

# STORIES <sup>OF</sup> CHANGE

Glimpses of a Journey – 1983-2018



Child Protection  
Women's Empowerment

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Glimpses of a Journey – 1983-2018

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# Preface



**Pradeep S Mehta**  
Secretary General  
CUTS International

Since 35 years from the time Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) was set up, it has worked tirelessly to realise the goal embedded in the masthead of the society, 'Value for People'. Over the years, CUTS has realised that consumers require empowerment not only socially but also economically and politically, so that they can take care of their interests and welfare, thus, emerged the need for CUTS to work on this agenda.

Our list of successes runs long and this publication is an attempt to capture the organic growth and subsequent progress of CUTS since its inception. Our aim is to present major impact stories that have made difference at the grassroots and would further provide guidance in pursuing the Vision of CUTS in future.

Therefore, this publication encapsulates success stories of two areas: Child Protection and Women's Empowerment, which are based upon outcomes from our various projects that we are implementing in rural areas of Rajasthan since 1993. It is an attempt to capture our endeavour of more than two decades in the field of women's empowerment, sustainable gender development and protection of child rights.

## Child Protection

Every child has the right to stay happy, healthy and protected as the children of today are the future of tomorrow. Their upbringing should be in a proper environment so that their health, education and mental development are promoted. Hence, it is our duty to introspect and evaluate our role in improving their status, particularly of those who are deprived of basic necessities and suffer malnutrition subsequently taking up responsibilities of earning for their families early in their lives by losing their childhood.

In the aforesaid context, there are several Constitutional provisions for children, which include, among others, providing free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6-14 years, prohibiting trafficking of human beings and forced labour and employment of children below the age of 14 years. There are also several legislations for children to ensure protection of their rights and national policies in place having provisions for the interests and benefits of the children.

CUTS Centre for Human Development (CUTS CHD), Chittorgarh has an extensive experience in working on child rights since 2002. Rural Girl Empowerment Project was initiated to develop constituencies of children, especially girls, to tackle any form of violence or deprivation which they faced within and outside their communities. The effort succeeded in developing a model of good governance in this process.

Another initiative 'Stronger Voice to Excluded Children in Government & NGO Policies and Programmes' was taken up with the objective to advocate for protection of child rights and inclusion of children in development programmes, policies and schemes of the government. Successful efforts were made by CUTS and community (especially) in villages of Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan to fight against exclusion.

CHD conceptualised the disability project and carried out a campaign under which it identified over 5000 disabled people aimed to bring about a change in the outlook of stakeholders and the community towards the disabled.

The Centre is also currently running a child rights' project in Bhilwara named 'Childline 1098' which works round the clock for children in need of care and protection in the district through a toll free national child help line number 1098.

#### *Few nuggets:*

- Durga Kumari, President of Ghagsa *Bal Panchayat* (village level forum for children) – a CUTS initiative in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan — was felicitated by Girija Vyas, former Member of Parliament and Chairperson, National Commission for Women for protesting against her own child marriage. Ever since Durga has been working fervently against the social evil of child marriage in nearby rural areas.
- State Award was given to the disabled by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Rajasthan, for their excellent work in disability area; and National Award by the President of India to the District Magistrate for doing outstanding work in creating a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities in Chittorgarh.
- The Child Welfare Committee and Childline team carried out monitoring with the support of police and locals for stopping child marriages. Furthermore, criminal proceedings were initiated against perpetrators under the prohibition of Child Marriage Act.
- Bhilwara district administration in southern Rajasthan, India applauded CUTS work on 'CHILDLINE 1098' which has reached out to 2935 children and resolved 2862 cases during August 2012-April 2018.

### **Women's Empowerment**

Women's empowerment has become a frequently cited aim of development interventions. When woman makes decisions regarding all aspects of her life free of compulsion she has freedom to participate equally in the society and can be more productive. When woman is empowered, whole families benefit, and these benefits often have ripple effects to future generations.

Rural women in India constitute 77 percent of the female population. They share abundant responsibility and perform a wide spectrum of duties in running the family, maintaining the household activities, attending to farm labour, tending domestic animals and the like, even then they suffer from being both economically and socially invisible. The empowerment of rural women generally refers to the process of improving the quality of life and the economic wellbeing of women living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas.

