

# A Case Study of the Short Stay Home for Women at Jalandhar

## Abstract

This paper attempts to carry out evaluation of the Short Stay Home at Jalandhar and analyse effectiveness of the Scheme of Short Stay Home for Women and Girls. It also struggles to identify the reasons which made the women take shelter in the Short Stay Home. It further evaluates the implementation of the Scheme in terms of: facilities/provisions made available to inmates, vocational skills provided to the inmates and efforts towards their rehabilitation by the Home.

**Keyword:** Short Stay Home; Domestic Violence; Sexual Abuse; Deserted; Abandoned.

## Introduction

'Shelter' forms a major constituent of the policies and programs for women. At the national level, a full-fledged machinery to provide institutional support for the advancement of women has been set up. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was set up in 1953, with the objective of promoting and implementing welfare programs for women, children and handicapped through voluntary organizations. The Scheme of Short Stay Homes (SSH) for Women and Girls was launched in 1969 by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India. The Scheme for SSH was later revised in the year 1999 to make it more effective and financially feasible and was handed over to Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) for its implementation.

According to the Scheme:<sup>1</sup> The Scheme of SSHs has to be implemented through NGOs, which are provided grants-in-aid for the purpose. The Scheme was specifically launched for the purpose of providing temporary shelter to women and girls in difficult circumstances. The women/girls in difficult circumstances under the Scheme have been defined as those being forced into prostitution, as a result of family tension or being discarded, those forced to leave their homes without any means of subsistence, women who have no social protection from exploitation and are facing litigation on account of marital disputes, who have been sexually assaulted and are facing problems of re-adjustment in the family or society, victims of mental maladjustment, emotional disturbances and social ostracism, who escape from their homes due to family problems, mental/physical torture and need shelter. The inmates are either sent under Court orders or themselves seek admission at the SSH.

This study has focused upon an evaluation of SSH situated at Jalandhar with respect to its effectiveness from the perspectives of beneficiaries and officials at the Home. The overall objective of the study is to critically evaluate the reasons which make women take shelter in these Homes. It further evaluates the implementation of the Scheme in terms of facilities made available, vocational skills provided to the inmates and efforts towards inmates' rehabilitation. In order to meet the aforesaid objectives, information on a number of parameters relating to planning and implementation of the Scheme, functioning of the Homes, the quality of delivery of services and experiences of beneficiaries were collected. The primary data were obtained with the help of personal interviews with beneficiaries, functionaries and NGO members. Before proceeding further, it is significant to know the profile of Short Stay Home at Jalandhar.

## Short Stay Home at Jalandhar

Association for Social Health in India (ASHI) runs the SSH at Jalandhar. ASHI has 19 State branches throughout the country. It is called 'Sanjeevani' which means 'One that Infuses Life'. Sanjeevani was established in the year 1982. Sanjeevani is located inside a housing colony on a peaceful road. It was secured by a gatekeeper at the main



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entrance but not guarded well. Anyone could enter the Home easily. It remained open most of the time although there was a woman gatekeeper deputed to guard it. The building was old yet well maintained. There was a well maintained lawn in the campus. The ground floor had accounts office and a crèche. Although this crèche was not run by Home authorities but by the District Child Welfare Council.

The office in the Home had tables and benches placed for the inmates and visitors. There was a provision of dining room and separate kitchen in the Home with two big tables and few chairs. The kitchen was clean and also had a traditional chullah in an open area. However, Home also had a LPG stove. It had a conference room with provision of sofas, cooler and carpets. There were three rooms for the inmates. It was observed that the inmates themselves were cleaning their rooms. Two rooms had folding beds with clean bed sheets. The third room had two beds and a pooja room. The inmates did pooja daily and sang religious songs. There was a provision of dholki also. There was a conference room also where the officials conducted meetings. There were two bathroom complexes, one for the staff of the SSH and the other one for the inmates. Both the bathroom complexes were neat, clean and hygienic. The SSH also had a family counseling centre which was run by Red Cross in association with the local police. This Home had two Superintendents and both of them were residential.

The inmates had provision of outings. Besides this, in association with Jalandhar Doordarshan, programmes related to women helpline were also telecasted every Thursday. The Home received applications from the eligible marriageable boys for the inmates. The choice to choose husband rests with the inmate only and no one is forced. Whenever an inmate is admitted to the Home, the inmate is firstly medically checked. It was also told that some of the inmates had bank savings account in the post office. The post office lady agent comes to the campus for opening inmates' accounts.

