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SHAURYA DAL YOJANA

A Model Documentation Report on Addressing
Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in India

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Subhalakshmi Nandi and Poulomi Pal

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*Priya Das, Alpaxee Kashyap, Nandita Bhatla,
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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AWC</u>	<u>Anganwadi Center</u>
<u>AWW</u>	<u>Anganwadi Worker</u>
<u>BMGF</u>	<u>Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation</u>
<u>CMCLDP</u>	<u>Chief Minister Community Leadership Development Programme</u>
<u>DPO</u>	<u>District Program Officer</u>
<u>DPM</u>	<u>District Program Manager</u>
<u>DTC</u>	<u>Delhi Transport Corporation</u>
<u>DWE</u>	<u>Directorate of Women Empowerment</u>
<u>FGD</u>	<u>Focused Group Discussion</u>
<u>FIR</u>	<u>First Information Report</u>
<u>GoMP</u>	<u>Government of Madhya Pradesh</u>
<u>GP</u>	<u>Gram Panchayat</u>
<u>ICDS</u>	<u>Integrated Child Development Services</u>
<u>ICRW</u>	<u>International Center for Research on Women</u>
<u>IEC</u>	<u>Information Education Communication</u>
<u>IFAD</u>	<u>International Fund for Agricultural Development</u>
<u>IPV</u>	<u>Intimate Partner Violence</u>
<u>MGNREGA</u>	<u>Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act</u>
<u>MP</u>	<u>Madhya Pradesh</u>
<u>MPWFDC</u>	<u>Madhya Pradesh Women Finance and Development Corporation</u>
<u>NRLM</u>	<u>National Rural Livelihoods Mission</u>
<u>OBC</u>	<u>Other Backward Classes</u>
<u>SEBC</u>	<u>Socially and Educationally Backward Communities</u>
<u>SC</u>	<u>Scheduled Caste</u>
<u>SD/Dal</u>	<u>Shaurya Dal(s)</u>
<u>SHG</u>	<u>Self-Help Group</u>
<u>TRWEP</u>	<u>Tejaswini Rural Women Empowerment Programme</u>
<u>UN</u>	<u>United Nations</u>
<u>VAWG</u>	<u>Violence Against Women and Girls</u>
<u>VLC</u>	<u>Village Level Committee</u>
<u>DWCD</u>	<u>Department of Women and Child Development</u>
<u>WFDC</u>	<u>Women Financial Development Cooperative</u>

INTRODUCTION

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) undertook a research study on **Evidence Based Systemic Approach to Addressing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in India: Creating a New Vision**. The broad aim of the research study is to identify and gather evidence on community level systemic programs and pilots that can potentially address IPV/Violence Against Women, in terms of recognizing and ‘voicing’; mediation; facilitating institutional linkages; creating an enabling environment etc. As part of this larger study, ICRW commissioned a short exploration of the Shaurya Dal(s) (SD/Dal) in Madhya Pradesh (MP).

Often referred to as the “gallant squad”¹ Shaurya Dals are community-based, and community-led bodies overseen by the Directorate of Women Empowerment (DWE), within the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD), Government of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP). The Shaurya Dals are expected to work for the empowerment and overall well-being of women and girls of the communities, including prevention of violence against women and

girls.² This report provides the key findings of the exploratory study conducted in Madhya Pradesh.

The methodological approach involved a two-day visit in March 2018 followed by a four-day visit in April 2018. The first visit was to Bhopal to meet with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) staff involved in ‘Tejaswini’ at the state level and to meet with officials of the DWE within WCD. The team also interacted with the District Program Officers (DPOs) of Tejaswini to plan the next field visits. In April 2018 different groups of SDs operating in Chhatarpur district of MP were met. The team conducted Focus Group Discussions with two groups of SDs in two rural Blocks of Chhatarpur and one urban group in a municipal area on the outskirts of Khajuraho town. Interviews and informal conversations were held with district officials and cluster level³ project coordinators overseeing the work of SDs in the study sites. The team also reviewed publications of the GoMP on SDs and accessed official documents on the structure and form of SDs, their achievements and the training modules used for capacity building.

¹ see Mohapatra (2018).

² <http://mpsdc.gov.in/shaurya/>

³ Sub-Block area.

Shaurya Dal: An Overview

In 2007, the Madhya Pradesh Women Finance and Development Corporation (MPWFDC) launched Tejaswini (Rural Women Empowerment Program), with the assistance of IFAD, in six districts of MP.⁴ The initiative mobilized women by creating Self-Help Groups (SHGs) at the village level and federating them at other levels of program administration. Tejaswini was aimed at “empowering poor women to make use of economic, social and political opportunities for their improved well-being” (DWE, 2013). The program ‘facilitated the social and economic empowerment of SHGs’.

In 2013-14 Shaurya Dals were created under Tejaswini in response to the need to ensure the safety and security of woman and bring down the high crime rate against women in Madhya Pradesh. This fact was much publicized during the national outrage following the Nirbhaya incident in Delhi 2012.⁵ To address the pervasive nature of violence faced by women and girls and the need to bring about change in the mindset of people, GoMP set up SDs with the understanding that – “violence

against girls and women can be curbed only by securing administrative, social and community partnerships. It was felt that except for some serious/heinous crimes, other crimes could easily be prevented by sensitizing and creating an environment within the community.”⁶

This is referred as the first phase of SDs that were set up in select villages in the six districts where Tejaswini was being implemented. The SDs set up under Tejaswini comprised five aware/empowered (“*jagruk*”) women of the village level committees (VLCs)⁷ and five men from the village who were “aware, sensitive and acceptable to community.” The SD members were to be selected in a participatory forum and with the consensus of their respective village communities. They would be people who had a desire to serve the community and work toward its betterment on a voluntary basis. SD members were to receive no remuneration or honorarium for their role.