According to United Nation's definition of Women Empowerment: Women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

#### *Few nuggets:*

- Ratni Bai Khatik, a CUTS networker, was awarded the international prize 'Creativity of Women in the Rural Life' in 2002 by the Women World Summit Foundation, Geneva, Switzerland.
- Women SHG acquired State Level Award for Excellence Work in Livelihood Promotion by NABARD on March 09, 2016. Badam Bai was honoured by the District Collector for encouraging fellow women of her Self Help Group (SHG).
- Reshma's husband used to be a truck driver and the family was struggling to eke out subsistence. She benefited from CUTS' intervention to organise the poor into SHGs which enabled her to start a poultry business with a loaned amount of ₹4500 and a parallel business of sewing by purchasing a sewing machine. These two businesses have contributed significantly to the family's income and raised their quality of life.
- United Nations Children's Fund organised an event '*Ladli Samman*' referring to equality of girl child in the society. Arun Chaturvedi, Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Rajasthan felicitated around 50 girls across Rajasthan out of which three girls marked their representation in CUTS CHD and Bhilwara fighting against prevalent barriers in upliftment of girl child in the community with the intervention of CHD.

I sincerely thank my colleagues at CUTS CHD for their involvement in this documentation and the contribution they have made in the aforesaid areas. I would also like to express gratitude towards my colleagues in the Communications team who have made this publication possible. I hope it will be read widely and generate more interest on the subject of consumer welfare.

# CHILD PROTECTION

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# CHILDLINE 1098

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2012-present

CHILDLINE is our 24-hour free phone service, which can be accessed by a child in distress or on his/her behalf by dialling the number 1098. CHILDLINE provides immediate assistance to a child and subsequently based upon her/his need is referred to an appropriate organisation for long-term follow-up and care.

This project is supported by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, India. CHILDLINE undertakes issues related to child abuse, labour, shelter, missing or lost, etc. Besides, the project team provides them emotional support and medical rehabilitation.



## Adding wings to dreams

Maya Bairwa, a 13-year old girl from Bhilwara, Rajasthan was in state of extreme poverty with her father. Due to their poor financial background, she was engaged at an early age. When her father got sick, Maya was forced to marry and quit studies abruptly.

We were informed about her absence via the CHILDLINE number by Maya's school authorities. Thereafter, our team along with the Police officials reached out to Maya and helped her escape the trauma that she was going through. Besides, she was also rendered immediate medical treatment required, and admitted in a government school-cum shelter.

It is inevitable to not think of the loss Maya would have gone through if the school would not have contacted and informed us.

## Nothing is impossible

Deo Kanjar, a young girl from Bhilwara, Rajasthan was forced to marry at the age of 15. Deo was against this decision as she wished to pursue her education, but her family remained indifferent. Deo took a brave step by reaching out to the police that further informed us via CHILDLINE.

We intervened and ensured that her marriage was called off, and she was allowed to study further. Our team got her admitted in a government hostel.

Deo wishes to become a doctor and wants to spend her life encouraging under-privileged sections of the society.



## Opportunity in adversity

Maya is 16 and lives in a village of Bhilwara district, Rajasthan. After the demise of her father, Maya's mother got married to another man and threw her out of the house. Thankfully, her relatives provided shelter. But they wanted her to get married whereas she wanted to study further.

Maya was hell-bent on creating a better future for herself so she reached out to us via CHILDLINE and narrated her ordeal. Our team spoke to her relatives who remained adamant about their decision. After repeated visits by our team, they agreed to call off the marriage. Further, we also helped her continue her studies and pursue dream of becoming a doctor.



## One missing child is one too many

Shrawan, a 12-year old boy from Tamil Nadu, was spotted by the railway officials, wandering at the Bhilwara railway station. Unable to establish any communication with him, officials contacted our team through the CHILDLINE number and sought help for the boy.

Our team, with the help of a Tamil translator, assimilated his details. The boy had lost his father and lived in extreme poverty with his mother. He left home for better prospects, but ended up helpless. Later, we were able to reunite the mother and son. It was an emotional moment for everyone.



## It shouldn't hurt to be a child

A Good Samaritan, called us through the CHILDLINE to inform about Kalu, an orphan living in deplorable condition, with his relatives at *Banjara Basti*, Bhilwara.

We helped Kalu by sending him to a shelter home for a better future.



## Never give up

Durga Lohar, a young girl living in the *Ghagsa* village of Chittorgarh district was an active participant of the *Bal Panchayat* meetings in her village, and so was also elected as the President of the same.

