

ACTIVITY REPORT

Centre for Women's Studies & Development
Himachal Pradesh University
"NAAC Accredited 'A' Grade University"
October 2019 to March 2020





हिमाचल प्रदेश विश्वविद्यालय

राष्ट्रीय मूल्यांकन एवं प्रत्यायन परिषद् द्वारा प्रत्यायित 'ए' ग्रेड विश्वविद्यालय
ज्ञान पथ, समरहिल, शिमला-5

आचार्य सिकन्दर कुमार
कुलपति



संदेश

मुझे यह जानकर अत्यन्त प्रसन्नता हो रही है कि विश्वविद्यालय का महिला अध्ययन एवं विकास केन्द्र अपनी वार्षिक गतिविधियों को प्रकाशित करने जा रहा है।

इस रिपोर्ट में महिलाओं से जुड़ी गतिविधियों के साथ-साथ उनके विकास एवं योजनाओं से सम्बन्धित लेख भी प्रकाशित होंगे, जिससे प्रदेश एवं देश में महिला विकास नीति बनाने में सहायता प्राप्त होगी।

इस रिपोर्ट में प्रकाशित लेख व शोधकार्य समाज को जागरूक करने, सद्भाव, समरसता एवं विकास को बढ़ाने में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान करेगा, वह मेरा विश्वास है।

मैं महिला अध्ययन एवं विकास केन्द्र की वार्षिक गतिविधियों के सफल प्रकाश हेतु हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं देता हूँ।

(सिकन्दर कुमार)

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From the Director's Desk...



While women have played a key role in the development of family and society at large, gender discrimination practices are still rising at an alarming rate. Women are considered a 'weaker gender' by the society. Mindset of the society is needed to undergo a drastic change. There is a strong need to empower women through education so that they can make a positive and effective contribution to the society. Onus should be on imparting skill development training to women in general and rural women in particular. This would pave way for their becoming financially independent. The Centre had organised various skill development workshops for rural women with the motive of making them self reliant.

Centre for Women's Studies & Development, Himachal Pradesh University has regularly been engaged in creating awareness about gender issues by organizing various activities like seminars, health awareness campaigns, menstruation hygiene and reproductive health etc.

The Centre is constantly striving to work towards creating an enabling environment of gender justice.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sushma'.

(Professor Sushma Rewal Chugh)

Director

Centre for Women's Studies and Development
Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla

About the Centre for Women's Studies and Development

The Centre for Women's Studies and Development, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla had been established under U.G.C. scheme for IXth Plan on July 2001. The centre has ventured into many activities but the main theme is development of women through meaningful action, research and outreach programmes to build an enabling environment for women in Himachal Pradesh. In October 2010 Centre for women's Studies and development Himachal Pradesh University upgraded to phase II. Centre for Women's Studies and Development has been regularly engaging in organizing various activities (Seminars, Workshop, Conference, Self Defense Training camps, Health camps, awareness campaigns, handicraft pine needle training craft etc.

Centre also recognized the work of those organizations that are fighting for women cause and rewarded them with women achievers on behalf of centre. Centre is also working with gender champions of Himachal Pradesh University to ensure dignity of women in society and fight against injustice and inequality.

Objectives of Centre for Women's Studies and Development Himachal Pradesh University

1. Bringing gender related issues to the arena of academic pursuit of interdisciplinary studies on women issues.
2. Conducting comprehensive study of the peculiar socio cultural and economic problems of the women folk of Himachal Pradesh.
3. Suggesting, measures to correct social imbalances in the process of Social change.
4. Giving a new direction to contemporary education to make it more responsible to the needs and aspiration of women and to make it a vehicle of creating sympathetic understanding of women as a human being and not merely a beast of burden and an object for sexual exploitation.
5. Assessing and evaluating through academic inquiry women's contribution to the social process and to identify and suggest corrective social action against discriminatory practices and the gap between political promises and reality.
6. Taking up the challenges to promote values of social equality secularism and democracy in our country.
7. Giving interdisciplinary academic orientation to gender issues with the help of analytical concepts and methodologies.

Vision of the Centre

- To make women visible in various disciplines.
- To accelerate the process of women empowerment.
- To understand and emphasize the scientific basis of women's development so that public opinion can be formed.
- To create database on the status of women in Himachal Pradesh.

