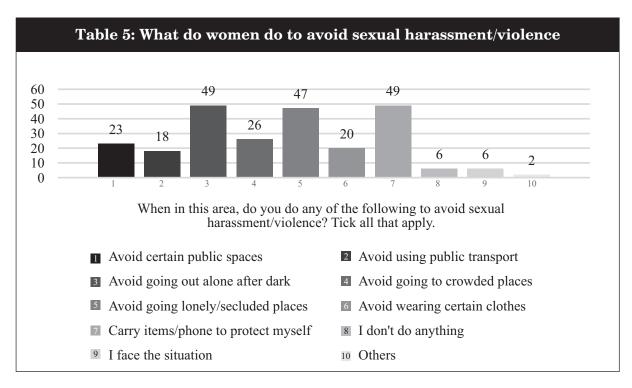
As for the factors why women feel unsafe, respondents indicated that reasons were due to poor infrastructure such as poor lighting, poor signage, crowded public transport including at stations, bus stops. *More than 50*% also shared that men and others do not respect women, and highlighted the issue of men taking drugs/drinking in open spaces. There did not seem to be much concern about there not being 'eyes on the street' nor about the lack of vendors in the public space, nor were there concerns about pictures being clicked in the public space. One fourth of the respondents did share that there was poor maintenance of infrastructure in open public spaces, such as parks, etc.



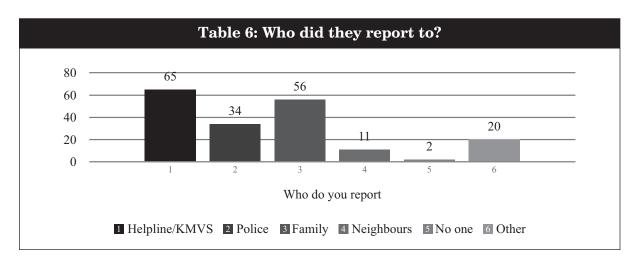
In terms of other factors, most respondents felt that **being a woman**, and **being highly vulnerable within the home** were among the key factors for their lack of safety. Close to one third of the respondents also shared that **belonging to a certain community** (i.e. religion, caste) **made them more vulnerable**.



In terms of sites of harassment, *more than 50*% shared that public transport, market places were unsafe and others shared that the roadsides, parks, open areas, schools, colleges, workplaces, and public toilets were unsafe. *A much smaller number shared that the home and other places were unsafe*. This reads differently from above, where it has been highlighted that women feel vulnerable within homes (*See Table 3*).



**More than 50%** shared that they would avoid going out alone in the dark, or to lonely secluded spaces, and carry some protection appliances with them such as phones so they can call. A smaller number talked about being mindful about how they dress, avoid use of public transport, or going to crowded places. Clearly the issue of unsafe infrastructure and environment rather than being restricted by social norms has been articulated.



Most of the women and men respondents shared that they approached the *Hello Sakhi/KMVS helpline and safety centres for support*, indicating knowledge and trust in the system run by KMVS. Others shared that they approached their families and sometimes the police. Close to one fourth of the respondents have mentioned approaching others, but it is not quite clear who they constitute.

The tabulated data is available in the appendices. The analysis of each disaggregated data has been compiled under their respective sections.

In sum, respondents have identified different forms of harassment/violence women/girls face, the sites of such violence. One notes that women experience vulnerability because of their gender, which is well known and that caste, ethnicity, working in public spaces add to their vulnerabilities. The KMVS helpline and safety centre have been considered a great support system to go to, however girls approached their families first in instances of harassment. The response of the system and other responses are captured in the sections below.

### 3.2 Qualitative Data: Findings from Interviews, Questionnaires, and Review of Documents

### **3.2.1 Supporting Survivors of Gender Based Violence:** Legal and Counselling Support

KMVS started its counselling and legal support work 10 years ago. Their vision is to transform the patriarchal mindsets in the region, support survivors through the helpline, generate awareness on their legal rights, build a cadre of para legal workers and support access to justice, by partnering with the judicial agencies.

KMVS has had close to **11,000 cases** registered with it over the past decade, while the police records have registered 6000. In the three year period (**2016 - September 2020**), they supported 9050 cases through the Hello Sakhi helpline, and **493 women** in their access to justice with the aid of para legal workers. It has been noted by KMVS that not more than 25% cases of domestic violence get reported. In the period 2011-19, under the PWDVA there were 1928 cases registered, while cases registered with KMVS and affiliated socio-legal centers for the same period was 3255. Rapes of minor girls has increased in the district with 96 cases of rape registered with the police in 2016-17, while 'Hello Sakhi', had 48 cases lodged. The cases on Hello Sakhi have doubled over time: (2016-17: **1422**), (2018-19: **2350**). (Donor report July-Sept 2020; KMVS ppt-2020).

On each of the projected indicators they have exceeded their planned targets (KMVS ppt, 2020). They have been maintaining an in-depth and systemic data record of all

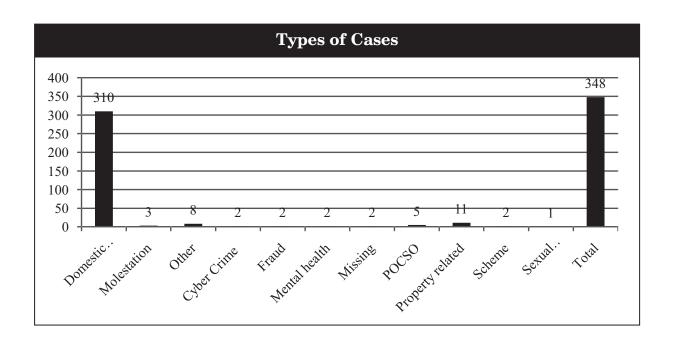
their cases, disaggregated by caste, age, background, type of complaint, service provided on a quarterly basis.

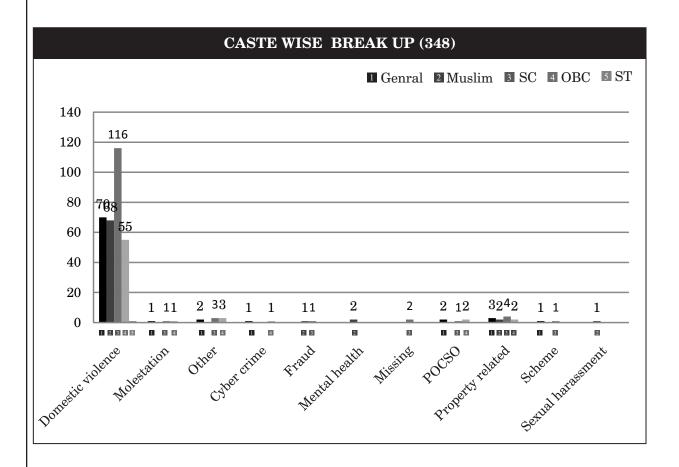
In their report to the donor for the annual period (2019-2020), KMVS hadreached out to support 1085 cases of women with 400 cases handled by the PLs covering all locations it works in (KMVS report, 2020).



In the last quarter (July-

September 2020), out of **348 cases reported, 310 were on** domestic violence (DV). One could link this rise to the Covid lockdown period, as has been the case in many parts of the country, with a surge in domestic violence reports. Their annual report 2018-19, shows 891 cases of DV. This points to the need for far more work in this area.





The graph above indicates that not only has domestic violence reports increased in the district, but that of POCSO cases too, in comparison to the previous phases. That the highest reporting comes from the SC community followed by the General community, Muslim community and OBCs. Reporting from the ST community is very low. It must be also be noted that 70 cases have been registered from the upper caste community, indicating that the incidence of violence cuts across all social groups, and that KMVS's work with the communities has led to increased reporting.

KMVS runs 5 Safety Centres in *Bhuj (2016)*, *Nakhtrana (2017)*, *Mandvi (2018)*, *Anjar and Bachau (2019)* in addition to the Hello Sakhi helpline. These Centres have play a crucial role in providing safe spaces to the survivors and community.

They have undertaken systematic trainings for the para legal workers over time and some of the PLs have themselves been survivors of violence and received support from KMVS. The cadre of para legal workers plays a crucial role in reaching out information to families and communities. A major part of KMVS's and PLs work is to reach out to women survivors, build their confidence, make referrals, accompany them to police, legal aid services and ensure they take their own decisions about how

they wish to proceed in their case. There are times when they attend to a case late at night going out of their ways to support women. Their partnership with the police stands in good stead as they negotiate for support from the Mahila police stations for a vehicle to rescue women and take her into safe custody.

Besides KMVS and PLs are members of POSH Committees, and have trained over 30 institutions on sexual harassment. They also advocate for committees to be functional within educational and other settings and train ICCs.

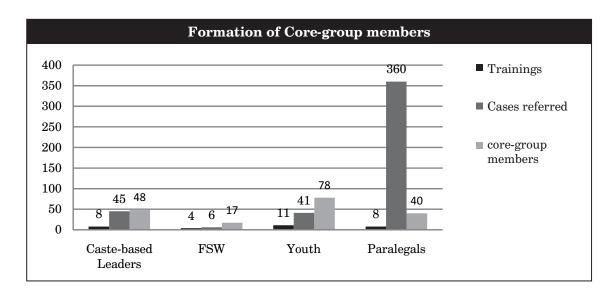
The KMVS team shared that their work was not easy as they have to fight patriarchal norms and mindsets of families that negate rights of young girls/women. In one of the cases, a young girl was sexually assaulted. Her family wanted to get rid of her by marrying her off to a 46 year old man. The KMVS worker took her to the Safety Centre, and later to an Ashram for shelter. She had her baby there and surrendered it for adoption. She now lives her life and has got married. In other cases, they have seen threats to the girl's life, for being forced into unwanted marriages, and sometimes girls/women take the grave step of committing suicide.

**3.2.2 Building an effective cadre of Para Legal Workers:** The data gathered through the questionnaire from para-legal respondents indicated that they considered being a woman, belonging to a vulnerable community, and working in a public space as a high risk. They also brought out the point that women risk violence within their homes. They identified several forms of harassment that women/girls face – such as physical, sexual violence, assault, verbal/mental abuse, touching, stalking, and violence at home. While women experience harassment in public spaces at several sites, for them **the first port of call is KMVS**, followed by family and then the police for any support. They also said that PLs were well trained by KMVS and knew how to navigate the redress systems, Hello Sakhi helpline, and accompany women/girls to police station. They were secure that KMVS provided them with good guidance whenever needed. They found the safety centres providing great services.

The question they ask is that women survivors don't talk about accessing justice, they talk more about maintaining family honour. That needs a lot of work with families For prevention efforts, they have undertaken safety campaigns in the villages.

The support received from KMVS has been exceptional. A PL shared about facing violence from her husband, and being from a conservative society (Darbar community). With support from KMVS, she has now changed her life. The support many of the respondents have received has been substantive - from filing complaints, to being informed and accompanied on all relevant follow up steps.

KMVS supports the formation of core groups in their work with the communities. As can be seen below the PLs are one of their most important constituencies and partners. With 8 trainings and 40 core group members, the PLs have been able to address 360 cases of violence in the last year (KMVS final progress report, 2020)



Another PL respondent spoke about her love marriage and facing DV, and how much support she got for taking a divorce, including free legal services from the government lawyer.

"Now I am in a position to support others".

Another PL shared that she faced much stress due to the physical and sexual violence encountered by her; her husband was called and counselled and her daughter also had tried to commit suicide, given the stress within the home. With the help of the staff of the KMVS Safety Centre, she received valuable support.

'KMVS taught me about my rights, especially property rights. I am an adopted daughter and now my mother and I have both accessed our legitimate rights within the household'.

They also shared how the police also takes support from the PLs, and they work closely with the Safety Centres to provide support on many forms of VAW that women have faced. They appreciated the tremendous amount of support they received from the safety centres, especially on the issue of illegal alcohol consumption by men, which they feel is an issue that needs more attention.

"I inform the police, knowing they are also in some ways taking bribes to let the alcohol consumption flourish underground. However, I continue to campaign and support women. Sometime the police also support us in our antiliquor campaign".

One PL shared that her family tried to dissuade her from undertaking this work. She resisted and said that: 'Tomorrow my daughter will be in danger, then what shall we do'?

They raised the issue of re-victimization of the victim at the hands of the police, when the perpetrator is from an upper class background, and they have to call on higher officers to intervene in such cases. They also talked about a school faculty member harassing a Dalit student and the case is still ongoing.

The PLs emphasized the need for prevention efforts and campaigns to stem violence to educate and sensitise the community. They have built alliances with Asha workers, ANMs, and are themselves working in these roles. All PLs have an ID card and that gives them credibility and recognition. Working closely with the state redress mechanisms (DLSA, police, OSCs, etc.), has also allowed them to fast track the case. Three PLs are members of the traditional Panch, where they now participate in community negotiations on conflict matters. Sometimes they go the media to highlight issues, as has happened in one case where the young woman was not paid her wages. Memos were submitted, other women took out rallies, and with the support of the sarpanch, the employer was forced to concede. The PLs have also attended to the most vulnerable women in accessing their entitlements, even during the Covid lockdown period.

