

Annual Report of Activities

April 2010- March 2011



RURAL WOMEN'S SOCIAL EDUCATION CENTRE (RUWSEC)

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Introduction:

Rural Women's Social Education Centre [RUWSEC] is a non - governmental organisation working for women's health and reproductive rights for nearly three decades. The organisation was founded by 13 women in the year 1981 and it is located at Chengalpattu, near Chennai, Tamil Nadu, South India.

Achieving women's wellbeing through women's empowerment is the mission of our organisation. Our main focus has been on enabling women to gain greater control over their bodies and their lives, and achieving well being through promotion of gender equality, sexual and reproductive rights. RUWSEC's overall approach has been to motivate, educate and organise women from poor and marginalised communities to stand up for their rights and become agents of social change. The core values of our organization's work focuses on two important themes 1) Empowerment and rights based 2) Women centered and participatory. The strategies of our work are to



- Bringing forth the voices of women (and men) from the most marginalized sections of society, especially dalit and rural poor communities;
- Promoting leadership skills of the above groups so that they can effectively participate in existing governance and accountability structures and other spaces for community participation this strategy.
- Developing critical thinking and alternative models in health care provision, research and planning for social action.

Since its inception, RUWSEC was a grassroots organisation with community-based workers drawn from the local villages. In the year 2004, after the three year transition process, RUWSEC transformed into a 'support' organisation that facilitates field-based work on sexual and reproductive health and rights by other organizations and individuals.



High lights of Activities 2010 – 2011

In this financial year 2010 – 2011 the activities were carried out to a wider out-reach to bring out sustainable change in the community. In the Executive Committee meeting held on 4th February 2010 it was decided that all the field based activities carried out by the partner groups should be integrated and brought under the umbrella of RUWSEC's field programmes. As a follow-up of the decision the prevention of violence against women programme and the programmes which enhance public accountability and participation to demand better quality of health care services in the public health care facilities were integrated and named as 'Integrated Reproductive Health Programme'. The staff who earlier worked in the partner group were appointed as RUWSEC staff from this year. In the integrated field programme the following activities were carried out:

Over 350 Aganwadi workers (Integrated Child Development Scheme staff) in four administrative blocks of Kancheepuram district were provided intensive and follow-up trainings on gender, sexual, reproductive health and prevention of gender based violence in this year. A comprehensive training manual was developed for this training programme. [Social determinants of health, gender inequality as a determinant for health, gender based violence against women as a reproductive health problem, strengthening accountability structures in the government health care facilities – Were the core curriculum for the sessions].

During the year 1998 – 2010 community committees were formed in 70 villages to combat violence against women. Members who are active in these committees were formed as a core committee, 10 women constitute this core committee, and they continue to combat all forms of violence against women in the villages. This year counselling services were provided to 69

women who were the victims of domestic violence. After getting the consent of the women and as per their wish 39 women's husbands were given guidance and counselling services.



A training programme for the newly married couples was planned for two days and a training manual for the same was also prepared. Two rounds of trainings were conducted. The couples were very much interested in attending the training but due to the nature of work of their husbands they were unable to attend the training as a couple. Even if the training was scheduled for a Sunday there is inconvenience for the participants to attend the training, as they wish to take rest and carry out other activities. So, in future we are planning to conduct training programmes for the newly

married couples not only in the selected villages but invite the newly married couples from all the project villages.

Under the National Rural Health Mission, village level health committees were formed under the sub centres limits. Community members of the village health committee (water and sanitation/hygiene committees) members in Maduranthagam block received one day training on gender, reproductive health and the functioning of these village health committees.

In Maduranthagam and Thirukalukundram government taluk hospitals counselling cum health education sessions are held once a week for pregnant women. This year 1860 pregnant women took active part in these camps and made use of the counselling services. In these camps women received inputs like food habits during pregnancy, importance of mental and physical well being during pregnancy and care during delivery.

Community level health awareness camps were held for adolescent girls, women in the

self help groups and men. The theme of these camps was reproductive health and awareness about domestic violence. More than 500 participants took active part in these camps.