Centre's Library

The centre's Library was set up during the first phase of its activity for ensuring infrastructure facilities. The Library contains about 600 selected books which serve as reference texts for the students and staff of the centre. The library also has educational material and posters from other Government agencies and NGOs which add to its readership. The library is looking forward for further additions in the form of books and journals.

About the Staff

One Project officer Dr. Seema Thakur and One Research Fellow Mrs. Anju Devi are working in the Centre from August 2009. They have been actively and whole heartedly participating in smooth functioning of the Centre and also in organizing various activities and outreach programme of the Centre.



Dr. Seema Thakur
Project Officer



Mrs. Anju Devi
Research Fellow

Report of Activity

The status of women in any society is a true index of its cultural, social, religious and spiritual levels. A problem of paramount importance both in ethics and sociology of a people is the status assigned to women in social life. Hindu tradition has generally respected womanhood, though occasionally we find derogatory references to women.

The history of ancient India may be said to commence from the period during which the Rig Veda was composed, in Rig Veda we find a great literary movement of hoary antiquity, containing a code of ethical life reflecting the thoughts and aspirations of the people. Vedic literature which is the prime source of all cultural manifestations in Indian depicts a vivid picture of ancient Indian woman hood.¹

One way to judge the state of a nation is to study the status of its women. In reality the status of women represents of standard of culture of any age.² The social status of the women of a country symbolizes the social spirit of the age. However, to draw a conclusion about the position of women is a difficult and complicated problem. It is, therefore, necessary to trace this position in the historical perspective.

In the course of Indian history from prehistoric to modern times there were distinct stages of the rise and fall in the status and role of women. The literature on Indian history abounds with contradictory and conflicting views on the status of women. It can properly be understood within the socio cultural condition of the society. As Mazumdar has rightly said, the status of women in India can be more understood in the Indian ethnology than in that of religion or Brahmanism....³

The status enjoyed by the Indian woman cannot easily be assessed. A women's role in her family is very significant. She begins to act at a very early stage of her life. To start with, she behaves as a daughter and sister, than she becomes wife and after that a mother. In all these capacity, she has to fulfill vital responsibilities in maintaining peace in the household and shaping the future of the family. The family expands to become a society and thus women's role is also extended automatically.

In society also, the woman has a defined role. She is a teacher, leader, clerk, typist, nurse and domestic servant. She is also a farm laborer and industrial worker. Now she is journalist, architect, engineer, doctor, soldier, air- women and even police officer. But in spite of all these achievements, the woman is neglected and discarded soul. In our typical social system the woman is exploited, battered and molested by man, who is still supreme and rules the roost. One of the reasons for this can be drawn from the fact that majority of women are still not financially independent and are not educated. Man continues to be the sole bread winner of the family and enjoys that status. Position of women is even worse in the rural societies.

In a bid to empower women of rural area of Himachal, the Centre for Women's Studies and Development Himachal Pradesh University made an effort to reach out to them. To empower the rural women, Centre has been organizing pine needles' handicraft training workshops for the past one year. After this training, women have strengthened their economic position by selling their products of pine needle. In future also Centre plans to continue with such activities that aim towards women empowerment.

Dr Seema Thakur
Anju Devi

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1. R. K. Tandon, *Women Customs and Traditions*, Indian Publisher & Distributors, Kamla Nagar, Delhi, 1998, p. 20.
 2. K. Gill, *Hindu Women's Right to Property in India*, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1986, p. 17.
 3. P. N. Majumdar, *Races and Cultures of India*, Asia Publishing House, New Delhi, p. 206.

Pine Needles' Workshop for Rural Women

Centre for Women's Studies and Development, H.P. University, had organized a 5-days outcome based workshop of creating handicrafts from pine needles for the rural women folk of Dhagogi Village, District Shimla, Neen Panchayat and Chari Panchayat under the Equity Initiative Head of RUSA. Besides working in the University, the Centre has also been closely associated with rural women and paving way for their empowerment through organizing such workshops and other outreach activities under RUSA Equity Initiative.

This workshop aimed to provide training of making beautiful handicrafts from the locally available pine needles to rural women. This 5-days workshop also aimed at capacity building of rural women by way of providing them Pine Needles Handicraft training for generating income through their skills. Pine trees grow in abundance in Himachal Pradesh. During the hot summer months, dried pine needles are a major cause of forest fires causing widespread destruction.