Some of the inmates were seen playing ludo. A few of them were working on sewing machine making protective covers for boxing gloves for a nearby factory. The Home had a provision for thirty inmates. The Home was still in touch with the ex-beneficiaries who marketed their produce like 'badiyan' and 'papad' with the help of Home in different fairs. Besides this, it is equally imperative to note the socio-economic background of women who took shelter in the Home.

#### **Socio-Economic Profile of the Inmates**

During the conduct of survey twenty inmates were lodged in the SSH at Jalandhar. Out of twenty, seven inmates were below 18 years of age, eight of them were between 18-25 years age category, four were between 26-40 years age category while one was between 41-60 years of age category. The above mentioned figures clearly show that the young girls are more prone to the circumstances which force them to leave their homes and take shelter at SSHs.

The inmates lodged at the SSH belonged to different religions and were victims of one or the other form of violence. Out of twenty, eleven inmates were Hindu, eight were Sikh and one was Christian. Caste(ism) is another dreadful reality of our society. It is

almost taken universally that those who belong to lower castes are most deprived and suppressed. Out of twenty, fourteen inmates belonged to General Category, four were SCs and one belonged to OBC Category. It is also believed that women in rural areas are more prone to inequality than their urban counterparts. However, it was found that out of twenty, nine inmates belonged to urban areas and ten of them belonged to the rural. One of them had no idea about location of her home. It shows that nearly equal number of women from urban as well as from rural took shelter at Home.

A critical analysis of marital status reveals that women irrespective of being married or not are prone to violence. Out of twenty inmates, seventeen of them were never married, two were divorced and one separated from her family. This also brings an appalling reality to the forefront that divorced women are less accepted even at their maternal home. Joint family structure has always provided a familial as well as social support to each of its member, mainly to the women. However, changing cultural patterns and independent way of life nurtures more nuclear families. During interaction it was found that twelve inmates lived in a nuclear family, seven lived in joint family structure and one of them had no idea about her family background. The findings show less incidents of incidences of destitution in joint family structure.

Life becomes intricate for inmates living with children. Normally, mothers at the SSHs send their children to confidant spaces. However, those who do not have a secure place or the ones whose children are too young to be separated prefer to keep them along. At Jalandhar Home, only one inmate was living with her child.

Education plays an important role in women empowerment. Women who are literate stand more chance to earn their livelihood while options to earn less for the illiterates. Three inmates at Jalandhar Home were illiterate, one semi-literate, seven below matriculate, two senior secondary and only one post graduate. The findings show that illiteracy and less education brings with it violation and destitution. Along with this, the economic status of a woman plays pivotal role in shaping her corresponding position in the society. They are relatively more secure than women who fall in the lower economic strata. They may face criticism and disrespect from all. Seventeen inmates lived in extreme poverty (below Rs. 5,000/month), while three of them belonged to lower middle economic strata (Rs. 5001-10,000/month).

Besides socio-economic background of the inmates, it is crucial to understand the reasons behind their destitution.

#### **Analysis of the Circumstances**

The rise in crime causes distress among women, especially among the victims of any type of violence. No woman leaves home for good but there are circumstances which force her to leave her home, parents, children and almost everything. There were five main reasons due to which the inmates took shelter in the Home. Six inmates were at Home due to Extreme poverty/economic reasons, six were those who were found abandoned/sent by Court/DC, another six were victims of domestic violence, one of them was deserted by family and another one was an orphan.

Five out of twenty inmates were thoroughly interviewed to understand their previous lives and life at Home in a better manner. The names of the interviewees have been changed to keep their identity confidential. Harpreet was an eighteen years old Sikh SC girl who belonged to Phillaur. She lived in a nuclear family. She was earning money by stitching frocks and ladies suits. Besides this, she also made rolls for a nearby factory. She was pursuing a course in beauty parlor also. She was a victim of sexual abuse by her father and relatives. Amandeep was a nineteen years old Sikh OBC girl and belonged to Ludhiana. She was never married and belonged to a poor nuclear family. She was lodged at the Home due to two reasons, one that she belonged to a poor family and second, after her mother passed away she was subjected to physical violence by her father. Geeta was an eighteen years old Hindu girl from Gurdaspur. She was from a joint family, never married and belonged to upper caste. She earned at the Home by stitching. She also had an account at the post office. She was a victim of rape committed by her father. Pooja was an eighteen years old, abandoned girl and belonged to an upper caste Hindu family from Ludhiana city. She lived in a nuclear family. She worked for a factory in spite of a poor eyesight. She complained that she had a sight problem which was not taken seriously by the Home authorities. Parminder was thirty years old girl from Moga and belonged to a Sikh family. She was from an upper caste family and lived in a joint family. She earned seven hundred rupees a month while working at the Home. She was an educated girl. She had an arranged marriage. However, it appeared that her in-laws had forced their son to marry against his wishes as he liked some other girl from a lower caste. She was a victim of domestic violence.