The research activities carried out by the organisation, research publications and the new research initiatives reached a wider audience. They play a vital role in bringing policy and programme level changes. We also strongly believe that the research and publication activities and disseminating information on health would reach wider audience in the coming years too.

This year research activities were carried out to bring in changes in health sector reforms and changes in health care policies. Research articles on Caste and Economic class disparities in access to and utilisation of reproductive health care services and the Impact of privatization of health care services were prepared. We have also started the research studies on Medical Abortion and the Economic burden in getting health care services. Sending research abstracts on women's health to

various national and international conferences is ongoing. Plans are on to start up a research study on Mental Health in the coming years.

In order to plan for future publications and reviewing popular health education materials and training manuals that have been published in Tamil were initiated this year. Books published by other organisations and groups have been collected and analysed. The first draft report of the same is ready. Even though there are enough publications on reproductive health the information that provided gives only scientific information. The review clearly brought out the fact, that the important aspect like how social, cultural and sexual factors hinders a women in getting reproductive health care services was not narrated or highlighted in any of these Tamil publications.

The translation, production and dissemination of Arrow For Change (AFC) newsletter of ARROW, Malaysia titled 'Reframing gender based violence against



women as a reproductive health issue' was successfully completed. Over 2500 copies were printed in Tamil and distributed to organisations and individuals working on domestic violence and women's health issues. In the newsletter our innovative programme on prevention of violence against women has been published as a special editorial article under the title 'Zero tolerance to gender based violence – A community based intervention'. This gave us a chance to disseminate our organisations activities on preventing violence against women widely.

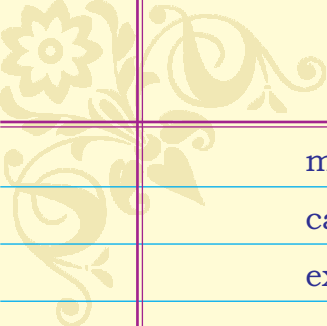
Under the 'women's voices' series which voices out the issues and concerns of rural women about health care policies and schemes were brought out as two

publications in English this year. A training manual on sexual well being of adolescents is under the pipeline for publication.

Activities along with the partner groups and supporting other groups in carrying out activities related to women's health and rights have reached a wider target audience this year.

Implementing life skills education programme among adolescents was carried out by the partner organisation SWAT. Teachers who have been trained for the past five years totalling to 395 received follow-up training this year. A new batch of 163 teachers were selected and trained. Additionally a new initiative of training welfare officers in companies was started and they received two day training. The Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan volunteers in Kancheepuram district were provided a three day training on life skills.

We provide administrative support to CommonHealth – A network on maternal and neonatal health and safe abortion. This network primarily carries out campaign on



maternal health, safe abortion and neonatal care in many states of India. In order to exchange the resources and experiences of network members and to share their ideas there is constant touch via e-mail and sharing of research abstracts. In Barwani district in Madhya Pradesh due to the negligence of staff in a Government Hospital, there were number of maternal deaths reported the issue was documented and brought to government's attention.

Our Reproductive health service clinic with a focus of women centred approach in providing reproductive health care services have brought in newer services and there is much development this year. Specialist doctors and researchers have been appointed. 20,639 patients utilised allopathic medical services, 337 utilised Siddha medical services, eight deliveries were conducted, 33 women accessed medical abortion services, 1510 people accessed laboratory services, 261 villagers accessed ambulance services.

We are in the process of developing our clinic into a resource centre that provides preventive care for health problems. To mote this idea among the

villagers, this year health awareness camps on swine flu, camps for adolescents and breast feeding day were observed. Support groups for cancer, alcoholics and diabetic patients were formed in villages with the guidance of Rheumatologist in our clinic. A special camp on cancer awareness and cancer screening was held in one of the project village.

Our Donors:

The interest amount from the Corpus and Endowment grant that we received from Ford foundation was utilised to carry out programmes of the central unit, clinic, integrated field based programmes and administrative cost. To carry out research projects financial support was received from World Health Organisation (WHO), Geneva, ARROW- Malaysia, PRAYAS - Rajasthan and CHEHAT- Mumbai. For translation production and dissemination of AFC Newsletter was supported by ARROW, Malaysia.

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