**3.2.3 Healing and Supporting Survivors of Violence:** All survivors in the evaluation process reached out to, shared that they were helped immensely by the KMVS staff and at the safety centres. This included being counselled, taken to the police station when needed, to the court for legal cases, medical tests, and so on. They shared that there is regular follow up over the phone to enquire how they were doing. They were enormously grateful for the support they received. KMVS supports the journey of the victim to becoming a survivor, and then an agent of change. Support is also provided through forming networks of survivors so they can support and learn from each other.

The main thing is that they listen very sensitively to us, mediate with proper consultations with the other party, family members and with documentation. They have given me much confidence and support. I came to them crying and now am happier.

One of them (Anjar) had a private lawyer but with no progress on ground, she approached KMVS and she got her divorce through in 4 months' time, and also got a compensatory amount (Rs. 1 lakh). Most importantly she said: 'I got freedom from my violent husband, a life of dignity and children's custody. KMVS are very nice people, they gave me a new life'.

In another case, a woman survivor said that she had struggled for a long time to get custody of her daughter. She was supported in taking the case upto the High Court. Later a mediation was undertaken with her husband and she has now reconciled of her own will and is pregnant with another child.

One survivor talked about her pre-marital relations with her husband and being pregnant at the time of marriage. Her mother in law threw her out of the home. 'KMVS convinced my mother in law and they now take care of me, take me to the hospital and even don't let me do any work at home'.





**Another said:** 'My father in law had thrown me out of the house and taken away my child. Consistent support by KMVS for 4 months has enabled me to have custody of my child and I work as well. I support other women with information about the helpline'.

'I did not bear a child post marriage and was called names – Banjini. Medical tests showed that my husband had problems, but I was being blamed. KMVS counselled me and the family and they have stopped harassing me mentally. I tried initially to consume some poison, my life got saved with great difficulty. Not many women have that luck. Justice is not an easy process, though I got it with support of KMVS. I have little more confidence, however I still live with fear'.

By getting support, I speak up and sometime tell my husband: 'If you torture me, I shall go to the police. I can assert myself now. My husband was very upset that I took support from KMVS. He stopped giving me money and also refused sexual relations. My brother in law wanted to take advantage of me. But I pursued the case with KMVS'.

'I am dalit poor woman and harassed by my in-law's family. Wanted my streedhan. And a local lawyer who is also the sarpanch was not in my favour. With the help of KMVS, mediation centre and helpline I got to know my legal rights and demanded them. My fear has reduced, and I travel alone and also support other cases. They also helped me in getting custody of my daughter'.

'I was married at 14, I was to go after 5 years but my in-laws insisted I come to their home against the socially established norms. My husband drank a lot and beat me. KMVS supported me and called the rest of the family, who did not turn up. I have now got my streedhan back by persuading my in-laws and telling them about my legal rights. I got support from my parents as they did wrong. I now refer cases to the safety centre'.

'I was married for 5 years and then widowed and came back to my parents. I got support from the Safety centre Anjar for return of my streedhan'.

It can be seen from all the testimonies above, that the work of KMVS is remarkable. They have been able to restore women's lives and support them in gaining self-confidence and taking decisions themselves. Their counselling, training, healing processes are high in quality and methodology. However, there is a cost they and PLs pay, in terms of threats from survivor's families, FIRs lodged against them, and they still continue pursuing the case to support women survivors. Besides, they need to continually maintain working relations with police and others, to keep the relationships functional and responsive. It has also been noted that PLs and team members also need safety plans for themselves and address their burn out stress issues. KMVS has recently started providing mental health services to their staff/community post-Covid period. It is an area that needs more investment. Other suggestions include upgrade technology and creating platforms, an app for easy access to services, an online learning, monitoring and support system.

#### 3.3 Interviews with KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

**3.3.1** In the interview with Chiragbhai of the District Court, the feedback was very positive. He affirmed the strong working relations with KMVS since 2011 and is committed to supporting them through the DLSA platform on legal services. He referred to their work in 2 courts and their support to women victims and women prisoners as well the support from the PLs and legal literacy camps held in the communities. He was clear that DLSA benefitted from KMVS's outreach work, commitment and close relations with the community. He spoke about the prevention work through campaigns on legal awareness with youth, schools, communities at the grassroots, etc. and that DLSA attends events, melas, camps planned by KMVS.

The approach of KMVS of being neutral and listening to both/all sides in every case has yielded good results. He also said some of the PLs are good, and work with the DLSA on an honorarium basis. Special efforts by KMVS on preventing early marriages has been effective and their staff members have played a key role of being amicus curie to the court on some of these issues. KMVS also has undertaken trainings for judicial officers, including in other states with the advice of DLSA.

He specifically mentioned the high profile case where girls were discriminated by the residential school system/management for being excluded due to their menstruation cycles, and found the support given by KMVS very useful. He also suggested that KMVS scale up and reach the community more widely, given that there are conservative practices that need to be addressed and the need to work with gate keepers and influencers. That women need to be supported and look at all aspects of empowerment, choice, voice, agency.

3.3.2 In the interview with Rajlakshmiben (Police): she said that the Mahila PS was started in 2010 and soon after the Hello Sakhi program was launched in May 2010. She has worked closely with them as this was helpline of one of its kind in Kutch and has been very effective. KMVS has been able to advertise it widely as they work with several communities and in several areas. There is no such village she felt that does not know about the helpline. She also shared that though recently the 181 helpline has been started, it has only one dedicated vehicle and limited outreach, and only two mahila thanas in East and West Kutch. The HS helpline counsellors are more easily accessible to the community/victims. She was concerned about the rising cases of VAW and increase during the lockdown. She continues to support them even though she is posted elsewhere.

She said that KMVS is far ahead of its time and has set many precedents in the district having been around for 30 years. She was keen that value based education be given to become good citizens, and keep the youth engaged productively.

**3.3.3 Interview with the Advocate of KMVS:** He shared about key cases that come to KMVS for legal support, most of them being DV cases, followed by cases of sexual assault, divorce, property rights, and so on. KMVS's approach is to counselling processes is to ensure that both parties are spoken to, and counselled and follow up actions are based on the directions and consent of the survivor. They also work to build a neutral space so as to influence the mindsets of families and ensure they support their daughters/others. They have found that mediation process does not always work and women need to pursue their cases via the informal justice or formal legal system. The informal systems demand a lot of money, for e.g. for divorce cases the caste panchayat demands for Rs. 25,000-50,000. The KMVS Safety Centres make no monetary demands, and ensures that women gets their maintenance, property and other rights.

He felt that most women are not aware of their legal rights, and there is need to educate them, and assist them to get interim relief and shelter, if needed. The emphasis of KMVS's work on women's economic rights is crucial. The PL system created by KMVS is extraordinary. He shared a recent case about how a woman PL did an entire case with support online from him and KMVS, with regard to the abduction of a young woman in the community. The worse thing is, that in turn, she faced a backlash from the family as they have filed a case against her in retaliation. Such steps need to be monitored.

There is need for far more numbers of PLs, as the demand for responding to women/girls is increasing. The state infrastructure support is rather limited, with few Protection Officers. A family court is also needed in every district. There is also just

one One Stop Centre in Bhuj, and there is need for more shelter homes. He also feels that the Safety Centres need to be expanded to 9-10 Talukasmore. And the need to strengthen the PL Networks to work closely with the system, other service providers and the community so that justice can be achieved.

## 3.4 Good Practice I:The Architecture of Support Services to end Violence against Women/Girlsand Advance Safety

KMVS has initiated several services over the decade to address the safety of women/girls. These include referral and counselling services via the helpline, legal counselling and psycho social support, linkages with para legal workers to support and accompany women through various stages of the case and partnerships with the Police, DLSA, health agencies/hospitals, Shelters, One Stop Centres, Advocates, Community leaders to provide relief to women/girl survivors of violence. It would be interesting to see the framework it operates in.

### 1. FRAMEWORK

KMVS has built strong linkages between prevention, education and outreach, building institutionalized services and access to justice for survivors, and working to transform mindsets and social norms. These can be captured in the following framework(adapted from: Loise, Ellesberg)that is multi-sectoral and multi-layered in nature, and reaches out to multiple constituencies.

- **a)** At the individual level, the project works with women survivors, girls/youth, students, women workers, sex workers, EWRs, to build their awareness and understanding of gender discrimination and safety, that enables them to access education, livelihoods, awareness of self and bodily integrity, and exercise their choices, freedoms, and assert their rights specifically to safety at all times.
- **b)** At the second level, the project works with women's/girl's families, other members to bring about changes in the way they view and position the role and status of girls/women in society. They reach out to them to address cases that may be registered by the girls and women in their families. It simultaneously includes sensitizing service providers and partnering them local police, help-line providers, trained para-legal workers, lawyers, mental health specialists, to support victims of violence and in the process shifting the gendered norms that underpin the violence.
- **c)** At the community level, the project engages with local communities, youth, including caste-based communities, social influencers (traditional leaders and their systems), self-help collectives and their federations, in building safety within community

institutions, reflecting upon behaviours that are regressive, gender unequal and make changes to restore equality and dignity to girls/women, and change gendered work/roles within families.

**d)** At the structural level, the project works with the government agencies, district administration, helpline system, legal cells, governance institutions, panchayats, colleges, industry, policy bodies to, prevent and tackle sexual and gender-based violence through putting institutional mechanisms in place and supporting cases of violence.

### 2. KNOWLEDGE AND DATA MANAGEMENT

- a) KMVS has addressed the following forms of violence in the last five years: domestic violence, sexual harassment, crimes in the name of honour, forced and/or early marriages, child sexual abuse, cyber-crimes, property related issues, missing children/women, kidnapping, entitlements to schemes, and others. For instance, over the decade KMVS has noted that it has handled more than 11,000 cases. They have also found that the highest numbers of cases are that of domestic violence, sexual assault/rape and child sexual abuse, etc. They have also found that more cases are registered with KMVS than with the police, and estimate that only 25% of the DV cases get reported. Further they also track the economic value of the support they provide in women accessing entitlements (widow pensions, land rights, marital and other assets), equivalent to the value of Rs. 61,34,600 (in the period 2018-19), indicating an improvement in women's economic status.
- **b)** KMVS gathers systematic data regarding who refers these cases, and disaggregates them by the nature of support provided. Further, they disaggregate data by community/other identities of the survivor (SC, ST, OBCs, Muslim, General community), and enables them to track where more intense and additional support is needed, such they can refine their intervention plans. This also informs them about the community practices.
- **c)** KMVS prepares case studies and testimonies of survivors to use for educational and other purposes.
- **d)** Undertakes major campaigns on the issue of safety in communities, villages and creates safer spaces for communities to report and reach their safety centres. It tracks the referral data that emerges post campaigns as well.

#### 3. COMMUNICATIONS AND MIS

Since 2018, KMVS has been using a mobile technology with a voice messaging platform to generate legal literacy messages and public sensitization messages to prevent gender based violence. KMVS also maintains regular MIS, documentation and a data tracking system of cases with disaggregated data analysis. This enables them to monitor any surge in any one form/incident of violence in a particular geographic area or within a certain community, enabling them to respond immediately and/or bring to the attention of the government agencies, if needed. Recently, KMVS has also developed an app named 'Sankal-app', that enables easy case tracking and identification and strengthens monitoring processes. It will soon be launched.

#### 4. SERVICE

- **Helpline Hello Sakhi** (HS) was initiated in 2010 as a joint initiative with the Kutch police with a formal order of partnership in place. This is a unique partnership and all calls are recorded by the police. The KMVS helpline workers possess a special ID card legitimizing their role and functions. The protocols are in place to guide the team.
- **Safety Centres:** KMVS has established 5 Women's Safety centres at the block level covering key areas of the Kutch district, ensuring wide outreach to the most marginalised. These centres provide an important space for women and youth to meet, discuss, plan strategies and support work.
- Para-Legal Cadres: Importantly, the HS team is an institutionalized link to the community and is supported by a cadre of 30-40 core team of Para legal workers (PLs) who are trained and certified by the KMVS team. The 719\* cadres of PLs and volunteers play an important extension role in linking cases to the safety centres and reporting to the helpline. They undertake campaigns at local/cluster levels to reach out widely to many more women.
  - **a).** The PLs undertake systematic trainings and learn about counselling, and build perspectives on the structural dimensions of violence.KMVS has developed substantive modules and materials and facilitated exposure trips for PLs, covering various dimensions of women's rights and constitutional guarantees, legal frameworks, and counselling skills. They are also trained to be neutral and unbiased in their approach, talk to all concerned parties and engage with cases professionally.
  - **b).** Paralegal volunteers have also been appointed at district levels on children's issues and attend to grave cases of sexual abuse of minors. Some PLs themselves have been survivors of violence and have received enormous support from KMVS, and feel highly motivated in reaching out to others.