The objectives of setting up the SDs were: i) Sensitizing communities to issues of women

⁴ Shaurya Dal was first initiated in select villages in Districts of Mandla, Balaghat, Dindori, Panna, Tikamgarh, Chattarpur

⁵ This refers to the Delhi Gang Rape that occurred on December 16, 2012 in Munirka in South Delhi. A girl of 23 years of age, a student of physiotherapy, travelling with her friend on a Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus was brutally gang-raped by the driver and four of his associates and left on the streets. Several weeks later she succumbed to her injuries and died. To conceal the identity, the case was referred to as the Nirbhaya Case. This created national outrage and led to several legal reforms by way of the Criminal Law (Ordinance), 2013.

⁶ <http://mpsdc.gov.in/shaurya/2013>

⁷ The VLCs are village level bodies comprising two representatives of each from all the SHGs formed in a village.

and girls; ii) Reduce the violence against women and girls by raising awareness amongst the communities; iii) Reduce social evils like child marriage, dowry,⁸ girl child discrimination, immoral trafficking, witch hunting⁹ etc.; iv) Raise awareness on rights of women and girls amongst communities; v) Prioritize issues of violence against women and girls and resolve them through the participation of the communities; vi) Raise awareness of communities on schemes and entitlements for women and girls and try to ensure benefits are received as per eligibility; vii) Reduce sex-selective abortions and raise awareness on the issue; viii) Work toward social and economic empowerment of women and girls and ix) Overall development of the village.

The institution was expected to serve as a bridge between the communities and administration in sensitizing them to the needs of women and girls, fighting to prevent violence against women and girls through community participation. To enable the setting up of SDs, a baseline was conducted¹⁰ on the status of women and girls to be able to assess need as well as to measure change.

The SDs formed under Tejaswini received training and orientation to function effectively; linkages were established with line departments (related to development activities like water, sanitation, schemes on housing and Mahatma

Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)¹¹ and other local institutions; a Shaurya Dal website was set up and media campaigns conducted; monthly meetings were held to compile achievements and 'success stories'. It is not entirely clear who was actually responsible for the initiative, since they were set up under a MPWFDC program but oversight was also provided by DWE, both operating under WCD.

Within the first year of its formation, several of the Tejaswini SDs reported success stories on preventing child marriage, girl child trafficking, ensuring justice for rape cases, resolving marital disputes and cases of violence against women. They had also begun to significantly contribute to the infrastructural development activities of their villages. These success stories were widely publicized in the local newspapers and TV channels and in the digital media. They also gained national attention. Some of SD representatives were invited to participate in the Republic Day parade in Bhopal in 2015 and were felicitated by the Chief Minister of MP.¹² Based on the successful piloting of SDs under Tejaswini, in 2014-15 the DWE with the support of United Nations (UN) Women, scaled up the initiative to 14 more non-Tejaswini districts. By 2016 SDs were established in all 51 districts of MP.

⁸ Dowry is practiced mainly in the northern states of India, where money, gifts, property etc. may be given to the groom by the bride's parent at the time of the marriage. It is considered a social evil – as it is demanded and expected by the groom's families and if the demands are not met, it often leads to the exploitation, death and harassment of the girl. A law to prohibit the demand and giving of dowry, the Dowry Prohibition Act, was passed in India in 1961.

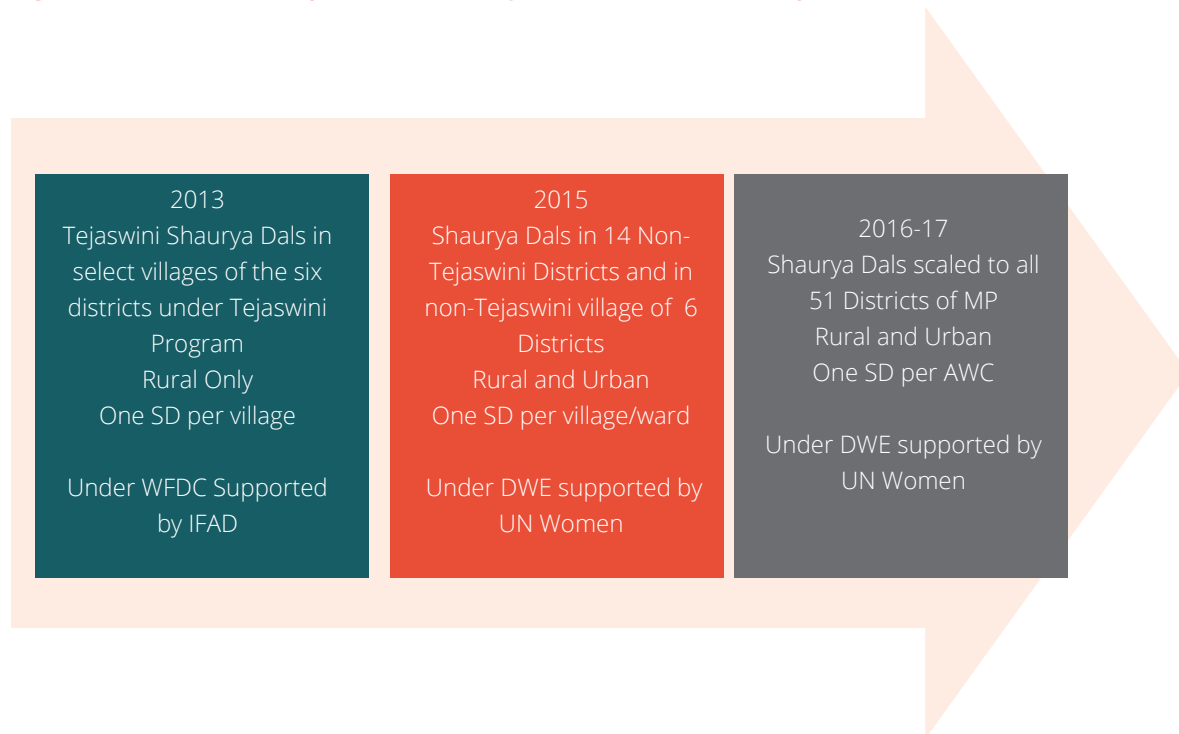
⁹ This is a practice in some parts of India, where women are usually targeted and branded as witches for the calamities that may occur within a household or village. Women branded as witches are made outcasts, tortured and mostly murdered. Most times personal vendettas or property disputes involving women are settled by branding them as witches.