Inmates were lodged in the Home due to various reasons under different circumstances ultimately leading to destitution. It made opinion of functionaries significant to gather information pertaining to the functioning of the Home to which inmates were the subjects.

#### **Opinions of the Functionaries**

Ms. Rachna was one of the representatives of the NGO managing the SSH at Jalandhar. She told that the inmates do share their problems with the members of the organization. She found non-compatible relationships among the couples/in-laws as main reason which creates problem, resulting into sexual exploitation and domestic violence. She also complained that many a times the problems told by inmates were false. She admired full-support by police and district administration in all the works. She further informed that vocational skills like beauty parlor training, Stitching and Art of Living classes are admired by the inmates. Major problem the Home faced was that of delay in grant-in-aid by the Government. Ms. Sita was Superintendent at the SSH in Jalandhar. She told that the inmates meet with the members of the Executive Committee on every Thursday. She informed that the inmates do cooking and cleaning work on rotational basis. She further told that nearly fourteen girls go to school every day from Home. She also informed that the inmates go for outings twice or thrice to nearby temples and gurudwaras. She complained that the staff received very less salaries and funds in a delayed manner. Ms. Neha was Counselor at

the SSH in Jalandhar. She informed that the inmates did not hesitate to share their problems with her. She told that among the major problems they faced, health issues were at top. She further informed that the inmates cooperated with her and those who did not later felt sorry. Lack of transport facility to go to Court hearings and Hospitals for medical check-up were major problems. She also told that the officials working in the Home did not get salary on time. Adding to this, she reported that her salary on papers was thirty thousand; however, she gets merely five thousand rupees a month. Ms. Leela was the vocational teacher at the SSH in Jalandhar. According to her, Craft is such a training which helps a woman in future. She informed that the Executive Committee takes care of the availability of raw materials. Dr. Chadda was Doctor at the SSH in Jalandhar. He told that the main health problems which the inmates face were related to anaemia, menstruation pain, worms in stomach etc. None of the inmates was suffering from any chronic illness and no inmate had ever been hospitalized. She also complained that there was lack of proper stock of B-Complex tablets at Home. Mr. Raju was Peon at the SSH in Jalandhar. His job profile was to accompany inmates to the Family Counseling Centres. Mr. Chani was Accountant at the SSH in Jalandhar. His main work was to prepare and send half yearly reports to the Board's office at Chandigarh and Delhi. He also took care of all the wedding and maintenance expenditure.

After assessing the prevailing facilities and provisions available to the inmates, the same information was gathered from the inmates. Their responses to the same are noted accordingly.

#### **Facilities Provided to the Inmates**

Only seven inmates were aware about the existence of the Scheme of SSH for Women and Girls before coming to the Home, while thirteen were not aware. The Scheme states in its mandate that a woman shall not be allowed to pursue her stay for more than 3 years at the SSH. Surprisingly, out of twenty, thirteen inmates were living in the Home for more than three years. Further, providing minimum basic facilities to the inmates is ensured in the mandate of the Scheme. Eighteen inmates informed that all necessary facilities were provided to them by the Home. Rest two of them specifically mentioned facilities like education, TV, sports facility and provision of clothes available to them.

It is significant to provide nutritious food to the inmates advised by the dietician and health professionals. When asked if special food was served to the sick inmates, seventeen of them said 'yes' while three of them told that there was no such provision at Home. Again, seventeen of them told that they assisted in the kitchen while the other three told they were never asked to assist in the kitchen by the staff. When asked about suggestions to improve the condition of food and nutrition at Home, one inmate suggested that the Home officials must think of including milk in their daily diet while five of them suggested that there was an urgent need to improve the quality and variety in food. The rest fourteen did not give any suggestion.

Generally, the environment in which an individual lives is of great importance for his/her health. In case of health related problems among the inmates, a special care should be provided to them by registered

medical practitioners, also stated in the mandate of the Scheme of SSH. When asked, all the inmates at Home reported that doctor never visits Home for medical check up of the inmates. Twelve inmates told that they get medicines from the nearby charitable hospital while eight of them informed that the Home provides all the required medicines at the time of need. The inmates also told that there was no provision of visits by the gynaecologist at the Home. It was noticed, which was later confirmed by responses of the inmates that there was no provision of separate room for their medical check up. However, none of them were aware about provision for health facilities in the SSH Scheme. When asked for suggestions to improve condition of medical/health facilities in the Home, one of them suggested that the Home must be equipped with hearing aid for inmates who have hearing problem. Four of them suggested to have provision of open medical and first aid kit including regular visit by doctor.