- **c.)** The DLSAs have certified some of the PLCs further to work on its behalf as frontline support workers. For such cases, they earn Rs. 250/day. Some of them are also chosen for a stipend to provide ongoing services upto Rs. 40,000/.
- **d.)** Besides case workPLcadres also address demands for access to entitlements, certificates, identity cards, scholarships for children, pensions and other government schemes. Both KMVS and PLs deal with a wide range of cases, largely covering domestic violence, sexual violence, POCSO cases and sexual harassment cases by being on ICCs.

### 5. PARTNERSHIPS

- Key linkages have been established across the services, helplines, 5 safety centres and district agencies at the block and cluster levels. This ensures effective working relations with local bodies DLSA, women's police cell and helplines (181 and 1098). As well as convergent platform is built across para legals, local community groups, lawyers, counsellors and others leading to effective work to prevent violence, as well strengthen women's access to justice, based on her requirements.
- Through campaigns and awareness raising processes, key stakeholders are identified as
  catalysts of change from within the community and that has given good results. They play
  an important role in communicating to their families and making change.
- This has also led to gender sensitization efforts within the panchayat and community institutions, that has led to women bringing up the issue of violence at the meetings, as well as becoming members of the informal justice committees.
- KMVS's competence and expertise gets recognised and a network of organisations invites
  it to be on their POSH Committees. They also give expert advice and play the role of an
  amicus curie to the District Court on some cases. DLSA invites them to train judicial
  officers in other parts of the country.
- During the lockdown period, more women approached KMVS helpline than the police. Police records reported 58 cases of crimes against girls/women in the first month of lockdown (March 2020), while the HS helpline recorded 170 cases in the same period. This also brought to their attention the vulnerability of young women as 60% of the complaints were from the age group 18-30 years. Given these surging numbers KMVS ensured that the helpline functioned through the lockdown period and a working relationship was maintained with the police, Women and Child Development, and Health and other Departments, and also an effective coordination between the different helplines (e.g. between 1098 and 181 and the Hello Sakhi helpline).

### **Emerging Challenges being faced:**

- As Government institutes new services such as the Abhyan Helpline 181 that runs 24x7, there are challenges on how best to harmonise between these two helplines. KMVS is in the process of restructuring its HS helpline to work at the safety centre level. However, the 181 doesn't yet have adequate infrastructure in place, so the complementary role still gets played.
- While there is a concerted focus on supporting survivors, the work with respondents/ perpetrators needs to be further developed, so that a process of change can be sustained and social norms impacted. This is being done through educational work in communities, schools and colleges.
- PLs and KMVS staff experience backlash and resistance, and there is need for some strategies to secure their protection and handle the cases that are filed against them.
- Ensuring capacities of the PL cadres get consistently upgraded regularly, and they are given intensive mentoring, and oversight, including mental health support for burn out/stress.
- Devising plans to supporting government's new schemes such as the one stop crisis centre
  with training inputs and technical support, so they can be more effective and bring about
  convergence across all services.
- Ensuring that the most vulnerable are reached out to migrant woman wives, workers, women from stigmatised and caste based communities – this will require a larger infrastructure and personnel in place with more centres and services at a de-centralised level.



# 4. Engaging with Caste based Communities on Pluralistic Cultures:

#### • 4.1 Context:

This is an area of work that KMVS has been engaging with knowing the many challenges that they face in regard to transforming mindset and reversing community based discriminatory cultural norms and practices. The intense work, particularly with the Devi Poojak, Koli, Rabari and Jat communities, highlight the fact, that it has been a gradual, slow process - of building trust, opening spaces for dialogues, reflecting on some issues raised and creating space for community leaders to assert their voice.

Initial work required getting to know the community, their practices, thoughts, informal justice systems to find meaningful ways to engage with them. It also meant engaging with women and youth from these communities and enabling them to look at gender-sensitive options and understand the framework of constitutional and legal framework.

Sensitization and trainings on legal rights and issues have been undertaken over time. KMVS has recently initiated a documentation of the Garasiya Jat community to understand their origins, roots, traditional justice practices, and so on. They have had discussions on choices of young peoplewith regard to their marriages, the levying of high fines for divorce, access to education and mobility, the freedom to dress for girls, and so on. In particular, they noted in their mapping process,that in 10 families, the wives had come via migration from West Bengal, and were not well-accepted as daughters-in law. This thus provided them with a window to reach out to these women to support them.

KMVS has been working with more than 45 community leaders across the communities. As a result in 2019, the Devi Poojak Community, having gained insights and understanding about critical issues facing women and girls, has initiated its own Safety Centre - '*Takrar Nivaran Centre*', thereby demonstrating a high ownership and a political will to sustain change, and it is run by 3 boys and girls, which in itself is a huge step.

During the period of the lockdown, KMVS continued providing support to the communities over phone or held meetings at their office (Sept. '20 report). The DP communitysafety centre that had shut down during the lockdown phase re-opened in September. They addressed 12 cases, 4 of which were solved by community leaders, 2 were property related and 1 was solved within the community itself and another taken to court. The Committee was proactive in filling out all required basic information reports for each case, held counseling sessions, and then reached out to KMVS once the mediation documents were prepared. They have learnt how to take the initial steps in case resolution by themselves.

#### • 4.2 Data and Voices:

The insights gathered through the questionnaire, interviews and reports indicated that women because of their gender identity experienced violence, especially from more vulnerable communities.

In terms of how they visualized women's safety, they echoed a similar thinking to that of KMVS. 'That safety should be seen in more than one dimension: economic, social and bodily integrity; within the home and outside too'.

Others said: 'That girls and women should suffer no pressure from either their peers or families. They wish to live a life with dignity and feel secure about themselves. They need an environment where they can speak out freely, without hesitation'.

They also said that: 'Girls and women should be able to do whatever they wish to do. They need a safe space to speak and talk. They should feel a sense of confidence, and no one dare look at them or harass them'.

One male member said: 'I let my daughter and daughter-in-law dress the way they wish, even though our Samaj doesn't permit such choices. Women need to be empowered to make these changes'.

Another male member shared: 'Women should take the lead, and we shall support them. We need to mobilise more women for justice and support. We shall stand for the truth and support the right path'.

A woman respondent: 'Earlier my husband did not let me go out of the house. But I insisted and went off with my child. He has now accepted this and I feel no fear'.

Interesting thoughts of one male member was:  $My\ wife\ is\ myEqual\ partner$ ,  $Hum\ Safar$ '.

It is quite obvious that the community vision of this select group has become progressive, and they are not shy of saying that, as men they have changed their way of thinking, and are ready to take the comments that may come their way from conservative people in their community. What is significant is that women have learnt to negotiate and build their self-confidence and question the restrictions on them.

Amongst the critical barriers girls/women face is around victim-blaming: they are held responsible for inviting violence against them. A woman respondent from the Koli community said, 'They are always blamed as they are powerless and women also do not feel safe in the outside environment'. This is an issue where women have to negotiate for their rights in both the public and private domains.

What was gathered from the discussions was that there is need for sustained work to be done across the diverse communities. The men emphasized the centrality of reaching youth with messages on equality, safety and respect: 'When women/girls are safe, society will progress. Men need to organise and take collective actions in the community'. He put the focus of collective change on men.

A male member from the Devipoojak Samaj said: 'We need to empower women/girls. We have opened a community centre. There is need for justice and space for women in the household as well'. He emphasized that women need to be empowered. Thus we can see the reflections of the twin strategies that KMVS deploys to create an even and fair ground for dialogue and change.

#### • 4.3 Redress Mechanisms:

KMVS has played a very important role and the community leaders now reach out to them for any problems they face. This is true across all communities (SC, ST, Minority, OBCs). They have enormous faith and trust in KMVS, find them very helpful and also take support from the police and families.

What also stood out is the role that community leaders play in undertaking bystander interventions: One community leader (male) saw a woman at the bus stand who was badly beaten up and thrown out by her husband. She had no money to go to her parents' home. He referred her to the KMVS helpline. A few days later when she saw him, she was grateful for the support by KMVS, and they had counselled her husband and he has stopped drinking since.

Some male leaders intervene in cases, where men drink and create problems. They focus on the need to take men along in changing mindsets and building confidence on women's safety issues within the community. Others have talked about the need for better response systems - better policing, effective redress mechanisms, better access to justice and empowerment.

The DP community has initiated processes to educate its members to end child marriages, and have made submissions to the Collector to stop alcohol-brewing in their areas. They work

closely with the para legal workers of KMVS, other community members and police to stop child trafficking and in two cases have helped re-unite the girls with their families.



#### • 4.4 Key Strategies:

Some men felt that the family is largely responsible for ensuring safety at home. The Nyaya Panch members charge a lot of money for conflict resolution and mediation cases, take time and some people feel they have not got justice. In these circumstance, the KMVS Centre is far more effective, and these has led to the traditional leaders feeling envious as they seem to have lost some power and money. The Nyaya Panchayat now has a few women representatives and they have broken new ground as a result.

The men were happy with the counselling and perspective building sessions of KMVS. They said they would not like to make a distinction between boys and girls. However, changing social norms is not easy and they have to deal with the resistance from others in the community.

The Devi Poojak community has for the first time included women into their Organizing Committee for their community functions. They have changed some norms, such as in case of marital disputes, the woman was not earlier allowed to be present in person when the Gyati Panch (caste leaders) met, is now permitted and the panchayatlistens to both parties. Further, the Sata tradition (traditional system of marrying a brother-sister duo to into the same family), that led to huge numbers of divorce cases, has been stopped. They have also noted that many young girls are saying 'No' to forced marriages.

The Rabaricommunity too, has been working on resetting their norms - against child marriage, dowry, traditional customs that forces girls' parents to purchase gold, making revisions in the system of divorce, alimony, etc. Their Panch leaders have committed to abiding by the new rules/norms, and have been levying penalties on families that do not follow so.

Another male community leader shared that a year ago, a young girl became an engineer, and they feel proud about her breaking the gender stereotype that will in turn impact another 100 girls down the line. He also shared an example of intervening in a marriage case, where a young girl wished to continue her studies, they approached the boys' family to not agree to the marriage as well convinced the natal family. This shows that pre-emptive strategies via persuasion and dialogue can play an important role and one does not have to take recourse to legal steps alone.

Women underlined the importance of education for youth and need to work across generations. One woman leader organised 8-10 women and held 7-8 meetings at the KMVS office to collectivise and support each other. The community has also conducted safety mapping and audits by young people, and advocated for street lights, removal of dark spots, demanded increased patrolling by the police to stem street harassment and other crimes.

KMVS has been reaching out widely to all communities, through trainings, exposure visits, and mobilising support from relevant government services. They have unequivocally promoted values of equality, against any form of caste, gender, ethnic discrimination and promoted peaceful co-living.

In the group discussions, participants said: 'Change needs to come from within. Each of us needs to translate them into everyday life'. Focus on boys helping within the households, joint property rights and assets for women, take away fears that girls feel, teach girls how to negotiate for their rights, especially post marriage, support widows, disabled and single women, work on equal citizenship for all, build skills for employment, take inputs from elderly people, and bring about more awareness.

They also underscored that whatsapp groups were helpful during the lockdown period and they could continue using them for other purposes. The DP community undertook a survey during the lockdown and a skill mapping which would help them plan their strategies moving forward. They are advocating for NREGA in urban areas. One woman leader said that she had filled out forms for 7 widows and had accompanied 4 cases to the Anjar Counselling Centre. And she has intensely engaged with the community for the last two and half years, on building a vision of a good society.

However, some women expressed concerns about the slow pace of change and the need for all homes to be safe primarily. They said more needed to be done to stop forced/early marriages for girls and support their choices and freedoms. They were aware that girls /women suffer character assassination, when they speak up and only a collective process will make them stronger.

The community in Anjar is also considering setting up a counselling centre to support young girls and women.

# 4. a) Emerging Practice 2: Sensitising and generating dialogue with Caste based Communities on Cultures of Safety:

#### • The Lens of Change

Patriarchy, caste and gender discrimination are deeply entrenched in mindsets of people and communities in our country. Along with misogyny and everyday sexism, there is ineffective implementation of laws on gender equality and unequal distribution of resources and opportunities, that result in gender wage gaps, no say in personal choices and the large burden of care work on girls/women. In the post pandemic period, the structural inequalities have been starkly highlighted. Despite legal reforms and stricter laws, crimes against women have not gone down. It is well known that laws alone do not bring about change, it requires an attitudinal shift, within the homes and society to ensure that women's right to dignity, respect, equality and justice are ensured across all spheres of life.