She was just 12 years old when her parents decided to get her married. Being an avid supporter of child rights, it was inevitable for Durga to oppose her parents' decision. She wrote a letter to us about her problem. Consequently, we discussed the ill-effects of child marriage with her parents, and informed them about the punishment under *Sharda Act* for supporting child marriage.

We succeeded in convincing Durga's parents. She is currently focussing on her studies sincerely and appreciates the efforts by CUTS.



## Let them be little

Chanchal Jat is a 17 year old girl who lives with her paternal uncle. Chanchal's mother remarried after the death of her father. She was merely 13 years old when her mother decided to get her married too.

Troubled and helpless, Chanchal asked for our help through CHILDLINE. We helped her escape from the marriage and sent her to the Ajmer shelter home for better care and protection.



## A child is meant to learn, not to earn

A brick manufacturing company in Bhilwara was found to be employing children for its seasonal brick making tasks.

The information reached us through CHILDLINE. Our team immediately notified Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of Bhilwara and visited the children for interrogation.

On finding the information to be true, all the 16 children employed were rescued, and sent to shelter homes by the Child Welfare Committee. An FIR too was registered against the brick company owner and the contractor at the nearby police station.



## Children with special needs inspire special love

An 11-year old, mentally retarded boy was abandoned by his family and left on his own at Jarod village in Bhilwara.

He was found roaming by the villagers, who then contacted our team through CHILDLINE. The team at once took the boy's custody and treated him for his illness due to malnourishment. After proper treatment, we accompanied the boy to the government shelter home in Jamdoli where he was taken care of.



## Adding joy to every day

Bhola, an eight-year old boy lives with his parents in Patna, Bihar. Once, due to unfortunate circumstances, he got separated from his parents, and was spending nights outside a hotel in Bhilwara.

We received a call regarding the boy, and our team accompanied by the police went to his rescue immediately. He was later handed over to the Child Welfare Committee that helped him move to a shelter home in Bhilwara.

Later, with the help of Bihar police, Bhola's parents were found and his custody was handed over to them.





## STRONGER VOICE TO EXCLUDED CHILDREN IN GOVERNMENT AND NGO POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES (IPAP)

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2009-2013

The objective of this project was to benefit the socially excluded children (Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes) in 28 villages of Chittorgarh district in Rajasthan. This was ensured through various development programmes, policies and schemes of the government, donors and the non-government organisations (NGOs). The project was supported by 'Save the Children' or *Bal Raksha Bharat*.



## Turning walls into doors

It was 2009 when the Government of Rajasthan decided to shut down 37 National Child Labour Project (NCLP) schools citing the shortage of funds. This decision appeared inconsistent with the Right to Education Bill aimed to provide free and compulsory education to all the children up to the age of 14 years.

We invited various stakeholders, including people from the community, media, funding agencies, civil society organisations (CSOs), etc. to deliberate on the crucial matter of school closures and draft an action plan to deal with the issue.

Subsequently, we issued an official press release, followed by a movement demanding re-opening of the schools. The entire struggle did yield the desired results as all the NCLP schools were re-opened by the government.

## Miracles are possible

Udai Lal, an eight-year old boy was diagnosed with heart valve failure while he was living with his father and two sisters.

Doctors advised replacement of the valve, and the cost of the surgery was too expensive. The boy's father died before he could get treated, and so he was left with little hope.

When we came across Udai, our team worked hard to help him, with the necessary treatment cost under 'Save the Children' project. Our team also approached various government officials and resultantly, Udai received ₹95,000 under the BPL Jeevan Raksha Fund.





# DISABLED PEOPLE SOCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAMME

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2014-2019

The project aims at ensuring economic empowerment of people with disability, advocating for their rights and entitlements, with government and developing a network of differently abled people. The project is supported by Sight Savers India.



## Know me for my abilities, not my disability

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Durga Katwal is a 17 year old girl who met with an accident a few years back. The accident severely affected her eyes and a leg. But due to her poor economic condition, she could not avail necessary treatment.

Through our CHILDLINE endeavour, we came to know about Durga's plight, and as a result of our team's sincere efforts, she went through a successful eye surgery at a private hospital, for free. She even got her leg replaced with an artificial limb.

Later, Durga received a scholarship by the government that further helped ease her life.

## Disability is not inability

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Lokesh was three years of age when he lost his eyesight. A resident of Badodiya village, Chittorgarh, he was deprived of education due to his disability.

When we came to know about his problem we helped by getting him a proper medical treatment and various concession passes and a blindness certificate.

Our special educator trained Lokesh about various life skills, and helped him further to get admission in a school. He is now 13 years old and is leading a happy and contented life.



# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

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# RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROJECT-I (RWEPI-I)

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1993-1996

This project was conceived to involve women in the decision-making process of their respective village. This programme was a step towards empowering women in different ways to resist all such acts, which lead to their exploitation.

As a part of the RWEPI-I, an integrated and intensive development project entitled 'Village Upliftment Programme', was also executed in six villages of Chittorgarh district. The project was implemented keeping the following objectives into consideration:

- Improving civic services through constant public pressure; and
- Making village women aware, active and enthusiastic, so that they can initiate action not only in their villages, but encourage similar activities in other villages as well.



## Change starts in your thoughts

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Snehlata, mother of two children was born to extremely poor parents and barely a teenager when she got married, leaving her education abruptly. However, she did not confine herself to household chores and took a job as an *anganwadi* worker in her village.

Later, she also started working with our Centre for Human Development (CHD), Chittorgarh as a volunteer in 1994 under the Rural Women Empowerment Project (RWEPP). New to CUTS, she was informed about the women rights through various training programmes.

With strong will power and dedication, she started her fight against the social evils, like child marriage, girl child education, etc., and helped umpteen girls and women in her village to overcome such practices.

Snehalata till date is working extensively towards obliterating the widespread social evils against women.





# RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROJECT-II (RWEPII)

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1997-1998

The project aimed at awakening and educating the rural women to fight for their rights, health and development. It was implemented in five blocks of Chittorgarh through an integrated training programme. The project was funded by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, USA. The main objectives of RWEPII were to:

- Raise the status of women in the male-dominated society;
- Inform and educate women on health-related issues; and
- Fulfill their basic needs and facilitate their participation in local self-governance.



## Let success make the noise

Ratni Bai Khatik, a 28-year old woman from a village in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan was married at the age of 13, but later left her husband due to his immoral character. People hurled abuse at her for standing up for her own rights. This only made her stronger and she decided to bring about a change in the society.

During the same time period, we organised various community mobilisation and sensitisation activities under the 'Rural Women Empowerment Project', focussing on various social issues. Ratni Bai volunteered to become a part of the project and it became an ideal platform for her to realise her dreams. Her advocacy efforts were enormously successful and resulted in creating awareness on women's health, girl child education, formation of Self-help Groups (SHGs), etc.

She was conferred with Women's Creativity in Rural Life award by the Women's World Summit Foundation, Switzerland, for her exceptional contributions to the society.





# RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

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1998-2001

The project, supported by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, US and The Summit Foundation, USA, sought to consolidate and expand scientifically and gradually on human development activities in five blocks of Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan. This project was an extension of our 'Rural Women Empowerment (RWEPII)' project.

The aim of the project was to empower rural women as well as sensitise their male counterparts through an integrated training programme covering subjects, such as gender issues, reproductive and child health, social justice, basic needs and sustainable development.



## **Ripple effects of grassroots intervention**

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It is a matter of inordinate pride for us that the people of the Kanpura village in Nimbahera block, Chittorgarh decided to own and take forward our RWEPI initiative. The project focussed on issues related to gender equality, education, self-governance, health, environment, etc.

This was possible only because of the continued efforts by our team as they ensured the participation of not only the villagers, but also the community leaders and other decision-makers of the village. This case is an excellent example of how our grassroots intervention created a ripple effect and enabled a positive environment around women's development and empowerment.



# WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

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2008-2016

The Self Help Group Bank Linkages project was supported by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), with the objective to empower women through bank linkages of SHGs, ensure socio-economic development and enhance livelihood security in rural areas.



## Success is a decision

We are one of the pioneers in the promotion of SHGs in Chittorgarh and Bhilwara districts of Rajasthan. Jawala Mahila is one of those many SHGs that have created a name for themselves by delivering life-changing experiences to its members.

Reshma, a member of this SHG, was struggling to meet her ends as her husband was bedridden due to an illness with no other earning member in the family.

Advised by our team and with constant encouragement from her group members, she acquired loans from the group and started a poultry business and also purchased a sewing machine. With two running businesses, she is now earning a decent monthly income and is able to take care of her family.

## Breaking the glass ceiling

Badam Bai, a 45-year old woman from Ochdi village in Chittorgarh district belongs to *gadia lohar* community (nomadic tribe), and is an ironsmith by profession. Life changed for Badam Bai when she formed Radhe Krishna SHG of 11 members with our support. She became the first woman from her community to take a step towards bringing a change in her community.