¹⁰ Baseline was conducted by the Department—the data collection was done in-house.

¹¹ Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was introduced in 2005. The Act was introduced as a poverty alleviation and social security measure that guarantees 100 days of wage labour to people are willing to take up unskilled manual labour. See <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx> for more details.

¹² The overview has been compiled from reading of the published accounts of the success stories of the Tejaswini Shaurya Dals.

Figure 1 Phased Development of Shaurya Dal in MP – 2013 to present



1.

FINDINGS: STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

In the scaled-up phase, while some basic features of formation have remained, SDs have followed a different model of structure and composition. An official document states “Ideally it comprises group of 10 people, five women and five men, who are proactive, vocal and have a say over the community. Generally, those people are included who are acceptable to the community and have no criminal background.” (DWE; Undated)¹³

Some state officials indicated that the original design was to include representatives of local institutions and ‘position holders’ in the village like the sarpanch,¹⁴ school teachers etc. This is not stated in any official document and it does not seem to have worked very well (reasons are explained below) While some Tejaswini SDs continue with position holders as members, others have ‘non-position holding’ community members. The SDs formed under DWE have an even stronger mandate to include position as a criterion for membership.

A common feature across all SDs is that there is no fixed term for members. Once selected, the

members continue for as long as they want or are replaced if they are not active. Only some position holders like the sarpanch have a tenure linked to that of their position.

Besides these commonalities, the phased scaling up of SDs from its origin in the Tejaswini led to significant changes in its form and structure. There are currently two types of models that operate at the field level. SD from its origin in rural areas are now also operational in urban areas of Madhya Pradesh.

1.1 Two Models of Shaurya Dal

There are currently two types of models that operate at the field level:

- Shaurya Dals under the Tejaswini Rural Women Empowerment Project (These will be referred to as Tejaswini Shaurya Dals from hereon).
- Shaurya Dals formed directly under the DWE in the non-Tejaswini villages and project areas (These will be referred to as DWE Shaurya Dals from hereon).

¹³ DWE. (Undated). *Transforming Lives: A Document of the Shaurya Dal, Directorate of Women Empowerment*. Bhopal: DWE.

¹⁴ Sarpanch is the title given to the President/ Chair person of the Gram Panchayat (GP) – the local government unit in Rural India. GP is a body of elected representatives at the level of a Revenue village and is the lowest of the Panchayat Raj Institute in India.

The two models have distinct differences in structure and form which seems to have a significant bearing on the Dals capability and ability to function effectively, especially in dealing with issues of violence against women. Even within the DWE Shaurya Dals, further changes to the structure were brought in when

it was scaled up from 14 districts (2014-15) to 51 districts (2016-17). Under DWE all Shaurya Dals have been standardized in accordance to the guidelines for the state-wide scale up. The details of the difference in terms of form and structure and the implications is discussed Table 1 below.

Table 1 Differences in the Two Models of Shaurya Dals

Parameters	Tejaswini Shaurya Dal	DWE Shaurya Dal
Geographical Focus Area	Rural	Rural and Urban. In Urban areas established at the ward level of each municipality.
Anchor Point	Anchored in Village Level Committees ¹⁵	Anchored in Anganwadi Centers (AWCs ¹⁶) – with the Anganwadi Worker (AWW) as coordinator.
Process of selection	As per the official documents the members are to be selected through a participatory process involving the village communities (although it seems they were primarily selected by the VLC members)	As confirmed to us by the ward -based DWE Shaurya Dal, the AWW has the prime responsibility of initiating and facilitating the selection of members to form the SD
Jurisdiction	One SD per village	One SD per AWC. Thus, depending on the number of AWCs in the village or ward, there can be more than one Dal. ¹⁷

¹⁵ For instance, in one of the village we visited there around 20 SHGs – the membership of the VLC was around 20 members.

¹⁶ Part of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program AWCs are a type of rural mother and child care centre in India. The ICDS Scheme is one of the flagship programs of the Government of India which looks at early childhood care and development. It was launched in 1975 as a response to the challenge of providing pre-school non-formal education and to address malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality amongst children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers (Source: <http://www.icds-wcd.nic.in/icds.aspx>)

¹⁷ As per the norm of setting up AWC under the ICDS program, one AWC is set up for every 1,000 population.

Parameters	Tejaswini Shaurya Dal	DWE Shaurya Dal
Who Constitutes the Dals	<p>Officially, it was to members of the community and women from the Samuhs or SHGs.</p> <p>Unofficially, the emphasis was on including local institution representatives like sarpanch and frontline health workers and 'position holders', primarily with the intention of facilitating linkages and creating some knowledge base in the Dal.</p>	<p>Given that there was no SHGs in non-Tejaswini area, the criteria for inclusion for SHG women was not applicable. Also, the eligibility criteria emphasize the inclusion of 'position holders'.</p>
Membership Eligibility Criteria	<p>More than eligibility, the guidelines defined the quality or kind of people who should constitute the Dals – men and women who are proactive, vocal, sensitized and willing to work for women and girls and the well-being of the community</p> <p>The only eligibility was that women were required to be members of VLC or Samuhs</p>	<p>The people who should constitute the Dal remained the same.</p> <p>The criteria of women being part of a samuh was no longer applicable. Elaborate list of eligibility or qualifying criteria for the people who could be members of the Dal. One significant criterion was that person should have completed schooling till 12th grade</p>
Inclusion and Representativeness	<p>No set caste or social identity-based criteria for inclusion. Did not want to explicitly recognize and endorse caste and social identities and differences. The intent was to give everybody an equal opportunity to be a part of the Dal.</p>	<p>It is desirable that the Dal must represent all caste and class groups that make up the community and persons belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe should be given priority in the selection of members.</p>

The Implications of the Structural difference between the two models

- **The loss of associational power:** According to the state officials, the Tejaswini SDs could draw on the associational power of the SHG federation to take up matters related to development and infrastructure. This was also reported by the Tejaswini SD in Bagota who categorically stated that- "when it comes to violence or torture of women, nobody

listens to a lone voice- in these matters neither can the AWW do anything nor can people from the line department. But when five or more women take up the matter - people have to listen." The successful advocacy for banning alcohol by several Tejaswini SDs has also involved the force of numbers drawn from the SHG groups in the village. Similarly, the federations have also played a role in resolving and mediating violence cases.