• Besides in Kutch, despite the interdependencies among communities, there is increasing polarization and divisions along multiple axes of religion, caste, class, location. This has resulted in young people being forced to stay within the confines of their caste and not to marry or love across these boundaries, in order to hold on to caste/religious based superiority. The othering of communities has now become a political issue and is deeply embedded in dominant societal values. The state has advanced its political agenda through projects such as, the 'Love Jihad', and way back in 2015, some inter-faith marriages have created tension in Bhuj. The Tanishq showroom in Gandhidham town of Kutch district in October 2020, was forced to paste an apology on its front door for the advertisement it ran, and was accused of promoting "love jihad", forcing the company to withdraw its advertisement<sup>20</sup>. There have been other incidents of 'othering and stigmatising' of the outsider, the migrants, the minorities, the women who come in marriage across the borders of Kutch from West Bengal, the sex workers, and so on.

KMVS sees change being made not just in the big picture but in the everyday practice of life at home. If families take small steps in creating a gender-just environment for their girls, by changing gender role divisions and demonstrate how girls are valued and treated as equals, that in itself will have a huge impact. The seeds of change have to be planted on a sustained basis through messaging, communications, campaigns, dialogues, and other such.

Education as a strategy for behaviour change at the grassroots level is a powerful medium, and this can best be done with community leaders, women and youth who can take on the mantle of change and set examples for others to follow. This requires an ability to take risks, to be bold, to stay calm in the face of resistance, and to build a core group of support around you. Down the line it opens up spaces for the young people to talk to their families on on gender, sexuality, menstruation and equal rights. One can see in the data gathered through the questionnaires, that the adolescent girls show most faith in their family members and therefore need an environment of care and respect. The men too talked about making changes; women leaders associated with KMVS have already embarked on making the change, as has been mentioned in some voices in the report. They have initiated cross-community dialogues and analysis of how structural exclusion, technology, industrialization and other factors impact on community relations and women's safety. KMVS has effectively used media and communications tools such as magazines, radio programmes (aired by AIR), video series, skits, voice message feedback as part of their outreach toolkit. This has been well received and mobilized the involvement of the community at scale.

#### • Change Building rapport with Communities:

In order for KMVS to be effective in this domain of work, they have reached out to the Devi Poojak community and later to the Koli, Garasiya Jat, and Rabari communities. Initially in

 $<sup>^{20}</sup> https://www.deccanherald.com/national/tanishq-showroom-in-gujarat-forced-to-write-apology-over-its-alleged-love-iihad-ad-901820.html$ 

2015-16, they have undertaken studies to understand the background, occupation, profiles and practices of the communities. A booklet on the Devi Poojak community has been prepared. Another study on the Rabari and Jat community is underway. They also engaged with understanding the working of the local jati panch and the traditional systems of mediation.

Their process of engagement includes building trust, dialoguing, negotiating, creating a core group of leaders among women, men, youth, and reaching out to gatekeepers and others. In advancing its safety agenda, KMVS is aware of both the challenges and the opportunities. They have unpacked the deep seated gender discriminatory norms and sensitized the influential members of caste based communities on gender issues. Alongside they have mobilized girls, young people and women from these communities. The women leaders from Sakhi-Sangini network and women's sangathans in other blocks of Kutch have been crucial allies in the initial efforts to reach out to communities. Many women leaders were themselves influential leaders and supported the young people.

## • Key Achievements:

KMVS has reached out to men and women leaders in these communities to deepen their understanding of safety concerns of women and girls through awareness raising and training processes. Despite there being a formal legal system in place, the leaders of the informal (Gyati panch/caste leaders) exert much influence on women ascaste panchayats follow castebased social norms, rules, religious values and settle conflicts among their own members. The panchayats impose penalties in the form of monetary fines while adjudicating cases. This is also being questioned by many as it seen to be a money making process rather than one dispensing justice.

- KMVS has been able to build informal cadres of youth, women and support groups in these communities. They have encouraged young women to lead their lives without fear of violence. They have provided trainings in non-traditional economic domains such as becoming auto-drivers.
- These is greater awareness about the underpinnings of inequalities and discrimination and their impacts on marginalized communities. With knowledge and confidence building measures from KMVS, some women/girls have asserted their rights and claims. They have learnt to negotiate their voice in decision making within the family.KMVS has convened public hearings and symposiums across panchayats, community leaders and caste leaders from the Koli, Muslim, Dhebariya Rabari, Machhoya Ahir castes, etc. Hearing stories of young women survivors of child marriages has moved the community

- Some communities have re-defined their norms with an equality lens, and followed the framework of constitutional rights. This has been with regard to age of marriage for girls, in the *Devi Poojak* community. The community has also intervened in cases of early marriage and persuaded both parties to delay marriages to enable girls to study. The *Rabari* community has prepared a new set of norms against child marriage, dowry, traditional customs that force girls' parents to purchase gold, revisions in the system of divorce, alimony, etc. Their panch leaders have also committed to abiding by the new rules and have been levying penalties on families that do not follow it. Most importantly, in the Koli community, they have formed another resolution and justice committee, with 3 men and 3 women as members for mediation and support. They have handled 28 cases so far and are also reviewing how to reduce the fines being levied. What is interesting is the counsel they take from elderly members, so no one feels left out and it enables build an intergenerational process. 50 caste leaders of Dhebariya Rabari community from 4 villages in Anjar have also supported campaigns against early marriage and also provided support to PCMCA officers in preventing the same.
- KMVS is working to build a pluralistic culture acknowledging diversity and differences among communities and how to respect oneself and equally give respect to others. They have raised issues of prejudice, segregation and caste and religious discrimination faced by Dalits, Muslims and other minority communities. They have had conversations about building bridges and trumping over narrow definitions based on caste and other identities. A student in Kotda Ugmna school said: 'We are often told to make friends from our caste only, so we rarely have friends who are not from our caste'.
- Engaging with youth from the communities mentioned above, has yielded some positive initial results. The core group of youth has been actively engaged in ensuring relief measures during the lockdown phase to the most marginalized communities. They have supported more than 200 women in accessing benefits and schemes. They also supported 17 women members who faced violence through referrals and support. A core group of 70 members has been formed in Bachchau and Anjar Blocks.
- The Devipoojak community have now started a counseling center in their area and they are now being trained to handle counseling and dispute resolution within the community. They are now considered role models for other communities to follow. The Jat and Koli community are also envisaging their plans to independently solve their problems. The participation of community leaders and youth is entirely voluntary and not a funded effort of KMVS. During the lockdown process they handled 12 cases independently of KMVS.

#### Challenges:

~ Despite the massive awareness and norm changes, data from KMVS's case work at the safety centres, indicate an increase in violence within homes. There have also been

cases of gang rape incidents in the past two years. This results in a backlash on girls/women and immediately impacts upon her mobility, freedom and pressures to be married off early. Thus ongoing intensive work is needed with individual families and not just with the victim/survivor. At a larger level, this also means more intense work with community leaders across the spectrum to build a culture of respect, and also ensure that a process of deterrence is put into place and reporting of violence encouraged, rather than silenced. The complicity of family members needs to be brought out in the open.

~ Sustaining dialogues and ensuring that no backlash takes place, is another challenge faced by KMVS and team. This challenge is best met with the fact that investments in local leadership and cadre-building is among the only answer for long term sustainable change, along with educational efforts and ensuring legal compliance by the Kutch Administration and KMVS

## • Key Insights:

KMVS has learnt that changing mindsets is a long term process and requires continuous deep engagement and association. That investment in leadership building of the young members across the communities is the only way towards aspiring for the longer term change. This will require building and maintaining mutual trust and respect, combined with a deeper understanding of other socio-political factors that impinge upon community autonomy and decision making. KMVS as a learning organisation, requires a tenacity and will power, to negotiate and build upon this process, knowing that it is time consuming, has huge risks and threats to their staff and PLs, but that which will draw results in the long term.



## 5. Work with Urban Poor Communities

#### 5.1 Female Sex Workers:

KMVS started its work with FSWs in 2016. It started the drop in centre for FSWs in April 2018, and created space for them to meet, collectivise and be together. They undertook door-to-door visits to let the community know about such a centre. Health check-ups, distribution of condoms (over 7,000 to 108 women in 2018-19), trainings and referrals to other state organisations and others were undertaken. Eight women were chosen to form a leadership committee with training inputs on safe working conditions and safety along with exposure visits to take forward their issues. **Thus far more than 132 sex workers have been reached out to and are engaged with the programme.** 

**Safety of FSWs:** In discussions and questionnaires some FSWs shared that **Safety implies:** 'Where there are special facilities for all women and girls, then only she will feel safe. She should also get access to all kinds of security (entitlements)'.

Another said: 'A vision of an equal society is needed and society should respect people's choices'.

They raised questions about equality and dignity. And about why women should be tied up in society's social norms? That it is important to them to be recognised as Sex Workers in society. That there should be no exploitation and violence on them. They said they suffer from stress, health risks and other forms of stigmatisation and discrimination as sex workers. They also expressed dismay at being called shameless women. They are primary bread earners in their families and have an important role to secure the safety needs of their families. They talked about their need for housing.

Some of the major interventions initiated by KMVS in the period 2016-18 were: a drop in centre for the FSWs. Partnership with the government health departments for condom use and check-ups, and publishing an interesting study with IRMA on Female workers in the unorganised sector in Bhuj.

**Strategies:** In terms of strategies, they were happy to note that the drop in centre worked well and that there is need for much wider outreach to other sex workers. They also need consistent counselling and trainings for growth and support. As it is, it is hard to disclose their work to their families, communities, as there is fear of stigmatization and that sensitization about their rights an identity is much needed. And they talked about police harassing them for money earlier, but now they were able to negotiate better.

They also shared the need for FSWs to demonstrate leadership, attend to their health needs, build confidence and competencies. They were tired of the government and other agencies seeing them as a health risk and they need more than health care support in their lives.

There is need for transforming the discourse, and to communicate that 'No work is small or big'. Rights literacy among sex workers is crucially needed.

Some of them shared that they have organised themselves into support groups, and have taken trainings. Earlier they experienced a greater degree of stigmatisation and discrimination but through these trainings and exposures they have built their self-esteem, self-confidence and felt less lonely as they have peers. Their sense of fear has also reduced and they have now reclaimed their voice and raise their concerns in society. They expressed the need for a stronger institution for FSWs and that they give support to others. They were concerned about their livelihoods which has suffered in the context of the Covid pandemic and have taken up new work, such as vegetable vending, selling, etc. to cope with the loss of earnings.

They were very clear that no child trafficking should take place and that girls should be married post 18 years of age, and if any of them wishes to opt for sex work, it should be as an adult, post 18 years.

KMVS has provided support by linking them to the Kutch positive peoples' network, and support to organising them in SHGs and integrating them through the federation of Sakhi Sangini. Some FSWs have formed their own SHGs, others have joined existing SHGs. They have also been mentored by VAMP and the Sangli collective in promoting the rights and networking of FSWs.

#### 5.2 Work with SHGs and Federations:

The *Sakhi Sangini* is a Federation of SHGs working in 52 areas of Bhuj, there are close to 209 groups with 3150 members since 2008, and they were formally registered in 2013. In 2018-19, they had collected total savings of Rs. 2,911,300 and they have disbursed loans close to Rs.52 lakhs to 1500 women. Some members were also supported through interest free loans for their business enterprises and other needs. The group has also been supported in the urban areas to address the negative impacts of firewood fuels on women's health and the climate change at large. They have been connected to the Ujjwala gas scheme of the government and also encouraged to re-use plastics and reduce their use.

Over time, in 2017 KMVS institutionalised the concept of safety within the collectives. This has meant a strategic shift from being a response mechanism to creating a safe environment. Thus the helplines and safety centres were upscaled. The centres operate with a counsellor, operator and a panel of lawyers and undertake trainings and information campaigns. They are effectively supported by Gramshasini. Besides Sakhi Sanghthan addresses issues of violence within their caste domains, especially related to unnatural deaths and sexual abuse.

**Safety Issues:** Many members shared that **Safety means:** The need to raise their issues with the government about their rights, particularly right to housing and assets, (mallikiyat) and that would lead to greater safety. Women must have a house in their names and be autonomous and independent. They must live a life of their choice.

They shared that it was crucial to educate and empower women/girls and build stronger SHG collectives. They need economic rights and freedom, so they can be free from debts and other matters. They also talked about having access to mobile phones to keep themselves safe, the need to build their self-confidence and enjoy mobility without any sanctions.

It was interesting that they made a link across all forms of insecurities – food security, bodily integrity, assets including housing in their names, and autonomy of decision making.

One of the members said: 'Where there is low infrastructure women are insecure: need better street lights, patrolling, eliminating dark spots and building better infrastructure of support'.