Regarding condition of sanitation, seventeen inmates informed that toiletries were provided to them by the SSH while one of them told that she procures all the required toiletries of her choice by herself. Two of them got toiletries from their families. Those who got toiletries from the SSH told that they were issued all the required toiletries once in a month while the other three inmates told that they got it as and when required. Besides this, five inmates told that they received clothing from their family. One of them told that the Home issued clothes to her while the remaining fourteen mentioned donations as the only source of clothing. It was found that none of them were aware about the provision for sanitation facilities in the SSH Scheme. When asked about the suggestions to improve the condition of sanitation and hygiene, seventeen did not give any suggestion. Two inmates mentioned that the Home should have provision of, more in number and hygienic toilets. While one of them suggested to have all time availability of sanitary napkins.

Counseling is a specialized service requiring training in handling exceptional group of individuals who are undergoing a problem. Mandate of the Scheme also suggests that women are to be given counseling services. Sixteen inmates told that the Home had provision of Counseling while four of them said there was no such provision. Five inmates told that they had undergone counseling session while the remaining fifteen had never undergone a counseling session. They also told that there was no provision of separate room for counseling. All of them collectively told that counseling was useful. They however, were not aware of the provisions for counseling facility in the SSH Scheme. When asked about suggestions to improve the counseling facilities at Home, two of them suggested that there was no need of counselor at Home as the Superintendent does the needful. The rest eighteen did not give any suggestion.

Vocational skills are based on practical activities related to a specific occupation to develop expertise in a particular vocation. All the inmates told that there was provision of vocational training at the Home. However, only nine inmates told that they were learning one or the other skill. The rest eleven were not learning any vocation. Out of twenty, only one inmate was not earning while staying at Home. Rest nineteen of

them were earning through stitching, from the outsourced work from factories, cleaning, working at crèche etc. Surprisingly, twelve inmates complained that the vocational skills they were learning were of no use. None of them were aware about the provision for vocational skills in the SSH Scheme. When asked about suggestions to improve the provisions of vocational skills at Home, one inmate suggested to introduce candle making at Home and two of them suggested to introduce new teachers as well as new courses useful for the contemporary era. The rest seventeen of them did not suggest anything.

Recreation is an activity associated with leisure. A majority, eighteen inmates informed that they have TV, indoor games, art of living sessions, recital of religious rhymes etc as means of recreation. However, two of the remaining reported that nothing was available at Home except television. When asked if the Home celebrated all functions etc., all of them said 'yes'. Only suggestion given by two inmates was that the Home must have provision of colors/painting for the inmates as a leisure time. Eighteen inmates did not suggest anything.

Outing is considered as a short leisure trip usually during the day to a place of interest to which the mandate of the Scheme also supports to. All the inmates informed that the Home had provision of outings for the inmates. Eight of them also told about provision of outstation leave while the rest twelve inmates denied availability of any such outing. When asked how the provision of outings can be improved, six of them suggested that inmates shall be taken to theatre for a movie once in a while. Fourteen of them did not give any suggestion. Besides this, eight inmates told that their family members/relatives visits the Home to meet them, while twelve of them said no one ever comes to see them.

Regarding the staff at the Home, nineteen inmates told that the Superintendent was easily available whereas only one inmate reported that the Superintendent was not easily available. They all told that they do share their complaints with the Superintendent as and when required. When asked if they were satisfied with the working of Superintendent, merely three inmates reported that they were not satisfied with the working of Superintendent. Only one inmate was facing trial in the court. However, all the inmates mentioned that the Case Worker was easily available. NGO members represent the organization running the SSH. Their role is to provide input from the inmates and deliver it to the respective organization and vice-versa. All the inmates told that the NGO members do visit Home after regular intervals.

Linking the available provisions at the Home with the suggested mandate of the Scheme the situation was further critically analyzed. This helped to identify the existing gaps in the 'provisions available' and 'actual availability' under various parameters.