Therefore our objective was to create beautiful souvenirs/handicrafts out of pine needles, which would also have served as a source of additional income for the rural women.

Objective

Women in rural areas of the State face several problems towards becoming financially independent and augmenting their income. Centre for Women's Studies and Development of H.P. University came up with this unique idea of helping these rural women by way of providing them training for generating income through their skills.



Craft Making from Pine Needles

Using pine needles for craft making has several advantages:

- 1) Dried pine needles are a major cause of forest fires during the summer months. Dried pine needles lying on the ground can be utilized for making handicraft articles from them.
- 2) Articles made from these pine needles are environment friendly.
- 3) The art of making beautiful articles from pine needles can be easily learnt and mastered by rural women and it is quite inexpensive as these needles are found in abundance in the rural areas.
- 4) These articles from pine needles are very sturdy and long lasting (can last up to more than 10 years) and are quite popular amongst tourists, thereby providing a source of income for the rural women.
- 5) This art of creating souvenirs from pine needles can be easily learnt and mastered by rural women.

With these objectives, the Centre for Women's Studies and Development under the Equity Initiative Head of RUSA, organized a 5 days workshops for the rural women of Dhagogi Village from 1st to 5th June, 2019, for women of Neen Panchayat from 16th to 20th September, 2019 and for women of Chairi Panchayat from 25th November to 29th November, 2019.





Implementation

Handicrafts from Pine Needles

For the purpose of providing training to these women, a Government of Himachal Pradesh certified Master Trainer Mrs. Sudershana Kumari and Co-trainer Mrs. Simrata were contacted. To make the workshop achieve its objective of providing training to maximum number of women and empowering them, help from Ward Member, Mahila Mandals and Self help groups of these Villages was solicited.

On 1st June, 2019, 50 women at Dhagogi, on 16th September, 2019, 56 women from Neen Panchayat and 60 women from Chairi panchayat attended the workshop to learn and master the art of making handicrafts from pine needles. Though pine needle basket weaving is a centuries-old craft, it is still as inexpensive, natural and unique. Through this workshop the women were trained to work with this abundantly available raw material and make innovative products. Pine needles are boiled initially to make them soft and flexible, then they are woven, coiled or braided using special kits provided by the trainer to make products like table-mats, coasters, pen stands, flower vases, chapatti boxes etc.

Outcome of the workshop

Souvenir Development

Pine needles craft would eventually lead to souvenir making. Tourists visiting Himachal Pradesh are now seeking unexplored destinations that are surrounded in the vicinity of the popular tourist destination. These are called satellite areas. Dadhogi, Neen and Chairi villages are also such Satellite destinations which are approximately 20-30 kilometers from Shimla. Tourists visit these destinations as natural beauty is in abundance there.







Though many tourists have started to throng these places, but the local residents do not make any souvenirs for the tourists. Rural women mastering the art of souvenirs from needles would pave way for the souvenir industry of these small villages which in turn would be a source of their empowerment through income generation.



Success Story

It is heartening to learn from the women of these rural areas that they have started selling these pine needle products to the hotel and home stay owners located in these areas. The Centre was also informed by these women about the active participation of the local self help groups through whom these rural women are able to sell their crafts. Having done the beginners' course in pine needle craft making, these rural women have also expressed their desire to undergo the Advanced Course in Pine needle Craft making courtesy Centre for Women's Studies and Development, Himachal Pradesh University Shimla.

Outreach Activities of Centre for Women's Studies (Participation in workshops/conferences)

District Level Orientation Workshop for Sensitizing the Police Personnel Regarding Handling of Women Complaints

The H.P. State Commission for Women had organized a workshop/sensitization programme for the police personnel of Shimla district for timely and impartially handling of complaints filed by women with the police stations regarding their problems. This workshop was organized at Bacchat Bhawan, Shimla on 5th July, 2019. Prof. Sushma Rewal Chugh, Director, Centre for Women Studies & Development was the resource person for the workshop. She spoke on the need of gender sensitization of police personnel regarding handling of women complaints. She emphasized upon the need for creation of safe and supportive environment at police stations.