Some questions that they raised was also in regard to why were boys not being trained to do domestic chores. And also that men had more leisure time than them. They were clear that unless one walked the talk, change would not come. And they also shared the risks they faced in the context of Covid and how they have to take care of their families, given the reliance on public services of water and sanitation. They also referred to the need to breach the social norms and bring change on perceptions of safety and rights for women/girls.

**Strategies and Services:** Of further importance to the SHG members was the need to ensure they enjoy their citizenship rights and build their awareness, assets, and self-confidence.

One of them talked about the need to continue to struggle, protest, and strengthen their slum collectives with women in the lead. 'I manage the anganwadi and reach out information to the community, attend to pregnant women, children on nutrition, menstruation, and build awareness. We share all the information we get from KMVS with the community'.

'We are now ensuring development schemes come to the village, such as the PM Avaz Yojana, ensuring women part of the community panch decision making and are demanding Property rights for women'.

One of the women members shared that she is on the board of Sakhi Sangini. She also works in the bank and mobilises women to pay back loans, etc.

Another shared that she was studying when she got married and persuaded her in-laws to complete her education. She has also taken a loan from the Mandal and is paying it back now. Yet another talked about how through education and trainings the SHG collectives can

transform their lives. She is a member of the School Management Committee (SMC) and ensures that she remains active and undertakes her due diligence. Another member talked about helping women get their entitlements from the state, such as widow pensions, Jan Dhan, and other interest free loans, etc. She sells clothes.

Some said that self-defense training for women and girls is needed. Over all community mindset change too is needed.

As a result of her being a member of the SHG and Sakhi Sangini, she says that her daughter has gained far more confidence and can move out alone now.

The Federation has undertaken a survey and will reach out widely to organise people, women/children and youth. The women members have accessed schemes from the government, built toilets, worked on budgets, and now need to access house titles. They believe that leadership training, safety trainings would benefit them enormously as there is need to mobilise more widely, build awareness, ensure women and girls have a right to safe mobility and end child marriages.

'I come from the Valmiki community and had studied till Class 5th when I was married off by my family. However I negotiated and have continued my studies and passed Class 12. I have also transformed the way I dress, also wear salwar suits. I have undertaken safety camps in my area. Am so glad to be in the leadership group with support from KMVS'.

The fact that in the local panch they have now considered inclusion of women so they can speak about their issues is a great step forward. 'What is needed is a simultaneous empowerment of men and the community not just women'.

They also spoke about runninga counselling centre along with the Samaj representatives. Besides addressing VAW, they feel the need to address discrimination faced by girls during menstruation and being barred from temples, kitchens, and so on. Another woman shared how she succeeded in doing an RTI and getting children into school, as well as in enlarging the SHGs from 4 to 8 groups.

Some communities have got a new school, sanitation facilities, aaganwadi, school training programmes, PDS, Ujjwala scheme and linked women to livelihoods. They have created awareness about the value of the SMCs.

A single widowed woman shared that she had educated her 8 daughters and supported the marriage of 4 of them so far. She worked hard and was keen to ensure that her girls had freedom of mobility and a voice, choice in their marriages.

Another member saved her earnings and bought a smart phone. She also convened a group for adolescents and sent her children to English medium school. These have been significant gains for her personally.

Women also talked about new ground being broken where young women have become auto (chakhda) drivers, they have been trained by Jan Vikas and more are now joining such non-stereotypical work. However, this would need some gender sensitive infrastructure for the women, access to toilets, resting place, and so on.

Challenges faced: In terms of challenges, some said that women's access to land tenure and housing rights is crucial as they are afraid of being evicted. Also community people resist when women get organised. The support by KMVS has made a huge difference to their lives and they gain strength from the process. However, sometimes getting women to come out of their homes, is also an issue. They have to reach out to in-laws and win their trust. Some have now ventured out of their villages to organise in neighbouring ones and catalyse local leaders to take forward the work in the community.

One woman leader from the Valmiki community shared that other women make comments and she faces exclusion and opposition when she organises women: 'Look at her – she's become a leader...she's going so much ahead. I have to spend so much time to convince them'.

Another leader too faced caste discrimination. She was not allowed to convene meetings. She also faced threats from the community ,as she spoke out and asked questions in the School Management Committee meeting. However women have opened their bank accounts with her assistance, accessed information and she works hard to maintain the SHGs as well as educate her children.

They also articulated the need to work more closely with local bodies on governance issues. To upgrade urban infrastructure and common services in the slum areas. There are about 14,000 families in slums, and some are migrant workers and feel insecure about informal housing. They were also concerned that migrant do not get entitlements as they have no ID cards. Some had visited the Kudumbshree program and learnt about convergence and coordinated efforts to empower women. They also wanted to learn about waste management that could be undertaken by them. The felt that women's safety needs to be everybody's agenda and their committees need to be recognised by urban local authorities and ward committees.

## 6. Women in Governance: Voices of Elected Women and Male Panchayat representatives:

KMVS initiated its work on safety with panchayats in 2016. Initially it focused on understanding the needs of women and undertaking safety audits and mapping unsafe places. In 2017, some panchayats passed resolutions on women's safety and made it an agenda of the gram sabha and mahila sabha. In 2018, they formed protection committees and close links with the HS helpline. So far KMVS has trained upto 1608 EWRs and 435 issues on

women's safety have been raised by the panchayats, 729 women have been identified in the villages to raise the issue of women's safety and campaigns on women's safety have been conducted in 407 villages. (KMVS ppt, 2020)

KMVSconducted a baseline study in 2016-18 and found that crimes against women was quite high in Eastern Kutch and decided to focus on these areas. The study also highlighted the gaps in knowledge, and the need for trainings of the EWRs and others. In another study in 2018-19, theyfound that 20% of the respondents found the home, transportation and government offices as unsafe spaces. They also raised the issue of lack of everyday amenities, access to health, education and women's safety (mainly violence due to alcoholism). Close to 99% of the respondents affirmed that panchayats should be responsible for women's safety. In the initial phases, the elected women members focused on infrastructure needs of the community, and it took time for them to begin to articulate socio-cultural issues and practices that discriminate against women.

KMVS followed up on these needs by giving extensive trainings on development and entitlement agendas including ending child marriage, dowry and other practices. Such sensitization led to 7 Panchayats agreeing



to put a stop to child marriage and to support girls. They also committed to passing resolutions and ensuring compulsory registration of marriages. Further women EWRs held Mahila Sabhas on citizenship, rights, natural resources, and other agendas. They have been raising the gender and safety lens on other agendas of the community, especially on ending violence and integrating women's perspectives into the village plans. They also wish to revive the social justice committees to address the needs of the marginalised women.

Data from the Questionnaires conducted for the evaluation, indicated that panchayat members found that *stalking*, *staring*, *violence* at home, and verbal and mental abuse were being experienced by women in their areas. They highlighted that poor lighting, poor maintenance of public spaces, crowded public transport and bus stops, schools and colleges were unsafe, besides men taking drugs/drinking in public spaces. Overall a lack of respect for women, being a worker in the public space and a community leader were additional threats to their safety.

They said that women dealt with their lack of safety by not going out at night alone, avoiding certain unsafe spaces and carrying their phones to call if needed. They also shared that KMVS and the police are the two main agencies that women go to for support. Interestingly, going to the family for support was not among their top three lists.

Some respondents shared that the Panchayat largely works on health and development issues and ignores women's safety and equality. It is crucial to mainstream this issue: 'Equality for girls and boys will result in safety'.

A male member shared: 'While there is need to change mindsets of people, where men/boys do not look at any girl with buri nazar; there is a simultaneous need for women to claim their rights, make their own decisions, and do whatever they want'.

Some women also said that they advertised the helpline numbers and go every Friday to the centre for meetings. Besides, they have put some CCTV cameras in their areas and attended to making the roads safe. They have built hospitals, water connections, sanitation facilities, burial grounds and undertaken major development works. Women and girls need to live their lives without any fear and they must keep a phone especially if they need to reach out to anyone for help.

Another member said that: 'People's minds are small (chotti soch). Women in panchayats do as much work as men and should be an integral part of decision making. There is need to advance rights of women and speak up against VAW and women's 'safety'.

Some women also shared that every taluka should have a women's collective. There is need to build an environment of safety, where women can go out alone.

A male member shared: 'There is need for working in a united manner on women's safety, and to change behaviours of men. Besides women need not feel any sense of fear and shame. There is a cricket team of boys in my village, and I asked the question - why not one for girls too. Now girls are also playing cricket. Women should have equal space and voice in all matters'.

Some of the women shared strategies that have worked for them in terms of raising concerns

at the Gram Sabha meeting. **They felt that do not have a strong platform for women as yet.** Through KMVS they get inputs about schemes, rights, projects, etc. so they can ask the right questions at the Gram Sabha meetings. They have also sought the support of the Mandal, village councils, panchayat, police, mamlatdar, local representatives, health agencies, and sakhi mandals. They also talked about economic support through the local organisation - Gram Shashini forum, and the government programme - Misha Mangalam. Some men have begun to support women's issues over time.

Among the concerns raised was the need to access technology, and secure mobile phones for all women. They also felt that girls' education is key and that will bring about change. Reaching out to more women, youth and engaging them in local governance issues would be helpful and they need continual trainings by KMVS. They also said when women raise their voice, they face some backlash and resistance, but some of us take stands and one woman shared that she did not sign the budget sheet as it was not shared with her.

One respondent said that: Women still do not speak up, and are afraid at home. It's important to know our legal rights. As women have to do all the home chores they have limited mobility. And the needs of single women, widows, vulnerable women are crucial to attend to.

Others said that they need to learn how to deal with resistance and take more trainings on governance. Key change will happen only if men support such changes.

Another talked about how women had claiming their rights. 'I raised the issue with my friend at the Mahila Sabha. And we then broke the liquor den, collectivised ourselves'.

'I am a panchayat member and call for sittings to talk about schemes for development. I have stopped the liquor business in my area and secured water connections for all. We have donors and panchayats doing work; We take legal remedies when needed. We mobilise women and have also approached religious-cultural organisations to support women's issues and girl's education'.

One woman said: 'My husband and uncle tried to push me back, as an EWR. But I got the support from KMVS and other women. It is a challenge for us to keep our leadership going. Sometimes people tell me keep your understanding with you, we don't need it here (when I go to a neighbouring village).'

Among the barriers for women is the huge care work burden on EWRs and impacts on their mobility. 'Even though my village has more freedom for women than others. It is only when more women come into elected positions, that things will change'.

Among the insights KMVS has gained over this period is that, establishing informal groups of panchayats has provided a mutual cross-learning space for other panchayats; progressive steps were being undertaken by some - gender budgeting, education of the girl child that reflected a gender responsive agenda. However, EWRs would need mentoring/assistance via a helpline (with DRDA); more meaningful safety audits need to be undertaken, checklists and guidelines need to be generated for making a village safe and Mahila Sabha agendas need to be mainstreamed within the gram sabha meetings (with the DDO).

## 7. Creating Platforms for Youth:

KMVS started working with the youth in 2016, by including them in designing training sessions, developing partnerships with schools and teachers on the importance of safety. They followed it up with conducting baseline and impact sessions of their courses so that could make content changes. They introduced thematics and created wider platforms, for knowledge exchanges - talked about growing up and adolescence, safe touch, consent, sexuality and so on. They also worked to mainstream the concepts in schools and colleges through the Panchayats reached out to the SMCs and built a cadre of youth who could be champions of change. In all they have trained 1857 youth at the village level and 9355 school children from classes 7-11 have undergone sessions on safety and rights. They also approached co-educational schools so as to talk to boys as well. They held fairs and open learning sessions to seek opinions on issues and concerns about sexual harassment and violence and the right to education.

To create learning exchange spaces for girls, nine centres were started in collaboration with the panchayat in Nakhtrana block. Through sustained work, KMVS has now mainstreamed the gender education modules with the support of DEO and DPEO in schools, and it has led to enhanced articulation of issues by children/youth. The feedback has been very encouraging and positive. Further down the line, kishori collectives were organised with young girls in-and out- of school, and centres have a library, sport equipment and a space for them to talk and build confidence and knowledge. (See more in Good Practice 3)

#### 7.1 Girl Students and Youth:

The data from the questionnaire indicates that the youth find stalking, staring, violence at home, mental and verbal abuse, street harassment as key forms of violence faced by young women. They shared that crowded transport, bus stops, poor signage, street lighting, men drinking in public, were reasons for harassment, and that women are not treated with respect, especially women within the family, and if she is from a migrant vulnerable community, then she is worse off. Interestingly the youth outlined the need for self-censorship and dress in certain ways, avoiding lonely public or crowded places, or going out alone in the dark, avoiding public transport, and carrying items/phone to protect themselves.

