



Rural Women's Social Education Centre - RUWSEC

RUWSEC is a non-governmental women's organisation working for women and young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights. Achieving women's wellbeing through women's empowerment is the mission of our organisation. Currently, RUWSEC's intensive community-based

activities covers 25 villages and our clinic services cater the needs of over one lakh people in the Thirukazhukundram block. Even though our main focus of work is on sexual and reproductive health, we have also engaged with health education and preventive and curative care for non-communicable diseases in the project villages, because of its significant prevalence and its interactions with sexual and reproductive health. Our focus is on gender and other social dimensions of risk of acquiring NCDs and in access to healthcare.



After the recent Corona pandemic and lockdown by the government from 23rd March, we have had to close down most of our regular activities. RUWSEC's workers continue to work within their communities at this time of lock down, while the clinic has been providing minimum essential services. Some of the activities that we are engaged with in the present situation are:

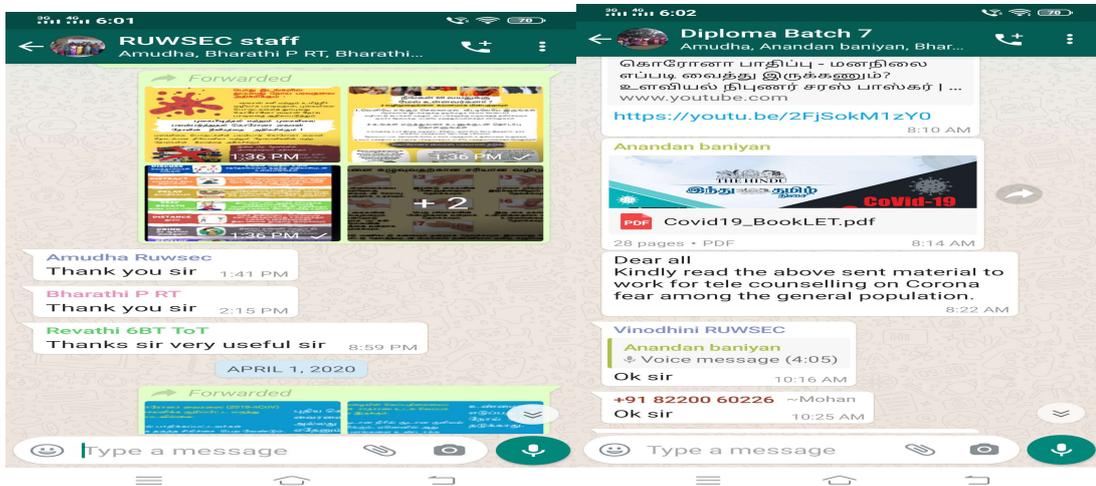
- **Creating awareness about the COVID-19 pandemic at the community level, referral of persons with symptoms:**

We prepared a leaflet on the Covid-19 pandemic: what it is, how it spreads, its symptoms, steps to be taken on developing symptoms, and self-care and the importance of physical distancing and the need for isolation, and distributed it widely in the project villages. We have also been reaching out to youth volunteers of RUWSEC (210 persons) through, short SMS and our WhatsApp group, who then share it with their peers and family members. Scientific information about the epidemic was collected and shared with the volunteers. One of our doctors spoke about the importance of social distancing and it was audio recorded and shared with the villagers through our volunteers.

Our team members refer patients with any symptoms like fever cough and cold to the nearby public health facility for necessary treatment. RUWSEC is aware of gendered barriers to seeking healthcare, and will provide social and economic support to women and girls who may face barriers to care-seeking. Our workers have also been ensuring that those advised home-based isolation adhere to the same.

- **Providing mental health counselling services in the community:**

Almost all the workers and youth volunteers (twenty-one persons) in our team have completed diploma in community mental health course conducted by the Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health (BALM), Chennai. With guidance from BALM’s faculty members, our team members have started providing psychosocial counselling services for persons who need services. Now, our team members are providing counselling services as well as technical information to help them deal with their fears and provide moral support. If needed, we will be connecting them to BALM faculty to speak with them over the phone and provide necessary support and guidance.