National Workshop on Women's Health, Hygiene, Nutrition and Well being

The H.P. State Commission for Women had organized a national workshop on Women's Health, Hygiene, Nutrition and Wellbeing: Challenging the Challenges at H.P. Judicial Academy Ghandal on 2nd August, 2019. Prof. Sushma Rewal Chugh, Director, Centre for Women's Studies and Development was the resource person for the same. She emphasized on the various issues pertaining to women's health and well being. The one day workshop was attended by gender champions of the University along with Dr. Seema Thakur and Mrs. Anju Devi.



Workshop on Human Rights

On 13th August, 2019, a national workshop was organized in H.P. University by the University Institute of Legal Studies on Human Rights. Director of the Centre for Women's Studies and Development, Prof. Sushma Rewal Chugh, was the resource person for one of the sessions of the workshop. She stressed on the fact that women's rights are human rights. Gross violation of these rights has been the cause of women's sufferings. The workshop was attended by academicians, researchers, scholars and law practitioners.



National Seminar on Jaliyanwala bagh in Hamirpur

Govt Degree College Hamirpur in association with Neri Shodh Sansthan organized two days national seminar on Jaliyanwala bagh Narsanhar on 21st and 22nd December 2019. Dr Seema Thakur project officer co- chaired the session. She highlighted the role of women in the Indian National freedom struggle.

Self Defense Camp

'Courage is the best adornment a woman can have' following this motto, the Centre for Women Studies and Development, H.P. University under the Equity Initiative Head of RUSA organized a 5 days long self defense training to the girl students of H.P. University in the University Hostel Auditorium from 2nd-6th March, 2020. More than 80 girls attended this Camp. The girls were imparted self defense training from 6.30 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. Mrs. Anju Devi, Research Fellow from the Centre for Women's Studies and Development was the coordinator of the event. A certified karate trainer Mr. Ajay Kumar Thakur, from Indira Gandhi Sports Complex was requested to train our girl students.



'Self-defense is protection'. Instances of harassment against girls and women are prevalent in society. With an objective to instill courage and confidence in young girls, Centre for Women Studies and Development, H.P.U. regularly conducts self-defense technique training to girl students. These students are trained in various life saving karate moves by experts. Self defense techniques are one of the most important ways to empower women. A physically and mentally fit woman is capable of facing the world confidently. The motive behind organizing such training camps is to make girls more self assured and to protect themselves if need arises.

One day workshop on International Women's Day

A one day workshop based on the theme, 'Each for Equal' was organized on 7th March 2020 by the Centre for Women's studies and Development Himachal Pradesh University International women's day under the Equity Initiative Head of RUSA. Hon'ble Vice chancellor Prof. Sikander Kumar was the Chief Guest on this occasion. An equal world is an enabled world. Equality must be there in people's thoughts and actions.

The event was attended by a large number of University teachers and non-teaching employees and various heads of the departments of H.P. University. There were a large number of women participants from rural areas around district Shimla. Participants also consisted of a large number of distinguished physically challenged scholars of the University.

Prof. Sushma Rewal Chugh, Director, Centre for Women's Studies and Development welcomed the guests. She briefed the gathering about the theme of the workshop. The International Women's Day theme 'Each for equal' is a reminder to each one of us to help create a gender equal world. Research has shown gender discrimination mostly in favour of men in many realms including the workplace. Discrimination affects many aspects in the lives of women from career development and progress to mental health disorders. While Indian laws on rape, dowry and adultery have women's safety at heart, these highly discriminatory practices are still taking place at an alarming rate, affecting the lives of many today.







Chief Guest for the workshop Prof. Sikander Kumar, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor in his presidential address highlighted that there was a great need to sensitize the society on gender issues so that there would be no discrimination on the basis of gender. He stressed upon the need for women to actively participate in all the spheres of life. He applauded the efforts of the Centre for Women's Studies for reaching out to rural women by way of holding pine needle handicraft training workshops for them. Women in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh face several problems towards becoming financially independent and augmenting their income. This art of creating souvenirs from pine needles could be easily learnt and mastered by rural women.

He emphasized upon the need to empower women through education so that they could make a visible contribution to the society. Gender inequality is a long-term problem in our society and females are discriminated in many ways in the social context of India, although legally women have equal right.

Seven physically challenged women achievers of Himachal Pradesh were also honored by the Vice Chancellor on the International Women's Day celebrations on 7th March, 2020. Prof. Sikander Kumar, the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of H.P.U. congratulated the truly empowered women achievers who had achieved the seemingly impossible with their sheer grit and determination.