#### **Critical Analysis of the Scheme**

The SSH at Jalandhar was not fulfilling the criteria of span of stay of the inmates. The staff at Home told that the inmates who have crossed the prescribed time limit have actually no place where they can go. It had no provision for job placement. However, it was found that the Short Stay Home at Jalandhar was

putting up efforts for reconciliation to improve the situations in inmates' life. The Home had provision of a counselor and was doing the needful. The mandate states that, the deserving women, who are in moral danger, may come on their own or referred by other people or authorities. The above mentioned norm was properly adhered by the SSH at Jalandhar as inmates either came on their own or were referred by other people or authorities, so fulfilling the condition as stated in the mandate. The mandate strictly prescribes maintenance of case history/register with a documentation of their case. These records are important for the Counselor and other authorities at the time of need. However, Home did not maintain complete case history of the inmates. It is mentioned in the mandate that there should be a mandatory medical checkup of every new inmate at the time of their admission in the Home. It is significant in the way as the Homes can keep a record of the health status of the inmates. It was observed during the fieldwork that this mandate was not adhered properly. The mandate mentions that the Home should take custody of all the valuables owned by the inmate and issue a receipt in return bearing proper signatures and date. However, the above said provision was not adhered by Jalandhar Home. The clause, for number of inmates to be accommodated, states that the Home should have an average of 30 residents at a time with facilities for a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 40 residents. The Short Stay Home at Jalandhar was found to be ill prepared to accommodate the maximum number of inmates as above. The mandate states that a protected, caring and compassionate environment is to be provided to the inmates for helping them rebuilding lives. The desired environment suitable for the inmates who can help them rebuilding their devastated life was well maintained. However, lack of coordination was found between the inmates and the Superintendent. Mandate supports nutritious food, rest and congenial company so the inmates can forget their past and start life afresh. In order to meet the daily need of the diet for inmates the food is to be provided to them according to diet scale. Jalandhar Home did not fulfil the desired criteria. The Home did not provide necessary supplements and nutrients to the inmates. The mandate states that the food is to be cooked either by the inmates themselves or by the women cooks appointed for the purpose. In the Short Stay Home at Jalandhar there was no provision of cook and inmates prepared all the meals themselves. The mandate prescribes a provision of free medical facility to regain physical and mental health of the inmates. The Home provided free medical facility to the inmates. However, it doesn't provide supplements and vitamins to the inmates. The absence or lack of proper medical care may cause health problems to the inmates. It is mentioned in the mandate that inmates must be provided Vocational training which helps them to earn for their living. The fieldwork however revealed that the SSH at Jalandhar had provision of Vocational Skills for the lodged inmates. It is mentioned in the mandate that each inmate must have a bank or post office account where she can deposit her earnings. Few inmates at Home had bank accounts but the passbooks and other details of those were lying with the Superintendent. The mandate mandates that office of the Superintendent and

her residence are to be located in the same building/premises. It was observed that the Short Stay Home at Jalandhar had office/residence of the Superintendent and office of the staff located in the same building. The mandate states that a security guard is to be deputed to ensure security of the Home. Jalandhar Home fulfilled this criterion. It is mentioned in the mandate that facilities like an open space for movement or exercise and a facility for indoor and outdoor games or gardening are to be provided to the inmates. During the fieldwork, it was found that the Short Stay Home at Jalandhar provided all the mentioned facilities to the inmates. The mandate also states that sufficient numbers of toilets are to be provided in the Home according to the number of inmates. The SSH had sufficient number of toilets. The SSH Scheme also mandates that there has to be a coordination between these Homes and NGOs. It is mandated that the organizations running these Homes shall expand networking with various departments and avail common public services for the benefit of inmates. This area is still to be analyzed as not much information could be gathered about it.

Based on the evaluation, some gaps were identified which were hampering the smooth functioning and effective implementation of the mandated provisions.

#### **Recommendations**

The above discussion reveals varying levels of effectiveness and quality of services in the SSH under study. The inmates had no access to various mandatory services including medical examination and vaccination. For the purpose of recommendation few of the ex-beneficiaries, who still visited the Home, were also contacted to get their views to improve the functioning of the SSH. Following fieldwork and evaluation, some recommendations may be forwarded.

The Home had most of the facilities for inmates. However, vocational skills should be matching contemporary demand with networking with employment agencies. The Board should also ensure that every inmate has a bank or post office account\ their passbooks, in order to enable them to have some funds of their own when they are discharged from the Home. The Board should also ensure to fund the Homes on time to help them which ultimately will fulfil the required objectives of the Home. The Home shall pay special attention on the health of the inmates. There is a need to improve the quality as well as quantity of food, nutrients, vitamins etc. The Central Social Welfare Board should also prepare a consolidated data of inmates who are staying and had stayed in the Short Stay Home at an all India level to further enhance research and advocacy on the same.

It was observed that the Short Stay Home at Jalandhar was nearly adhering to the entire stated mandate under the Scheme. The state of affairs can be made more effective for smooth functioning of the Home.

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