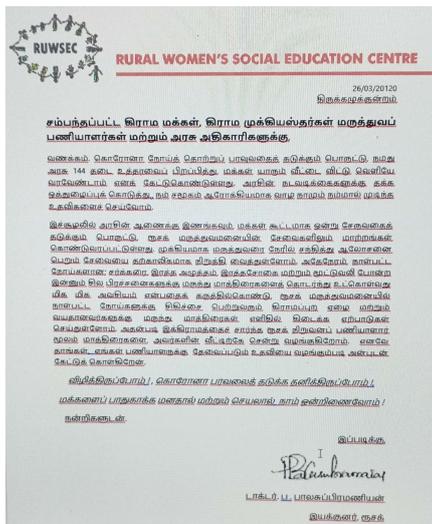


- **Identify persons who need special assistance and support:** There are some people in the community who need basic support like food and shelter (isolation room if the need arises) in the community and start support activities: Our workers and volunteers start identifying people in their villages who needs special assistance like elderly persons without family support, deprived daily wage workers, orphans, single women, persons living with physical or mental disabilities who are desperately needs food and other essential support. We plan to form an active group of individuals within each community, and draw (as far as possible) on local resources to cook and supply the food for these vulnerable persons or households. RUWSEC’s worker in these villages will take the lead in the initiative. Also, if need arises, our team will support the quarantined people in providing shelter / isolation facilities, they will speak to Self-Help-Group (SHG) federation leaders, school headmasters and local Panchayat Raj Institution members, use the public facilities and the SHG buildings for their stay.
- **Maintain contact with women in need of maternal health and contraceptive and safe abortion services and assist them in obtaining the necessary services:** RUWSEC’s workers provide regular counselling and health education to pregnant women and lactating mothers, and women in need of, or currently using, spacing methods of contraception. This is done in all our project villages and in one PHC in our

area. During this period of lock-down, RUWSEC's workers and youth volunteers are regularly in touch with these women over the phone, and will be assisting them to obtain Iron and Folic acid tablets, transportation to the health facility for delivery, and obtaining contraceptive pills and condoms. We hope to be able to assist as needed, women who need safe abortion services in obtaining these services from the public sector, and if this is not available, from the private sector.

- **Provide ongoing support to women survivors of intimate partner violence who are part of our VAW prevention and support programme:**

RUWSEC has had a Community-based Prevention of VAW programme (PoVAW) since 1998, wherein community support-groups are trained to prevent and provide support to women experiencing intimate partner violence (and other domestic violence). This is complemented by counselling and health services provided by RUWSEC's clinic and support group activities and referral to legal recourse. Realising that the lock-down situation creates additional risks for women experiencing violence within their home, our PoVAW team members are maintaining regular contact with the community support groups, encouraging them to act pro-actively in diffusing tensions and preventing violence within the home. PoVAW team members are also in touch with women who have recently sought help, to ensure that they are keeping safe, and assuring them of support in case of any problems.



- **Provide psycho-social support and menstrual hygiene supplies to adolescents and young women:**

We have been in regular contact with adolescent girls and young women working in factors in our project villages. Our workers provide SRHR and psycho- social support counselling services at the community. We also help them to get sanitary pads supplied by the anganwadi and primary health centres. In few villages, it seems to be out of stock, our workers in these villages help them to get it from the private shops and distribute.

- **Supply of nutrimix powder to cancer survivors:** Since, 2010, we are running a support group for cancer survivors. Currently there are 14 persons in the group. We

have also been providing them with one kilogram packet of home-made nutrimix powder to consume as liquid diet. We will continue the supply by delivering it to their homes.

- **Supply of medicines to NCD patients from vulnerable households:** As most of our consultant Doctors are from Chennai and unable to travel in the lockdown period, we temporally stopped our regular outpatient care services (Allopathy Siddha and Homeopathy). But at the same time, we have about 250 NCD patients (Diabetes, hypertension, and other chronic morbidities) who are taking regular treatment in our clinic. Most of them are very poor elderly women and men. So, we run the pharmacy and laboratory services on Sundays and Thursdays and dispense drugs for the NCD patients. Using the clinic register, we have prepared a list of patients from the 25 villages, who are undergoing treatment from our clinic and receiving medicines for diabetes, hypertension and other chronic conditions. We have been informing them through our community health workers and youth volunteers to collect their medicines for a month. There are also a few people in each village, who are unable to travel alone. We are packing a month's supply of medicines and delivering it at their home with the help of youth volunteers.



- **Continue to provide counselling services and follow up for NCD patients:** In 2019, there are over 700 diabetic, 350 hypertension and 200 other chronic morbidity patients in the RUWSEC project villages. A majority of them are women and nearly half of the patients (47 per cent) belonged to 40-60 years and another 37 per cent aged above 60 years. As our target population are predominantly *dalit*, they are poor and mostly used public facilities for treatment. Nearly half of the NCD patients seek treatment from public facilities and one third used RUWSEC clinic, and the rest opt for private doctors. So, our health workers and youth volunteers in the project villages have been following up with the NCD patients to ensure treatment adherence; continuation of medicines and helping them the collect drugs from the PHCs and RUWSEC clinic.

For more details about our organisation and its activities. Please join hands with us in supporting the above initiatives by sending us your suggestions. Monetary contributions are also welcome. We have an FCRA number to receive foreign contributions, and local

contributions and donations to RUWSEC are exempted from Income tax under 80 C exemption.

FOR FOREIGN CONTRIBUTIONS:

Account Name : Rural Women's Social Education Centre

Account Number : 850918181

Name of Bank & Branch: Indian Bank, Chengalpattu Branch, P B No: 27, 7, G S T Road, Chengalpattu- 603001.

Swift Code Number: IDIBINBBTSY

IFSC Code : I D I B 0 0 0 C 0 2 2

FOR LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS:

Account Name : Rural Women's Social Education Centre

Account Number : 437274748

Name of Bank & Branch: Indian Bank, Chengalpattu Branch, P B No: 27, 7, G S T Road, Chengalpattu- 603001.

IFSC Code : I D I B 0 0 0 C 0 2 2

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