However, what is different from other respondents is that they prefer to go to the family first, then to others and then to KMVS in that order. The police is not a preferred option.

While undertaking a profile of 120 youth (90 girls, 30 boys) in 2018, KMVS found that the majority of girls had dropped out of school for various reasons. A core group of 25 youth has been formed and they have developed action plans. KMVS has been working with adolescents and out of school youth by training them on gender and rights sessions. They have also reached out to 200 schools in the district and partnered the District Education Office to sensitise young people on key concepts. They have set up nine kishori centres for the youth as a space for dialogue and interactions. They use creative media, case studies, newsletter - Bol and campaigns to reach out widely.

KMVS has also reached out to 7 young women who have agreed to drive a chakda and have undergone trainings. They went through a process of negotiating their roles in a non-traditional profession and breaking barriers that people have about women taking up new roles in public spaces.

~ **Key Issues:** Amongst the many issues that girls and adolescents face is that most times, she is dissuaded from reporting any violence faced by her. She is constantly told to bear it. And there is pressure from parents, who provide little or no support. In severe cases, girls/adolescents have committed suicide. The family blames her for bringing a sense of shame and that if society gets to know about her case, no one would marry the young woman in future. Therefore not more that 50% complain, said one respondent.

Essentially victim blaming, threats and re-victimisation has been their experience. They also face character assassination on social media, and in the community by the perpetrators, and being left alone to fend for herself. In one of the cases they recalled, that a younger woman who complained about harassment, was married off to a man much older than her, and she now has to suffer for a life time.

Some girls shared that these restrictions have put barriers to girls making their own decisions. If they raise concerns, they will be more bandhans and fetters put on them. The fact of unfreedoms, including limited access to technology is challenging. These are life time bandhans.

Girls felt that they should be taught to speak up and not be silent against any form of discrimination. That they enjoy equal freedom as boys. And that boys should also be given tasks in schools, to sweep the floors, like girls are given. Girls have a right to dream and to a voice. They also felt they need support from all community institutions and government agencies.

Most importantly girls spoke about the need to study, and that they have asked their teachers to intervene with their parents and convince them. Also that beyond access to middle schools, the higher educational school/college system is far away from their villages and they are not permitted to travel.

~ Challenges and redress systems: Amongst the youth group, a major issue raised was the lack of access to continued education. And no choice nor consent sought while finalizing their marriage.

A girl shared: 'Once a boy sent me a message and called me. I told him I will inform the police. He said I would not have the guts to do that, and that I have no courage. I got support from my family and blocked him'.

'Yes, it is difficult to report. My sister was blackmailed by a boy and he threatened to put my picture out, we went to the KMVS helpline and were supported by my father and my sister'.

There are some good stories of challenging norms too, and they felt their voice should be raised. One girl said: 'A maulana saw me wearing jeans and told my father about it. My father told him that it was his choice to support his own daughter and not the Maulana'.

'Once a 35 year old man kept staring at me in the bus for the 8-10 days of travel. I told the driver that I would no longer use the bus services and also shouted at the man to stop staring. It worked!'

One youth member said: "I get angry with myself for being a girl. I had to convince my mother and say by studying I can earn and contribute to the family. Now I do not face restrictions. I have learnt to fend for myself and speak up, and not tolerate anything. We need to talk to our families, understand them and convince them'.

The students and youth also talked about taking many trainings, on gender, patriarchy, and safety, auditing unsafe areas, speaking up against early child marriage, menstruation and building self-confidence. They also talked about learning not to discriminate on basis of skin colour, caste, religion, and on other grounds, and making friends across communities with equal respect to all. As well the need to focus on the most vulnerable, given the impacts of C-19.

'I spoke in a public function against child marriage and contributed to transformation in thinking. Mindset change is needed. Give girls respect and dignity. In school functions speak about our education and equality and rights'.

Some of the youth have also helped women in distress, counselled them, including to pursue a case for maintenance. Some of them also referred vulnerable families to KMVS during the lockdown period.

There was disconcert among girls that they are not treated equally, and are forced to accept it. That the community and family harbor fears such as: 'If women are treated equally, they will go far ahead of the men.'

'We need to form our own collectives for bringing in change and for equal respect'.

The notion of paraya dhan is discriminatory, as is menstruation, and limits girls from going to temples, and outside, and they feel this is to keep them in a backward stage. That change can only come about when the family and community are sensitised. Boys have to learn to stop harassing and blackmailing. They argued about some form of strict deterrent and punishments that are needed to be instituted for boys that could stem their aggressive behaviours.

Some young women also felt that they need to realize their dreams - of playing cricket, becoming an engineer, tailor, a member of the panchayat, a doctor, a singer, and to make their families proud of them. They want to study more, do more with their life and so on.

## 7.2 Perspectives of Boys:

The perception of some boys was that some girls doreport their cases of violence. There is a fear of the family/others and if they get their support, then the perpetrator can be punished. They also felt that some families tend to blame their girls/daughters. And that creates mental stress. One of them also shared that he had gone out of his way to support a girl who was being harassed.

Respondents also shared that girls should be treated as equals and given equal opportunities. They shared that girls/women have to work at home and are seen as the weaker sex. There is need to see them in their own right and for them to experience freedom. The KMVS trainings

have resulted in them learning about gender, equality, non-harassment, gender division of labour, and now they have started helping their mothers in domestic work.

Some youth have taken part in campaigns and did a drama at a town hall against child marriage. The message was clear that both boys and girls suffer as a consequence. Also boys need to understand that stalking, teasing and abuse will not be tolerated. Some form of social sanctions need to be imposed so that boys can understand more about heir negative behaviours. Besides, there is need to engage leaders from the community on these issues.



## 7.3 Perspective of the Teachers:

All the teacher respondents said that the girls are unable to report when they face violence and harassment. They said girls are being stressed out and some also commit suicide, due to pressure faced within their families. They were very concerned that girls were suffering in silence, and families need to support them, and gain their confidence. They also talked about the need to address man-made patriarchy and toxic power relations.

Some teachers said they had supportedgirl students when they faced harassment. One was a case of incest by her father. They counselled the mother and intervened with the father to apologize and stop the violence. The teacher also followed up on the case for the next 3 years.

Others shared that they support students with information about their rights, services like the helpline and so on. Some have intervened with parents to stop early marriages, others to motivate parents to support their education. While some parents respond others do not heed the advice. They also try and convince families regarding boys working at home and allowing girls to play cricket and access equal opportunities.

They raised the issue for boys to have role-models to learn from and bring about change. Boys should be given feedback and be sensitised. While there is need for more police patrolling in public spaces, there is need for education to change norms.

## 7.4 Perspective of Government Officers

7.4.1 Neelesh Gor, Deputy District Primary Education Officer (DOE): He was very appreciative of the good partnership with KMVS in 40 schools in 2 blocks of Anjar. He liked the trainings imparted by KMVS to students, as well as information shared with them through webinars, as schools are functioning online currently. He also emphasized that girls should stay back in schools and early marriages be stopped. He suggested that KMVS expand their work to more blocks and work concertedly on mind-set changes in the community.

He urged for more teacher trainings and to give them tools to address issues of safety and empowerment. Giving messages to families was critical and special focus on boys is much needed. He found the KMVS materials very useful, and their campaigns in the past very interactive and meaningful, as it engaged students. He also found the work of KMVS with other departments meaningful on addressing POCSO cases, gender equality, VAW, menstruation and so on. There is need for strengthening the Beti Bachao programme, as also skill training for girls/youth for economic employment. He has formed a school committee and will be planning one on women's safety and to undertake audits to make changes, as was done in the past. He referred to the need to upgrade some of the infrastructure and give it focused attention in the future.



**7.4.2** Interview with the SDO, Kutch District: He shared that joining hands and forming partnership with KMVS was very meaningful, as it has led to doubling of the state outreach in the district to communities. He specially mentioned how KMVS worked on prevention, that their work was focused and did not threaten the peace within the community. Through awareness programmes KMVS has been sharing materials of the government and educating them on laws against early marriage and ending violence, as also attending to cases of women and children.

As a result of the information flow on ECM in the community, they were able to stem 35 cases of early marriages last year. Also the young girls have access to contact numbers and can reach either KMVS or the department directly, if they wish to. The partnership works on a shared cost basis, and the Department picks up costs of the community awareness events at times. They have also developed audio and radio messages with them to be relayed widely. He mentioned that KMVS's work covers panchayats and should this be consolidated and strengthened further, there is a best practice in the making.

**7.4.3** Interview with Vipul Dorya: District Child Protection Officer: He too mentioned how effective their partnershipwith KMVS was – in preventing child marriages and raising issues of violence against minors. KMVS shares legal information about POCSO and also supports cases for referrals.

He particularly felt that the challenges in the district are large, not only due to the geography of the area, but the traditional practices within the community. The lockdown had impacted outreach and services, even though government agencies were functioning throughout the period. KMVS has worked with commitment on the ground, it knows the community values, practices well, and is able to intervene in some cases. He also mentioned that it is a tight rope walk, as there is need to not alienate the community, and instead engage with them for change. He mentioned about the Department providing aid to vulnerable children and those at juvenile homes, with support from KMVS as well.

#### 7.a. Good Practice 3: Mobilizing Youth as Gender Champions on Safety:

KMVS has worked with young people quite intensively, convening a plethora of campaigns, workshops, dialogues and reaching out to more than 200 schools in urban and rural areas. They see youth as important catalysts for change - in transforming behaviours at the community level and creating a dialogical space for them. In an initial baseline study KMVS discovered that 80% of the girls in the respondents list were already in a Gauna relationship and this practice needed to change.

Overall in the period (October 2016-September 2020), KMVS has reached out to **9355** school students from Classes 7-11, ahead of their planned targets. They have also trained **1857** young people at the village level to raise issues on women's safety. Besides they have formed a core group of 80 youth and supported them in developing their action plans.

~ Gender and Safety Perspectives: KMVS has been very mindful about developing meaningful sessions in schools - that provides an environment of enquiry, helps raise questions and reflect on experiences. Students are encouraged to analyse structures of power, privilege, patriarchy, gender roles, and challenge myths about masculinities and femininities. Key concepts include issues of sexuality, bodily integrity, againstbody shaming, consent, saying No, and the like. They also talk about dreams, desires, and pains, especially with girls.

Perspective building is undertaken with an intersectional lens and addressing particularities of each community, creating space to re-examine prejudices and discriminatory practices. KMVS helps young people and others to move their lens from cultural essentialism to one of realization of constitutional rights and freedoms. KMVS has developed some very creative gender sensitive materials and modules that are now being extensively used across schools. The POCSO booklet has been distributed by the Elementary Education Department to all their schools. Their publications also provide information on how to reach services. They use creative mediums - magazine, posters, radio messages, video productions, and mobile communications. A training tool for youth leaders and facilitators - Gender School in the form of an Android app has been developed and covers concepts of gender, patriarchy, masculinity, femininity, sexuality, feminism, etc. During the period of the pandemic, KMVS undertook trainings in small groups and learnt that online education was not possible for all, as boys had more access to mobiles than girls who were at a disadvantage.

~ Engaging with the system: Understanding that there are several barriers young women face including in attending training sessions, camps, KMVS developed strategies to reach out to family members, including fathers, mothers, grand-mothers on making them understand and support their daughters. In doing so, they have moved the needle on working with the larger system of the family, school faculty, education management system and government departments. This allows for space to influence change in gender adverse norms - such as

early and forced marriage, right to education, training boys to contribute to domestic work, and so on.

They are also witness to huge gender biases that exist in teachers and the need for continuous sensitization. Thus they have developed good allies over time with the system who in turn support girls to continue their education and intervene in cases of violence.

This has led to good progress such as girls are speaking up about their rights and resisting pressures from their families. Some of them have clearly said NO to marriage, made the calls to the HS helpline, complained to the teacher, sought help from KMVS and others. They are questioning social controls that limit their choice of dress, mobility, etc.

In publicly talking about menstruation with girls, families and the school system they have been able to de-stigmatise the issue and address the pollution practices that exclude girls/women from the kitchens, temples, other places, during their periods. KMVS has played a critical role in one of the high profile cases where the management made the girls strip to check if they were menstruating.

What might be an issue to flag is that young girls prefer the security of their family members for reporting their issues and concerns, more than KMVS. More work will be needed on this front, so that they can have independent access to helplines and other redress mechanisms and services, whenever they need, considering that they are minors.

KMVS has held public sessions where government agencies (Education department, social welfare, child protection and child line services), and family are invited to be sensitized. Youth have undertaken 109 safety audits and at these meetings they place their governance agendas and demand for gender-sensitive infrastructure.

In recent months post the lockdown period, KMVS has supported the education department in conducting online sessions reaching students through the Learning Delight platform. They have trained 29 teachers from 23 schools and have standardized exercise books on Gender and Power, Me and My bodywhich they hope to take further with the teachers. Courses on POCSO have been undertaken.