- **More than one Dal in a village may lead to friction between Dals:** Some of the state level officials of DWE shared their apprehensions about having more than one SD in a village. The officials believe that having more than one SD in a village will create friction between the communities. This they feel could have an adverse impact on the Dals function, especially in resolving disputes and addressing VAW. It could also pose a problem if in inviting members from the local level institutions to be a part of the Dals. Most institutions have one or two representatives at GP level and given that a GP could include more than 2-3 villages, it may not be possible to have the same representative across so many Dals.

1.2 The Inclusion of Men, their relevance and level of participation

Both Tejaswini and DWE officials reported that inclusion of men in the composition of the SD is among its most defining, unique and important feature, even though the relevance of inclusion is perceived differently by different stakeholders. An official publication by DWE states “Gender equality is a critical index to assess the development of society. It is an issue that affects the entire society, not only women. Garnering support for profound social changes cannot be achieved by women alone. The involvement of men is also required for overall mindset of the community.” Some officials shared that including men will facilitate the functioning of women more effectively- although this was not the main reason for their inclusion.

For women of the Dals men serve the following purpose

- Having ‘respectable’ men in the group not only assures the family and husbands of the women but also gives the women members’ respectability.
- Men are particularly helpful in facilitating the mobility and safety of women in the SD if they have to travel outside their village to Block Offices and District Offices to address some issues.
- Men of the group are called upon to do some of the work that requires travel and time – women have a lot of responsibilities at home and cannot give that kind of time.
- Men members are often called on to speak with the men of the household or the spouse of the victim.

It is uncertain if the inclusion of men in SDs really helped in changing mindsets. The expected roles tend to reconfirm the existing gender norms, rather than challenging the status quo.

Enlisting and Sustaining the Participation has been only partially successful in Tejaswini Dals. According to the district level officials of Tejaswini, about 55-60 percent of the Shaurya Dals meet the criteria of five men members. The remaining have between 2-3 members each. In fact, as specified by them, they had to retract their initial push to include men with positions in the village institutions as most of these men could not give time to the Dals.

2.

FUNCTIONS AND SHIFTING MANDATE ON VAWG

2.1 Role and Functions

In terms of the primary function, the Tejaswini SDs with their origin in the VLCs, were described both as a “pressure” as well as a “proxy” group.

- **Role as Pressure Group:** According to the officials, the SDs were to serve as a pressure group to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG). In the initial phase of the Shaurya Dal, the main mandate of the Dal was the elimination of VAWG. The motto read as follows – “the work of Shaurya Dal is to put a full stop to torture, harassment and violence against women.” In describing the main purpose, an official publication on the Shaurya Dal states:

In order to curb violence against girls and women in Madhya Pradesh, an innovative approach of constituting Shaurya Dals has been initiated...[M]ost of the crimes against girls and women take place in private places and it is difficult to register cases with the Police due to lack of support. Shaurya Dal

functions on the principle of community partnerships for curbing violence against girls and for expeditious resolution of cases.

- **The Role as proxy group:** The SDs were also expected to support and facilitate the developmental works in the village. The Dals met as part of this assessment had been involved in several such activities – ensuring the cleaning of drains, effective running of schools and nutrition programs in AWCs, building of roads, getting entitlements for the poor and needy women in the village. For their role in the developmental work in their villages they were referred to as a “proxy” group; proxy for the village panchayat committees,¹⁸ that tend to be either non-existent or dysfunctional in most panchayats.
- **Enabling access to economic empowerment schemes and right to entitlement:** Another core function of the Tejaswini Dals had been to enable women in accessing economic empowerment schemes related to agriculture (getting agricultural

¹⁸ These are committees that are formed under the GP to monitor and oversee the different development activities in the GP. These committees may vary from 8 to 15 in any GP. The most common committees are Village Health and Nutrition Development Committee. Most committees have Panchayati Raj Institution representatives, some village representatives and frontline workers.

equipment's, pump sets, micro loan, ponds, kitchen gardens etc.) They also enable women to access right to entitlements like health checkup, institutional delivery, widow pension etc.

In scaling up the Dals, their role has a pressure group seems to have been diminished and the emphasis on development work has been enhanced. The focus on the developmental activities is aimed at the community at large and not specifically at women and girls.

2.2 The Shifting mandate on VAWG

A comparative review of the Guidelines 2014,¹⁹ and 2016 by DWE²⁰ on the objectives and expected work of Shaurya Dals makes evident a marked shift in focus and intent in the purpose of setting up SDs. Most importantly, there is a significant dilution in the scope of Dals to work on the issue of violence against women and girls. The SDs role and responsibilities in the 2016 guidelines are completely oriented toward raising awareness and supporting the implementation of government schemes on anemia, nutrition, cleanliness, greening of public spaces, while VAWG is mentioned only in the passing. The change in mandate is evident in the articulation of the objectives itself. Unlike in the 2014 objectives detailed in the overview of the Shaurya Dal, the 2016 Guidelines provide only the following two points as its objectives:²¹

- Shaurya Dal will work with self-motivation, sensitivity and responsibility to maintain the

dignity and glory of women in accordance with the time and the country

- For the health of the family and society, it is necessary that women are healthy, safe, educated, independent and empowered. Shaurya Dal, maintaining a balance with the environment, based on societal tradition and science, rights and responsibilities, via the medium of women, will work for the development of the village and community in an organized, self-reliant, humane manner and with sense of love for the country.