After the SHG was formed, we worked to help them open the bank account and provide credit linkage. The group started saving for domestic and occupational needs. But even after saving regularly, the funds were insufficient to engage in sustainable income generating activities.

We encouraged all the members of the SHG to take loans from banks to promote their traditional business. Subsequently, they took loans from banks at low interest rates to buy mechanical hammers and to install diesel engines, in order to reduce their physical labour and to run their power hammers respectively.

The members benefitted greatly from the funds and appreciated our efforts for giving them the courage and support, which helped them provide their children better lifestyle and amenities.



## Struggle leads to progress

Prem Kanwar, a member of a SHG narrates how she and her group members received their first financial aid from the bank, which was further used to repay their previous debts.

The second loan received helped them establish their dairy business. We provided Prem with necessary help wherever it was required. Life changed dramatically for Prem and other members of her group.



## No force can stop a woman determined to rise

Shyama Bai Soni is a resident of the Beda Bakshi village, Nimbahera. Earlier, she was a housewife while her husband was a tailor. Their economic condition was not sound and so Shyama wished to work too. But she could not work as her husband did not support her idea of working.

Our community mobiliser visited her village and convinced the residents to form a SHG. Shyama along with 13 other women formed the Ashapura Maa SHG, where Shyama was chosen as the president.

The members along with our team members worked hard to get loans from the banks to establish their businesses. Eventually, Shyama and her group members started earning considerably, adding purpose to their life.





## We rise by lifting others

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The *Kanjar* community, comprising 212 members, lives in *Mevda* colony of Chittorgarh. The community created terror among the residents for burglary, robbery and other crimes were their main source of livelihood. The police department tried its best to change the air around the *Kanjar* community but all in vain. Later, the district administration connected with us for help, considering the positive influence CUTS had on the community members.

Our team along with the police met the *Kanjar* community members several times, convincing them to give up criminal activities and to start fresh for the sake of good. The Police assured leniency if the members surrendered and promised them economic aid too.

By July 16, 2008, 22 people surrendered and their lives changed drastically. Their families could live freely, while the children were allowed to go to schools and mingle with other children outside their community.

The district administration highly appreciated our efforts. Also, the State Minister for Rural Development and *Panchayat* expressed gratitude by honouring CHD on August 15, 2009. The whole episode evoked a greater sense of servitude among our team members, inspiring to do more.



# DISABLED PEOPLE SOCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAMME

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2014-2019

The project aims at ensuring economic empowerment of people with disability, advocating for their rights and entitlements with government and developing a network of differently abled people. The project is supported by Sight Savers India.



## Success is 99 percent attitude

Born handicapped, Rekha is a 29-year old woman from Bamamkhedi village in Chittorgarh. As life went along, she became scared of her future as her dependence on others for day-to-day activities grew with time.

Learning about her state from one of our volunteers, our team reached out to her. We helped her get a concession pass, regular pension, tricycle, crutches along with useful tailoring training – resolving her financial and accessibility concerns.

The assistance from CUTS boosted Rekha's confidence. She is now married and has managed to start a tailoring shop.

## Disability is the inability to see ability

Manju is a 36-year old woman residing in Bassi, a small village of Rajasthan. Her life changed immensely when she got handicapped at the age of eight. The poor economic condition of her family only added to her woes.

We identified her plight and helped her acquire a disability certificate, which, subsequently, entitled her to a monthly pension. We also helped her form a SHG for disabled people, which in turn helped her obtain a loan to start her own business of soap, detergents and other cleaning products. Manju is now independent and earns a decent living.



## Pain is real. But so is hope

Kalla Devi Salvi is a physically handicapped, 28-year old woman from Udapura village of Chittorgarh district. She hails from a humble, under-privileged background.

We came in contact with her when she was a minor. While her parents wanted to get her married, our team members not only ensured that the marriage was called off, but also helped Kalla complete her basic formal education. As a result, she was able to secure a job as *gram sathin* in an *anganwadi* and simultaneously also contested for the post of a *sarpanch* only to win the elections by a good margin.

She made use of this opportunity and achieved a remarkable feat of making her village defecation-free, which certainly is her valued contribution to the society. Kalla credits us for her own success – mentioning that she could not have made it as far as she has without the constant guidance and support from CUTS.



## Determination has no disability

Sapna was born in Karunda village, in Chittorgarh. She was diagnosed with a disability in her early childhood, but it did not deter her family members from providing her with primary school education in spite of their poor economic background.