3 online trainings are to be planned with teachers on gender mainstreaming in schools. One session was held and the teachers had to make a video of themselves on how they would teach the gender session. 20 teachers sent in their videos and were able to explain the concepts of gender and sex very well and go beyond gender binaries.

However the concept of 'Gender Transgression', was difficult for them to understand. The teachers expressed the need for a clearer understanding on gender and sexuality and its intersections with exercising one's power.

~Peer Support: KMVS has established nine kishori centres in slum areas of bhuj as a space for dialogue and interactions, reaching out to more than 500 adolescent girls and boys. They address a wide range of issues, including mental health given that some young girls/youth have committed suicide. KMVS is conscious of the fact that young people need to make their own decisions and negotiate with their families and others in their environment, for which they need skills and capacities. A youth cadre including from newer villages have the potential to collectivize and address their issues in a united manner. A core group of 70 members from Bachau and Anjar Blocks has been formed recently.

They are also mindful about the fact that they must not be put through increased risk of torture and violence. They need unconditional support, and strengthening peer groups works quite effectively.

## **Key Achievements:**

- That students are gradually being inspired to take progressive steps and question norms and practices within their communities and families. They are raising their voice and asserting their agency.
- In working with the family and school system, critical issues have been raised around, criminalization of choice and economies of marriage with the Dhebaria Rabari and Pranthaliya Ahir communities, and this could lead to sustainable changes in time to come. Further, teachers have become allies and students are gaining the trust and confidence of teachers who intervene with parents to help them continue their education.
- Engendering the school curriculum and introducing gender has great scope and includes: story-telling, songs, drawings and drama with gender sensitive pedagogy.
- Community leaders from DeviPoojak and Valmiki community have taken up issues of kishoris and raise them with their members during the samuh lagna and other festivals.
- The core group of youth formed showed great resilience and sensitivity in reaching out relief during the lockdown period, to the most marginalized communities. They supported more than 200 women in accessing benefits and schemes. They extended support to 17 women facing violence. The adolescent girls from the slums of Bhuj also provided relief to fellow residents.
- KMVS established safety procedures for adolescent girls during this period, so they could share their concerns and build solidarity with others. They undertook trainings on 'gender and sexuality' and 'My Identity'. New groups were created in 3 new areas and samuh meetings held following re-opening post the lockdown.

#### **Challenges:**

• The Intervention programmes with youth is at an ascent stage, and while being dynamic, one knows that the constituency changes with youth moving out of schools, and being a captive audience. There is need for further ideation on how to keep the momentum of change going and enlarge the circles of influence. The issue of toxic and harmful

- masculinities also needs to be worked on more intensively and how socialisation processes need to be re-thought within families.
- Mainstreaming Gender into the current educational content andprocess in partnership
  with the DEO office and DIET, is a good way forward. This would need some expertise in
  building a framework and tools and further investment of time and critical thinking.
  There is need to ensure that gender is not instrumentalized and the focus is on Equality
  and Transformative change.
- This is the time for Generation Equality, Beijing+25 processes and world over younger feminist women, trans and queer people are leading the world on critical issues and concerns. KMVS can link to this process with UN Women and other regional and international networks of youth and women. There is need to work with trans people and those with diverse gender identities.



## 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 8.1 Relevance and Effectiveness:

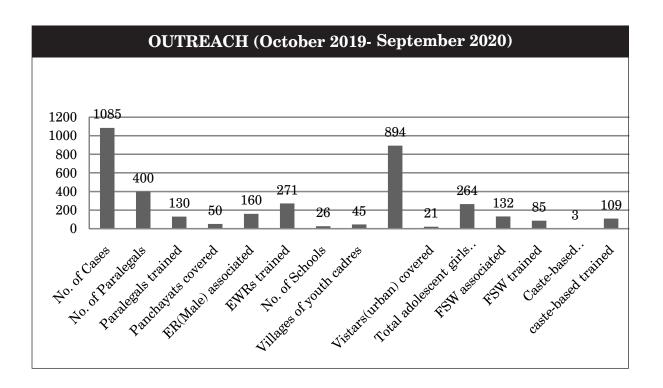
- 1. The project is highly relevance and each of the stakeholders interviewedacknowledged the expertise, work, unique contributions and commitment of the KMVS team. They find KMVS (and their PLs) to be compassionate, respectfuland a sense of security when with them. KMVS is seen to be a problem solver, a facilitator, a confidante, a space for discussions and more. Government stakeholders value the partnership and joint programming with them, and have no hesitation in saying that it is due to KMVS, that outreach in communities is possible on scale. Many survivors testified to the high quality of support received, including the support they get to choose options they wish to pursue, with access to justice and interim relief measures. They have also mobilized the support of families, government services providers when needed.
- 2. At a broader conceptual level, stakeholders have a good understanding of safety and rights. The intense trainings, dialogues, campaigns, facilitated by KMVS has helped cadres, community and Sanghathan leaders imbibe a rights perspective and a spirit to propel change in their personal lives and within the community. KMVS has developed an interactive, experiential and rights based pedadogy, drawingupon the knowledge of the community. Their training and communications tool-kits for students/teachers, and other constituencies, communities are substantive in content and is user friendly.

KMVS is deeply committed to a feminist rights based perspective, and leadership development from below. An intersectional lens that dissects power relations in society, particularly for the most marginalized, has found resonance among the diverse communities. They realize that shifting social norms is extremely hard and people need to be taken along, including the younger and the older generation, in making incremental but sustained shifts. The results of the project across the diversity of communities, geographies, institutions has been outstanding.

## 8.2 Efficiency:

3. The training and awareness raising tools have been manifold - short/micro baseline studies that provide the evidence, training modules, student and teacher guides, campaigns, radio and video materials, newsletters, posters, booklets, apps, information sheets, protocols and guidelines for counselling and more.

They have undertaken an extensive set of activities, despite the C-19 lockdowns during the period October 2019 - September 2020. This includes - individual/community outreach to 1,085 survivors, 400 PLs, 160 male elected representatives, 132 FSWs and 3 caste based communities. In terms of institutional outreach: to 26 schools, 50 Panchayats, 45 villages through the youth cadres and others, and to 21 urban areas (vistars). KMVS trained 1,753 participants in this period. (see: graph below).



Over a three year period, the overall outputs have been remarkable (see table below). Over **25,640 people** have been trained on women's safety; safety audits in **109 villages and municipalities; over 9,070 women survivors** supported, with 367 of them rehabilitated and **493** supported in their access justice; and **719 PL** strained. In terms of community outreach: **407 villages, 109 municipalities, with 435 women's safety issues** identified by panchayats. The canvas is quite vast, indicating a growing ownership by community, youth leaders and their institutions of the safety agenda.

Sr. Number	Indicator	Target	Progress (2016-2020 September)
1	Number of survivors helped through "Hello Sakhi"	7100	9070
2	Number of villages covered through awareness campaign	285	407
3	Number of women selected to work as paralegals	600	719
4	Number of EWRs sensitized on safety concerns	1120	1608
5	Number of villages and municipalities undergone safety audits	96	109
6	Number of school children from class $7-11$ undergone sessions on gender and safety	8800	9355
7	Number of womens safety related issues addressed by panchayats	250	435
8	Number of women and children rehabilitated through the program	290	367
9	Number of youth trained at village level for raising issues of safety	950	1857
10	Number of women identified at village to raise dialogue on safety	330	729
11	Number of women linked with livelihood option	80	
12	Number of FSWs organized to raise concerns on safety	95	132
13	Survivors supported for access to justice by paralegals	200	493
14	Number of leaders identified from caste based society who take up issues	35	44

The staff, stakeholders, community leaders, PLs, and trainers have meaningfully internalized perspectives on women's rights and safety that KMVS has imparted to them. During the interviews, the evaluator noted their progressive thinking and articulation on equality, safety, non-discrimination and autonomy for girlsto pursue their dreams. However, the ground is not so easy, and while they have translated some of these values into their everyday lives, the dominant discourse on women's roles and position in society still underpin most family practices. KMVS realizes the enormous efforts needed to work on this front and take strength from the small but significant gains made thus far.

KMVS has been responsive to newly emerging issues and challenges, and making shifts in their approaches and strategies, as needed. For example, they started focusing on working with perpetrators and their families; they track data on forms/manifestation of violence so they can build a rapid response around it. KMVS has dedicated staff, cadreof PL workers, volunteers, core groups from select communities, who have been trained/mentored over the years and go out of their way to support cases of violence. Down the line, KMVS may think about ways toformalize these groups to become autonomous and self-functioning.

4. In terms of adaptiveness, KMVS has ably demonstrated in the C-19 lockdown period, their ability to rise to new challenges, conduct online assessments, plan relief services, assist with identity cards and entitlements, link to government schemes, and make available online services for mental health counselling, support particularly o their cadres and young girls facing stress. The learning curve has been very steep on this front, and the evaluation is a good example of their confidence in undertaking complex tasks online.

## 8.3 Sustainability:

- **5.** Shifting mindsets and driving social change: Sustained change is possible when communities demonstrate leadership to advancing women's safety and equality. The agenda of changing power structures and power relations is particularly difficult; that of sharing power with the most marginalised, discriminated and/or excluded by society, across diverse gender identities mediated by gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, dis/ability, class and other factors<sup>21</sup>. KMVS has been chipping away at the feudal, traditional, caste-based patriarchal structures, slowly, but forcefully. They have deployed a range of strategies to engender minds, collectives and institutions, while advocating for substantive equality and a political voice for women/girls and promoting equal rights to assets and resources. They have constantly questioned the issue of impunity granted to perpetrators, victim blaming and backlash stacked up against women/girls. In building cultures of safety, they have created access for women to report cases of violence, even if against her own family member(s), or against a person from a dominant caste without fear of retribution. This has led to some positive results, and women are pushing back against their pushbacks. The work with the ecosystem and bringing in other players will have far-reaching impacts.
- **6. Women's leadership:** KMVS has effectively invested in nurturing women's leadership and supporting them through their journey for gender justice. They have built women's self-esteem, skills, access to resources and decision making and supported their institution building. It is their personal transformation that is helping women/adolescents reach out to other communities and mobilize them. This has been rewarding as women are critical to the change process.
- 7. Cadre building: KMVS's work with youth is to build a multiplier force in shifting norms. They have developed multiple strategies of influencing family patriarchs and institutions panchayats, traditional panch systems, education systems, that has proved to beeffective. They have created peer groups of support to help sustain the alternative paths being tread by members, in changing behaviours and beliefs. With the paralegals they have built an effective institutional link in strengthening outreach services for redress and justice at a de-centralized level. (See Good Practice 3)

## 8.4 Overall Impact:

**8. KMVS** needs to consolidate and refigure its strategies in a more coherent manner. It is at a meaningful stage where a take-off by some local communities is evident, but there is also the unintended consequences of the pandemic, where girls/women are being subjected to more intense forms of violence within the home, and outside. The pandemic is taking a huge toll on the lives and livelihoods of women, men and children. Data generated by civil society is indicating a roll back on development gains. Evidence of child marriage, trafficking, declining

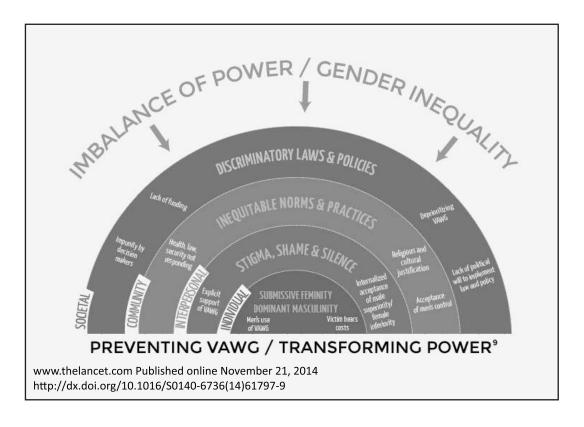
 $<sup>\</sup>overline{^{21}} Batiwala\ Srilata:\ https://namati.org/resources/all-about-power-understanding-social-power-power-structures/all-about-power-understanding-social-power-power-structures/all-about-power-understanding-social-power-power-structures/all-about-power-understanding-social-power-power-structures/all-about-power-understanding-social-power-power-structures/all-about-power-understanding-social-power-power-structures/all-about-power-understanding-social-power-power-structures/all-about-power-understanding-social-power-power-structures/all-about-power-understanding-social-power-power-structures/all-about-power-understanding-social-power-power-structures/all-about-power-understanding-social-power-power-structures/all-about-power-power-structures/all-about-power-power-power-structures/all-about-power-po$ 

health and nutrition are emerging. Much vigilance would be needed to track the fallouts on the socio-cultural practices of the community and try to sustain the process of change.