The above objectives are highly problematic. The well-being and empowerment is no longer the main outcome but merely an instrument or a means to achieve a 'healthy family and society'. The second objective identifies women only as a medium to achieving a larger goal of village and community development. The emphasis on family, tradition and accordance with the country, confirm rather than challenge the status quo of existing patriarchal mindset – it appeals to a benign patriarchy that offers patronage and protection to women rather than rights and agency. The understanding of 'economic empowerment' of women embodied is simplistic and its definition is limited to access to the government's own schemes, without addressing what could be the structural bases of inequality, discrimination and violence, such as right to resources, division of labour, bodily integrity and mobility – all of which form the basis of women's economic empowerment (and is linked to political economy of violence).

¹⁹ The final draft was shared from the file by DWE. The official notice for this was not available.

²⁰ The final draft of the official notification shared by DWE. The original notice copy was not available

²¹ Translated from Hindi from a document by DWE (2016)

3.

CAPACITY BUILDING

The only documentation available on capacity building measures for the Dals is on the training and orientation and that too via the two training guides published in 2014 and 2016. The other measures outlined below have been put together based on the discussions held with the District and the State level officials of DWE and Tejaswini.

3.1 Key Capacity Building Strategies

Module based orientation and training

As per the official narratives the Tejaswini Shaurya Dals have had two module-based trainings and orientation – one in 2014 and one 2016. According to them the trainings were imparted by a developing a cadre of master trainers at the state and district level. The panel of resource people impart the trainings comprised of lawyers, police officials, subject matter specialists and administrative officials among others. According to the officials the trainings were conducted both at the state and the district level. The training and orientation

were based on guides developed specifically for the Dals. Trainings of Shaurya Dal members were organized to enhance their capacity in taking up issues about ending violence against girls and women and addressing the issue of access to entitlements. The members were trained on various Laws and Acts aimed at preventing violence against women and girls like Dowry Prohibition Act,²² Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique Act (PC & PNDT Act),²³ Juvenile Justice Act,²⁴ etc. The idea was to make the members aware about various laws and acts framed for safe guarding their legal rights. They were also provided training to address their access to entitlements on various welfare measures like Ration Card, First Information Report (FIR), Sanitation, Health measure etc. (DWE; Undated)

In terms of focus on Gender and VAWG: the 2014 Guide focuses on gender and different types violence is done primarily through a detailed explanation of the laws and rights available for women and girls.²⁵ The language

²² A legislation introduced in 1961 that criminalizes both giving and taking of dowry

²³ A civil law introduced in 2005 to protect women from domestic violence. The law for the first time provided a definition of domestic violence that included within in its ambit emotional, physical, mental, verbal, sexual and economic violence.

²⁴ PC & PNDT Act – a legislation introduced in 1994 to prevent sex-selective abortions and arrest the declining sex ratio in India

²⁵ Dowry, Child Labor; PC & PNDT; Domestic Violence; Girls Laws; Child Marriage; Right to Education; Protection of Children from Sexual Offences; Sexual Harassment at Work Place, etc.

used in the Guide is simple and is supported with illustrations and photographs. The 2016 Guide has two key modules on gender/patriarchy and on violence against women – detailing all the different kinds of violence. There is a separate module on laws related to women. The main explanations pertain to laws related to immoral trafficking and sexual harassment at the workplace. Included in the module is a table with details of some of the sections of the IPC that relate to the crimes against women. It does not mention anything on domestic violence. The 2016 Guide is text heavy, is full of legalese and not easy to understand.

Learning through Exposure: Linkages with line and police departments

As explained by the officials of Tejaswini Dals at the district level, one of their main strategy has been to enable the Dal members to “learn through exposure.” Rather than classroom trainings, the Tejaswini officials have enlisted the help of most line departments and have organized several interfaces between the Dal members and the officials of the line departments. It was not clear whether DWE had also facilitated these kinds of linkages.

- **Linkage with Line Departments:** The meetings with officials entailed discussions relevant on schemes how the Dal members could facilitate deserving candidates to access the benefits. The interaction with departments and its impact was visible in women’s success stories related to developmental activities in the village like the cleaning of the village drains, ensuring the effective functioning of the schools and others.
- **Linkage with Police:** One of the key aim of Tejaswini and DWE has been to establish a firm relationship between the local police

and the SDs. Efforts have been made to train the SDs on the process and procedure filing FIRs and on the functional aspects of the local policing system. In enabling learning by exposure –the officials have attempted to get SDs, in batches, to be trained by the police officials and spend time in the police stations to observe and learn. However, as the officials, across levels, reiterated, the police department has been less than forthcoming in this initiative. In one of the recent examples shared by a Tejaswini staff, in the 2-day training of SD members with the police in Chhatarpur, the police just gave them couple of hours. Around 1,700 women had been mobilized and brought to Chhatarpur in batches for this purpose.

Building recognition and spreading awareness about the Shaurya Dals

To enhance the confidence and visibility of the Shaurya Dals one of the key strategy has been to hold meetings and events at the district level and ensure that the activities and achievements is adequately covered in the local print and visual media. This has worked effectively to shore up the recognition of the Tejaswini Dals at State level. The impact of these measures in enhancing the visibility of the Shaurya Dals amongst their village communities seems to have been limited.

Chief Minister Community Leadership Development Programme (CMCLDP)

The Department of Women Child Development has been asked to recommend women from the Dals for the ongoing GoMP’s CMCLDP course. Approximately 10 SD women per administrative block will be trained under this initiative. The course focuses on the developmental aspects related to environment, cleanliness, education, nutrition etc. These cadres will operate

primarily as frontline facilitators of the effective implementation of the government schemes and projects at the village level.²⁶ The course does not focus on VAW or women's rights.