Under the Disabled People Social Inclusion Programme, we helped her obtaining a disability certificate, which made her eligible for the pension, rail pass, bus pass, and a loan under the Chief Minister Employment Scheme. She also underwent tailoring course with our help. Thereafter, she started a cloth shop and is now earning a modest income of ₹10000 per month. Having gone through a lot financial and social troubles, Sapna has become empowered financially and an inspiration to many!





# MOTHER AND CHILD HEALTHCARE PROJECT (MCHP)

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1993-1994

The MCHP project was an effort in health advocacy at the grassroots to generate health awareness, particularly among women and their households on issues relating to mother and child's healthcare, family size and health services provided by the government agencies.

The project was funded by Norwegian Agency for Development and Cooperation (NORAD), New Delhi office.

## A woman with a voice is, by definition a strong woman

About 25 years ago, when Manju was first approached by us, to work as a volunteer for the upliftment of women in her village, it sounded all Greek to her but, with our guidance and training, she was able to fathom the significance of the issue.

With her parent's blessings, she started working for women health under the 'Mother and Child Healthcare' project. Her unceasing efforts not only helped in changing the mind-sets of men towards the women of their own village, but also helped them realise the need for better healthcare services, hygiene and sanitation.

With continuous community mobilisation and effective advocacy at the district level, Manju was able to create awareness on concerns related to women's health and health-related services provided by the government.

But what makes her distinct from others, perhaps, is the flame of inspiration she ignited and continues to do so in many a rustic heart.



## Problems are guidelines

Netawalgarh Pachli, a *gram panchayat* of seven villages, was found to be lacking in healthcare facilities. The mother and child mortality rate was high there, whereas the doctors and attendants were untrained and mostly unavailable.

We initiated the Mother and Child Health Care (MCHC), an effort in health advocacy at the grassroots to generate awareness among women. In addition, efforts were made to create awareness among the villagers about the healthcare services.

In due course of time, the community realised the need of establishing numerous healthcare centres in seven villages, and the government was also approached for the same. As a result, the government supported the idea of more healthcare centres in the villages, thereby, improving the situation to a great extent.





# NAI ROSHNI – LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF MINORITY WOMEN PROJECT

2013-present

We have been organising Leadership Development training workshops since 2013 under the *Nai Roshni* project, which is supported by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India.

The objective of this project is the empowerment of women from minority communities and emboldening them to move out of the confines of their home and assume leadership roles, assert their rights collectively or individually in accessing services.

In addition, the project also helped them to acquire necessary facilities, skills, and opportunities, by gaining required knowledge through various tools and techniques for interacting with the government systems, banks and other institutions at all levels. Subsequently, this improved their lives and living conditions immensely.

## Let your light shine

Sajida is a 36-year old woman who lives in Sawa village, Chittorgarh. Mother of two, Sajida lived an absolutely plain life, devoid of knowledge and orientation, until she came across our team.

Sajida considers the *Nai Roshni* Minority women leadership development scheme by CUTS, the critical point which acquainted her with issues like child education, human rights, and government schemes for poor and disabled people. They were also informed about various diseases and health hazards that occur due to unhygienic lifestyle.

The meetings held under the *Nai Roshni* project impacted Sajida to a great extent. She considers herself fortunate for being able to learn from the meetings and implement the know-hows dictated during the course. She acquired formal training from us and started campaigning for child education and women empowerment.

From dependence on circumstances to taking control of her life, Sajida feels indebted towards CUTS for giving her the confidence to lead her life independently.



## Empowered women, empower women

Hamida, a married woman of Sawa village, Chittorgarh belonged to the minority community. Unaware of various evolvments happening around her, Hamida lived a restricted life within the four walls of her house.

When our team visited Hamida's village, she was introduced to various possibilities that could reshape her life. Attributing it all to our *Nai Roshni* Minority women leadership development scheme, Hamida recalls how her life changed greatly. Besides, she learned about importance of hygiene and became aware of various beneficial laws and facilities provided by banks for rural population.

Having a bank account was a far off thing for her, but now she is capable of visiting the bank for deposition and withdrawal, with ease. Hamida gladly shares, how the loan from the bank helped her start her business. Now, Hamida attends various meetings at our Chittorgarh centre and spreads the word among the other residents of her village.

She now encourages people to educate their daughters while taking advantage of the various scholarships provided by the government. Hamida greatly appreciates our support, and hopes to only evolve in the coming years.



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