9. It is being predicted that state/district resources for development will shrink and budgets for girls/women's safety will see a decline in the coming financial years. This will have devastating impacts for the community. Partners, constituents of KMVS, including the government have urged for an *expansion of their services and safety centres* at the block/village levels. These services are by their very nature intensive and need resources. There are also demands to ensure convergence in supplementing the state services such as the 181 and 1091 helplines and OSCs and building capacities of the government agencies. The unique PL model developed needs to be upgraded and institutionalised. DLSA can use these PLs on scale to support their work in other blocks. KMVS needs to build their theory of change and design their next decade of work. They need to refine their gender mainstreaming and training strategies to address scale and intensity.

Below is a sample for a proposed Strategic Framework for KMVS.

KMVS can develop/adapt an ecological framework on preventing VAW and transforming power relations in society as seen below (developed by Lori Heise and adapted by Mary Ellsberg) on Preventing VAW and Transforming Power Relations)<sup>22</sup>.



<sup>22</sup>https://www.thelancet.com/series/violence-against-women

#### This includes:

- **a.)** At the individual level: Working with women and girls as they primarily bear a huge cost to their mobility, choices, ability to factor in their agency, and submit to femininity norms of their society.
- **b.)** At the interpersonal level: There is a huge cost that women/girls pay as they are blamed for the violence/harassment on them, their mode of dressing, their free will to go out including with boys/men, their resistance to forced marriages, and they are forced to self-censure and internalise the norms of an inferior sex in society. They are made to suffer the stigma and silence of violence against them as it will bring dishonour to the families.
- **c.)** At the community level: Women and girls face challenges of being unequal in society and have to deal with the pressures of a patriarchal society and institutions of culture and religion that dictate gender roles and expectations, as well that male domination of society prevails. It is well known that all institutions are also gendered and do not deliver gender justice as expected under the constitutional norms of the country.
- **d.**) At the structural societal level: There is inequality embedded within the laws and policies, which do not view women as equal and autonomous beings, there is impunity within institutions, a lack of political will to implement the services for equality and redress for women and girls, besides there being a lack of budgetary allocations, and so on.

Thus a multi-sector, multi-layered approach that KMVS uses needs to be further consolidated and developed to guide it. This will require organizational shifts at several levels.

#### 8.5 Overall Recommendations:

KMVS has established a unique niche in its work to advance women's safety. They now need to embark upon refining this further and developing their next generation of strategies and tools. Some key recommendations to consider:

**Recommendation 1:** At an organisational level, KMVS needs to consolidate its learnings more systematically and evolve a Theory of Change and a Strategic Framework (see above). There is need for a more nuanced analysis that enables them to see the larger picture and identify critical barriers to their work. It is also important to learn from what does not work on the ground. Alongside, they need to strike a balance between intensive and extensive outreach strategies, as they will experience fatigue and burn out and will need to renew themselves.

KMVS may consider creating different kinds of platforms - that bring rights holders (PLs/others) together to demand accountability from duty bearersthrough strengthening

their powerful collective voice for advocacy and taking their work upstream. As well for community members building a cross- learning platform across different geographies and caste groups at the district level. At a functional level, KMVS could re-organizeits functional unit of work around key pillars, geographies and constituencies. A specialized unit for documentation, knowledge management, independent monitoring, learning and evaluation needs to be put into place. This will allow for more substantiveand rigorous analysis that can inform ongoing programming. KMVS needs to make its social profilemore visible, and expand its partnership with other issue-based groups and networks.

**Recommendation 2:** Covid-19 has thrown up several challenges with debilitating socioeconomic impacts on the lives, livelihoods of scores of people. The surge in domestic violence and other forms of cyber-crimes and dispossession are being seen. Women's care burden has created barriers to her productive work, and women entrepreneurs, home based workers, sex workers, trans people, migrant workers have been badly affected. In order to address these issues, KMVS will not only have to build upon its existing work, but build back better the economic, social, cultural fabric that has been disrupted during this period. A collective vision of empathy, co-living, practicing equality will need to be renewed. To build sustainability, KMVS will need to effectively mentor and incubate the transitions in community leadership and institution building at the de-centralised level.

# **Recommendation 3:** KMVS should pay attention to re-shaping its **knowledge management** practices.

- **3.1)** Systematise and consolidate the organization's knowledge assets for meeting strategic programme requirements. There is a wealth of data, knowledge and depth of experience that KMVS needs to minein a more significant manner and to theorize as well, to inform the second generation of strategies moving forward. A more substantive understanding of the framework and methodology of engendering institutions needs to be developed.
- **3.2)** KMVS should undertake a process documentation of their work what works, what doesn't and under what circumstances, and so on. This would capture shifts taking place on the ground, and help them identify specific constraints in gender mainstreaming of safety within the various institutions.
- **3.3)** Their knowledge products should be made available online, including to diverse communities and constituencies, and if possible, be bilingual in form. They could consider building a digital archive on women' safety and make it accessible through portals, social media and e-lists. They may consider partnerships with a Women's Studies Institute, research institutes and media agencies to mine their data/learnings.
- **3.4**) They could prepare policy briefs and papers, through fellowships, residency, and such. The data they collect needs better analysis, and can be used for inputs into larger policy formulation of the government and others, and published in feminist research journals. This would give KMVS and its partners visibility and highlight their unique work contributing to cross-learning at the national/global levels.

## **Recommendation 4:** Strengthen Prevention and Services to Ending VAW:

- **4.1)** Public space violence: A focus on violence in public spaces in urban areas has been earlier identified by KMVS and was also flagged again by the stakeholders. KMVS could focus on theimpacts of urbanization on women informal workers and how they can claim their right to the city-space in opportunities, services, voice and governance. Some aspects that could be considered include:
- A renewed focus on tackling sexual harassment in public transport and at transport stands.
- Advocate for access to housing given high fears of eviction, especially by migrants and sex workers. There is need for safe shelters and short term stay homes for women/girls.
- Safety audit tools are available online and partnerships could be forged with Safetipin and others to collect big data and advocate on scale for gender sensitive infrastructure.
- The new norms of social distancing and protection from the virus would mean new ways of re-designing the work space for e.g. for vegetable vendors, re-zoning the market place, managing the density of people within local transport and affordable transport options for women/girls. This will enable girls to travel to schools and colleges that are far off, and for women to go to their work sites. This will address the time use poverty issue of women, who manage care responsibilities.
- Advocate for a gender sensitive governance mechanism for a multi-sector approach.
- **4.2)** Respond to new and brutal forms of violence and stigmatization against women and girls: surge in domestic violence, online, cyber-crimes, hate crimes, violence faced by domestic workers, sex workers, frontline workers, trans people and sexual minorities. As government agencies seem unable to effectively respond (though the Gujarat helpline services worked quite well during the pandemic), it would be important for KMVS to expand its services andpartner with government and community frontline workers. They could think about, if resources permit, scaling up the number of safety centres reaching every block. This has been a clear demand from every stakeholder.

#### **4.3**) Prevention of VAW:

- i) Their work on prevention and education needs to be taken to scale. Given limited resources, it is difficult for NGOs to play that role on a sustained basis, a partnership with government and other donors, with more investments and political will is required. KMVS can capitalize on their current work in engendering the school curriculum, that has a huge potential for transformative change.
- ii) There is need to support compliance with legal and constitutional standards for girls/women's rights in the community. This will requirelegal literacy processes on scale, strengthening gender champions, and findings ways by which the state can reward and incentivize communities for transforming social norms. The framework of CEDAW and the commitments made by Gujarat state, on SDGs 5 and 11 can be woven into such programming.

Innovative campaigns such women's courts (e.g. Vimochana) can also be held which explore alternate notions of feminist justice and do not depend upon the state to deliver delayed justice.

## Recommendation 5: Upgrade Services and Capacity building

- **5.1)** To meet with new demands on the ground, there is need to upgrade skills of staff; revise training manuals, tools, standard operating processes (SOPs), guidance notes, to support counselling, mediation cases of violence against women/girls; ensure the case workers follow prescribed ethical frameworks and are in compliance with laws and policies of the land and the organisation.
- 5.2) As KMVS works with minors/adult survivors, there may be merit in instituting a panel of experts to backstop and guide the team, as they have done in the case of have a panel of lawyers. This could include feminist psychologists, counsellors, therapists and researchers. In addition, KMVS needs to address burn out issues faced by staff and PLs, dealing with case work, in ensuring access to advanced therapeutic and mental health counselling.
- **5.3**) There is need to learn more about family and group counselling processes with new tools/methodology and gain specialized skills, as this is an area KMVS has started engaging in.
- **5.4**) The post-Covid world requires combining on-line services with on-site services. The courts are working on a limited basis and virtual courts are being held. It would be useful to support women's informal justice systems Mahila Nyaya Panchayats to reach out to victims in urgent cases.
- 5.5) With Panchayats, urban and rural bodies, KMVS needs to find a way by which the VAW and safety agenda becomes central to their response. A combination of safety audits, social audits, governance and budgetary audits can be considered as multiple strategies to demand accountability by women. They can be trained on gender and governance issues.

In this regard, KMVS could consider partnering with SIRDs and SRLMs to take forward the livelihood and governance agenda. The fact that panchayats do not have much power and are dependent on donors and government for resources, but work with them would ensure sustainable outcomes. A plan to develop one or two model Panchayats on women's safety could be made as a demonstration site, with plans for upscaling. This will require intensive work at district levels with access to technology platforms for effective coordination.

- **5.6)** KMVS can also think about integrating a health sector response into their work. VAW is a public health issue and addressing health impacts on women and ensuring her right to emergency, reproductive and sexual health services is imperative. In this regard, para-health workers can also be trained to reach out to women and ensure access to maternal, reproductive sexual health and other care. Asha workers too can be trained on this.
- **5.7**) The helpline services can be upgraded further with additional technology features and data analytics.

#### Recommendation 6: Partnerships and Policy Advocacy:

- **6.1)** KMVS with its wealth of experience could contribute more effectively to policy making and implementation at the state/national level. They could contribute to National Networks such as Aman Network on DV, the Gujarat DV network and so on. Submission of reports on CEDAW, to UN Special Rapporteurs and submissions to the government on safety issues must be pursued.
- **6.2)** There is need to put women at the centre of policy change, post Covid, by supporting their participation at important fora.
- **6.3**) Advocate with district/state authorities to ensure support to grassroots women's collectives, especially those that provide essential services to vulnerable populations, including Asha and Anganwadi workers.
- **6.4**) Advocate for women's voice in decision-making processes so that their needs and concerns are included in responses to violence against women/girls.
- **6.5**) Advocate with the state to expand numbers and quality of shelters, including making plansto re-purpose other spaces for urgent needs of survivors.
- **6.6)** Sensitize and engage with private sector to integrate redress and prevention mechanisms to support informal and formal female employees, including those working from home.
- **6.7**) Ensure that local authorities are planning to re-design public spaces safer for women/girls including markets, transport stands, kiosks, vending zones, etc.
- **6.8**) Reach out to new donors to support their work and find ways of creative fund raising. Build a dedicated team for fund raising and communications.



#### **Conclusion:**

KMVS is deeply committed to feminist and intersectional perspectives in their engagement with communities and social groups. As young women activists, they have walked a difficult path to open doors, and minds, including for the younger generation and for those who live on the margins. They have dealt with difficult topics around sexuality, consent, gender binaries, restorative justice, and enabled women and girls to reclaim their lives on their own terms. To pursue social and gender justice, they will have to continue to disrupt the powerful structures that propagate inequalities and discrimination. They have built a body of great expertise and have the good will and incredible support of their partners, community members, counsellors, trainers, mentors and others in the government. They need to capitalize on emerging opportunities and challenge the backlash that accompanies any empowerment and rights assertion process. This is a good time to re-structure, re-build and re-invent.

It is the considered opinion of the Evaluator that the project needs to continue for a second phase for a period of 5-7 years in order to mine the real outcomes envisaged for sustaining and institutionalizing change.

We used to counsel women understanding their insecurities and abuse that they have faced but now we approach the discussion holistically andtry to work towards solution which also sensitizes the society so that womanbecome safer.

- Legal program

Women in slum live in heterogeneous communities and rarely have safety net in their surroundings. We have started to understand this further and have extended our interventions from accessing entitlement to auditing for safe spacing.

- Urban program

Rather than making girls empowered it is more important to sensitize boys and girls that equitable society is a violence free societySo we have strived to achieve this by talking about diversity and equiety to our adolescents.

- Yuva vani

Panchayats have never thought of bringing in discussion on gendered violence in their purview but in these years we have sensitized and strengthened standing committees so that they also discuss about violence at their village and have become proactive for enhancing access to justice for victims.

- Panchayat program





16 'Yogeshwar' Opp. Bhuj Gymkhana Ghanshyam Nagar Bhuj-Kutch (370001) Gujarat - India