3.2 Differential capacities of Tejaswini Shaurya Dals and DWE Dals

The Shaurya Dals formed under Tejaswini, were carved out of Village Level Committees (VLCs), -whose members had been given periodic, systematic and intensive training on issues of gender, violence, social justice and other issues of women and girls development and empowerment- The excerpt below from an aide memoir from June 2014 -clearly substantiates the preparedness of the VLCs of to operate as Shaurya Dals –

VLC is the second tier of the community institution comprising two members elected from each SHG operating within a village. The program has conducted substantial training program in areas related to: (i) domestic violence; (ii) sexual harassment; (iii) gender equality; (iv) malnutrition and (v) entitlements. 1287 VLCs have opened bank accounts. Most VLCs are vibrant and Tejaswini's efforts in building capacity of the members have resulted in developing remarkable cohesion amongst members, self-confidence and ability to demand services from the government department. VLCs have taken up several activities related to social sector issues such as roads, schools, Anganwadi centers, electricity supply, violence against women and malnutrition.

Several of the Tejaswini Shaurya Dal women have also received additional capacity building by way of intensive trainings on laws and rights of women as well as on VAWG and gender toward setting up the Family Counseling Centers²⁷ the functions and role of which is discussed in greater detail below.

The DWE Shaurya Dals clearly lacked the advantage and capacity that SD formed by leveraging the platforms of VLCs. The new model in prioritizing position holders or community workers aims to induct already capacitated individuals. The DWE will however also have the inputs of the CM CLDP program discussed above.

3.3 Budget constraints for Capacity Building

One of the key issues that underpins the capacity building efforts of the Department of WCD is the lack of budget for the Shaurya Dals. The Tejaswini Shaurya Dals still operate under the Tejaswini project and all capacity building activities have been supported by the project funds. In the initial scale up of the SDs, DWE in WCD was not given any additional fund for SDs. As shared by the DWE officials at the state level, most capacity building activities -including orientation and trainings for Shaurya Dals has been undertaken by using the funds and training opportunities available to other programs. As per the state officials of WCD, it was only financial year 2018-19 that they have received a separate budget for the Shaurya Dals to the tune of around INR 3.2 million. Given that the total number of SDs (AWC centered and the Tejaswini Shaurya Dal) around 85,000,²⁸ the budget is grossly inadequate. Much of the budget is to be spent in the orientation trainings of the newly formed Shaurya Dals.

²⁶ The CMCLDP has been launched under MP Jan Abhiyan Parishad in 2015. The program primarily aims to create a cadre of 40 men and women leaders (with a priority to marginalized group) who are willing to work voluntarily towards the betterment of the people in their communities. This is a year-long course on various development issues involving both theory and practicals. This program has been established in collaboration with Mahatma Gandhi Chitrakoot Gramodaya University and distance learning and education.

²⁷ These centers were set up in 2014 with the intervention of a Pune-based NGO Chaitanya.

²⁸ As shared by the Tejaswini Officials at DWE

4. RESPONDING TO VAWG

The Tejaswini Shaurya Dals were initiated with the primary purpose of addressing VAWG and working toward the empowerment and well-being of women and girls. The multiple success stories of the Tejaswini Dals have been documented by the DWE, WCD (DWE; Undated) Based on the fieldwork we look at a few key issues related to the SDs understanding of violence, the types of cases they have handled, and the processes adopted in resolving them. It also highlights some of the key constraints faced in the resolution of cases and other related issues.

4.1 Perceptions on violence

The Tejaswini officials and the DWE officials displayed an expansive understanding of violence – in terms of the types and forms of violence. The Program Manager at the District level spoke about the many facets of violence. In his view women needed to address not only physical forms of violence but also restriction on mobility and being prevented from working - forms of economic and mental violence.

In our limited field work, it was found that the Dal women did not lack in the nuanced understanding of violence and the right of a woman to be free from violence. The issue

really was with the hierarchies they created in the different types of violence women faced and the degree of acceptance accorded to violence within the limits of the sanctity they attached to keeping the family and marriage together.

In the discussion with women from the Bagota Dal,²⁹ marital discords like “fights between husbands and wives” that entailed some amount of “*gali galoch*” (verbal abuse) and “*ek aad thapad*” (occasional beating of wives) was referred to as “*chotta-motta*” (small/petty) fights and issues. The women in Bagota and Kiratpura also spoke about the young women of today as “being equally aggressive” and do not get “pushed down” easily. They too fight and “speak abusively.” When asked about the prevalence of violence – the women in Bagota said that five out of every 10 homes may have some form of violence – “*but they are not big issues – they are ‘chotte-motte’ issues that are resolved by us just visiting them.*”

The need for a married woman to remain in her marital home is considered paramount. The normative thinking that the well-being of a woman lies in remaining with her marital home was dominant. In our discussion in Bagota, the Dal women argued why it is not good for a woman to go back to her natal home saying that,

²⁹ Women from a village called Bagota

"A natal home is no place for a married woman. It invites shame to the family and the woman. It is better that if at all, she can live by herself with her kids if she chooses to separate from her husband."

On repeated asking as to why it was better to stay by herself and not remarry they offered an interesting response- *"if she (a woman) was to legally separate or remarry then she can never stake a claim on her husband property and her kids will not get their share either."* It is difficult to interpret this response. At one level it tells us that they believe that a woman has right over husband's property but on the other hand it belies the fact that she is entitled to it only by living a life of struggle and destitution and remaining in the institution of marriage.