Prof. Meenakshi Faith Paul, Principal, Department of Evening Studies, H.P.U., spoke on the issue of inclusion of women in 'equal for each'. She emphasized upon the need to empower women. Women are traditionally considered by the society as weaker sex. She has been accorded a subordinate position to men. Women should be provided with equal opportunities like men. They should be independent to take decisions on their own.

Prof. Sonia Khan, Director Institute of Vocational Studies, H.P.U., stressed on the need to change the societal mind set about gender roles. 'Sex' according to her has always been a biological term while



'gender' is all about societal perceptions and expectations. This makes the 'gender' a very restrictive term. Women generally are not encouraged to think and act in a free manner. As a result, only handful take courage to venture out of their gender restrictive roles assigned to them by the society. She also stressed upon the fact that the entire society should be sensitized towards gender. Gender equality should ideally begin at home. Parents should treat Girls and boys equally. Parents are the first role models for children. Therefore learning from home would pave way for children being a better and balanced future citizens.

Dr. Ajay Srivastava, Nodal Officer, stressed upon the specific issues and problems faced by physically challenged women. They are more prone to being exploited, degraded, violated and discriminated both in our homes and in outside world. This peculiar type of discrimination is prevalent everywhere in the world and more so in Indian society. Therefore, there is an utmost need to sensitize our society on this peculiar issue.

Ms Muskan, Election Commission's Youth Icon, in her candid address, spoke about her own experiences of dealing with and overcoming physical challenges.

It was concluded that empowerment is the process that has the capacity to create power in individuals over their own lives, society, and in their communities. People are empowered when they are able to access the opportunities available to them without limitations and restrictions. Feeling entitled to make one's own decisions always creates a sense of empowerment. Empowerment should mean raising the status of women through education, raising awareness, literacy, and training.

Dr. Seema Thakur, Project Officer, Centre for Women's Studies and Development, thanked the participants and guests in her concluding remarks.

Health Awareness Campaign in Himachal Pradesh University Girls Hostel

On 8th March 2020

Centre for Women's Studies and Development, H.P. University, in collaboration with UMANG Foundation, launched a health awareness campaign for the girl students of H.P. University under RUSA on 8th March, 2020 at the girls hostel auditorium of H.P. University. The motive of this Campaign was to educate girls about menstrual hygiene, reproductive health and breast cancer. The event was attended by a large number of University students and hostel wardens. Dr. Mamta Gynaecologist, DDU Shimla, Dr. Kalpana Sanghaik, a breast cancer awareness social worker, Dr. Shama Lohumi, Principal, Shivalik Nursing College were the resource persons for the event.

Prof. Sushma Rewal Chugh welcomed the guests. She briefed the gathering about the importance of female health, hygiene and reproductive health related issues. She impressed upon the need to discuss women's health issues in an uninhibited manner as there should not be shame associated with body parts. Dr Ajay Srivastava, Umang Foundation also welcomed the guests and the audience.

Dr. Mamata, gynaecologist from DDU Hospital, Shimla described at length the importance of hygiene. She discussed the menstruation process and also highlighted the importance of female reproductive health. She also spoke at length about the usage of contraceptives and their advantages. She stressed upon the need to do away with the fear and hesitation of sex education among the youth. Girls





actively participated in the interactive session. Many queries related to menstrual health were put forward to our expert by the girls.

Dr. Kalpana Sanghaik, a breast cancer awareness social worker addressed the girl students of H.P. University. During the course of her talk, she emphasized upon the need for self examination of breast to recognize early signs of breast cancer. She described the ways for examination of breast for any kind of lumps which may lead to cancer in future.

Dr. Shama Lohumi, Principal, Shivalik Nursing College, apprised the girls about the various health issues peculiar to girls like menstrual problems and hygiene. She stressed upon the need to break free from various myths and societal taboos associated with menstruation. She reiterated the fact that menstrual hygiene is not to be accorded a silent treatment. Menstruation being a natural body process cannot be avoided. Therefore girls should be made aware about hygienic menstrual practices. Participants had raised many queries related to women's health which were addressed to the satisfaction of the participants.

In the end Dr. Seema Thakur, Project Officer and Mrs. Anju Devi, Research Fellow, Centre for women's Studies and Development Himachal Pradesh University, thanked all the participants for making the event a success.



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