The reinforcement of the sanctity of family and marriage also comes from the training and the interventions that happen even at the level of the experts. As the leader of the Bagota SD stated "the one thing we have been asked never to do is break-up a family." Even at the only Government-supported Family Counseling Center in Chattarpur, a port of call for most rural women in the area, the Counselor informed us that the main emphasis of the center is to keep the marriage together and prevent a family from breaking up – often at the cost of the woman being asked to compromise and conform. The Family Counseling Centers set up under Tejaswini keep with the same intent. It is not surprising that in both Kiratpura and Bagota, the Dals had not handled a single case of a woman willing to leave her husband and stay on her own.

Domestic Violence, or *"gharelu hinsa"* and IPV therein, was openly talked only in the context of its extreme form (abandonment; extreme physical violence etc.; breaking of families/ marriage). Strained relationship between mother and son, conflicts between mother-

in-law and daughter-in-law, abandonment by husband, extreme physical abuse by husband were all discussed within the ambit of domestic violence. When we instigated a discussion on sexual violence in intimate relationship, there was hesitation in accepting it and speaking about it openly. The Bagota group talked about it as a *"private matter between the husband and wife."* They were categorical in stating that these cases have never come to them -either individually or otherwise as women do not talk about it openly.

We did hear voices that empathized with the right of the woman to make her choice, to move out of her husband's home if she was unwilling to compromise, right to marry in accord with one's choice, having a son is not the responsibility of a woman and the right of woman to have her own child even if her husband does not want her to have one. There are also cases where the family had been counseled to take back the son who had fallen out with the family for marrying of his own choice.

The dualities that exist between knowing and understanding the right of woman in the context of violence and preference for the prevalent normative thinking of keeping a marriage together was evident in Kiratpura. In this group we found that the two leaders had brought back their daughters from violent marital homes, and after making efforts to restore the marriage, had decided that they would not send them back. At the time of the visit they were continuing to fight for their daughters. Notwithstanding their stand – both leaders did feel a sense of shame at what had happened to their daughters. They were hesitant to share their stories with us and did so only at the prodding of the project staff who had accompanied us.

The most easily and openly talked about forms of violence that occur not within private, but public

spaces – like rape (for which the terms used were “*kand*” or incident, and “*ladki ko kharab kar dena*” or dishonoring the girl) and “*ched-chad*” (teasing/sexual/verbal harassment). These forms of violence are often ‘othered’ – those that happen to others or in other areas. These forms of violence evoke some sense of moral indignation. Groups were also unequivocal and unhesitating in talking about condemning all

forms of violence against girls – be it child sexual abuse, rape, trafficking and child marriage.

4.2 Types of Intervention

The Table 2. below, extracted from the DWE publication (DWE; Undated), offers a comprehensive range of the kinds of interventions women have taken up in the context VAWG.

Table 2 Cases of VAWG Handled by Tejaswini Shaurya Dal

Crime Heads	No. of Cases evolved	No. Of Case resolved	No of cases forwarded
Abuse	41	38	3
Molestation	267	254	13
Domestic Violence	183	178	5
Dowry	40	23	17
Trafficking	2	2	0
Child Marriage	15	15	0
Social Evils ³⁰	348	324	24

Table 3 Cases Handled by Dal Women in the study sites

Dals Visited	Type of Cases
Bagota (Tejaswini Dal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevented a man from leaving his wife and eight daughters and marrying a second time. - Successfully fought against a local leader who was trying to encroach the land of a widow - Trying to resolve a case of a woman, the second wife of a man, who has been abandoned by her husband for having a child he didn't want
Kiratpura (Tejaswini Dal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enabled a girl from their village to be taken back by her husband - Prevented another woman from committing suicide by counseling her marital family to stop harassing her for not producing a son. - More active in the developmental issues in the village - the cleaning of the village drains and preventing malpractice in the distribution of ration.
DWE ward-based SD in Khajuraho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focused on preventing child sexual abuse, trafficking and child marriage, given the interest of the Muslim woman leading the group was in child protection. - No specific case related to women (only 4-5 cases a year on spousal violence/ conflict) - A member of the Dal was battling her own case of having been duped into a second marriage and then abandoned. The Dal had assisted her in fighting her case but there was no resolution.

³⁰ The document does not specify social evils. Generally, it refers to norms or practices that are detrimental to the growth of robust, just and equal societies. Also referred often to as socially harmful practices – they could include anything from sex selective abortions to rape and other forms of crimes against women and girls that are not included in the list.

The one issue that does not feature in Table 2 is the work against alcoholism. Many of the domestic violence cases reflected in the numbers could also be alcohol induced. Consumption and abuse of alcohol is widespread in the area. Other than individual cases of successfully counseling men to give up alcohol, the publications on success stories chronicle a few stories on how women of the Dals have successfully rallied and banned the sale of alcohol in their area.

The three groups we met were well known for their achievements in preventing VAWG (also the reason the officials had shortlisted these groups for our visit).

Given that two of three groups we met were categorical that not too many cases of spousal violence come to them (Khajuraho and Kiratpura) for resolution, one cannot clearly state the extent of their impact in preventing IPV. Also one does not have a clear understanding of what a groups motivation are in taking up the cases they do – why one group addressed several cases of spousal violence and other two did not. As mentioned above, none of the group had dealt with any case on sexual violence between intimate partners.

4.3 Methods of intervention

In this section we look at the methods and processes adopted for intervening in cases of VAWG, including the procedures followed in resolving a case, the institutional support sought and given, the inter-linkages forged with other community platforms and factors that limit a Dal's ability to intervene.

Intervention in DV/IPV by request only: In cases of domestic and spousal violence, Dals intervene only when asked. They intervene proactively when violence is visible and is at the

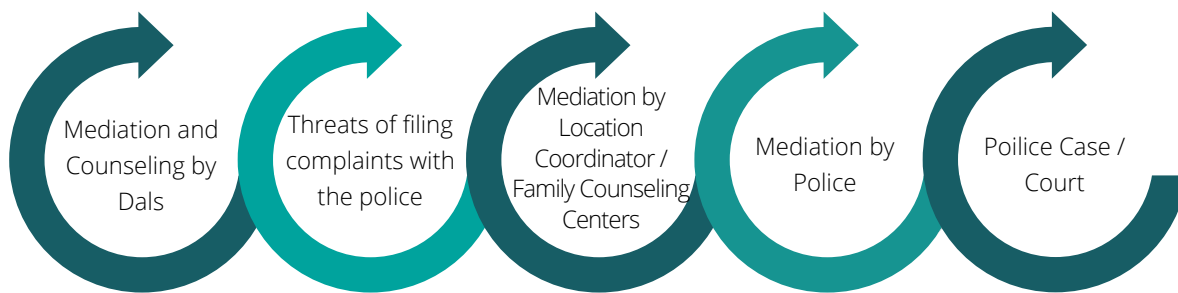
level of becoming a grave crime' – as in the case of the woman in Kiratpura, who tried to commit suicide and the neighbors alerted the Dal women. Dal women claimed that being proactive often backfires on them. Women facing violence tend to turn volte face and defends the perpetrator and accuses the Dal of interfering in personal matters. Dals are proactive mainly in preventing "social evils" or violence that occurs in the public domain (like dowry related harassment, child marriage, sexual abuse against girls and others).

Mediation and Counseling is the primary method of intervention: In the Kiratpura discussions, one of the leaders, also the main speaker of the group, stated – *"as a Dal we do everything we can within the permission we have been given, to prevent any kind of oppression and violence against women and injustice in the society."* When asked to clarify what she meant by "permission", it was clarified as *"we do not have the right to take the law into our hands by beating up somebody. What we must do is mainly counsel ("baat"), make the perpetrator understand ("samjhaish") and give advice ("hiyadyat")."* This was reinforced across all three groups and the officials. As one of the DWE official explained, *"the main task of SD is preventing a small crime from escalating by talking and making the concerned people understand."*

Counseling / talking / mediation happens at different levels, depending on the nature of the case (See Figure 2). First, the Dal level try and mediate and counsel the couple. As a Dal woman in Bagota explained –

"Five of us go and we take another five women and go to the house of the concerned person. We talk to them and try make them understand. When we are unable to do this, we seek support from the location coordinators support or other

Figure 2 Linear progression in the Methods of Interventions Adopted by Shaurya Dals



officials – usually we take the concerned parties to Chhatarpur. Sometimes, in Chhatarpur if the matter is serious and the perpetrator is unrelenting then we get the police to come and talk to them. If all fails, we file a complaint in the police station.”

No prescribed method for recording or processing a case: Unlike most Alternate Dispute Resolution models (like Nari Adalat³¹ of the Mahila Samakhya³²), in Shaurya Dals there is no paperwork, record or documentation involved in the resolving of cases. Neither are the cases registered nor are there any written agreements between parties.

In the Tejaswini Dals the need for paperwork has been dispensed with because of the informal process adopted for case resolution. In the case of VAW, Dal women’s work on VAWG is usually noted in the register where the minutes of the monthly meetings are recorded (the meeting overlaps with that of the VLCs). From these registers the officials identify the successful activities and ask the Dals to write out the details

of the case and send it as a success stories for publication and communication. In the case of the ward based DWE Dal, they have not been asked to maintain any register. However, they do maintain a register for their own purposes. They too have been asked to compile their success stories and submit to the district level DWE authorities.

If the case involves the police and filing of formal complaints, only then there is some official paperwork undertaken.

Mediation and Counseling by the Family Counseling Centers: These centers play an important role in the mediation and resolution of cases, especially if the Dals have members who are part of the center, like it was in Kiratpura. The two most active and knowledgeable women, the de-facto leaders of the SD there were part of the Family Counseling Center set up in Chhatarpur. Cases involving disputes between spouses or families that do not get resolved by the Dal at the village level, are often summoned to the Centers. These Centers operate twice a month-

³¹ Nari Adalat is an informal Alternative Dispute Resolution platform run on feminist principles, an innovation of the Mahila Samakhya of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, in response to the rise in the number of cases of VAW.

³² The Mahila Samakhya programme was launched in 1988 in pursuance of the goals of the New Education Policy (1986) and the Programme of Action as a concrete programme for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly of women from socially and economically marginalized groups. The principal strategy identified for ensuring women’s participation is through mobilizing and organizing them into sanghas (collectives).

on the 8th and 30th of every month, coinciding with the cluster level and district level federation meetings. The women in Kiratpura reported that apart from the 12 members, a few of whom participate in each hearing of cases, the location coordinators also play an important part in dispute resolution. These centers also serve as spaces to engage the police informally. There are currently only six centers operating from the Tejaswini project office. However, to remain self-sustaining, they have started charging INR 300 for hearing and resolution of cases.

The role of the police and Filing of FIRs: The desire of the DWE officials and Dals is that the threat of involving police should serve as an effective means to resolving cases at the level of the Dal. Thus, they are keen that the police department is proactive in supporting and visibly identifying with the Dal in every possible forum, especially at the local level. The women of the Dal are also trained in filing of First Information Report (FIR)³³ and are expected to learn the policing system through learning by exposure, described previously.

The Dal women in the Tejaswini project claimed that most cases are resolved with the mere threat of involving the police and rarely do they file a FIR. Of the over 500 cases resolved in the first year of setting up the Tejaswini SDs, only 60 FIRs had been filed.

The support of the police department has been central to resolving many of the cases we heard in the three Dals. This notwithstanding, a chief concern expressed by officials at the State and district level of Tejaswini and DWE is that police are most hesitant to lend support.

There is no policy directive that obliges the police to support SDs. All trainings and support has been facilitated by requests of the local DWE and Tejaswini officials to the local police departments.

Further, in all three Dals we visited we found instances of where the police had hindered rather than supported the work of the Dal. For instance, in Kiratpura, we learnt from one of the Dal leaders whose daughter is a victim of dowry demand, that despite filing a dowry harassment case, the police have taken no action against the husband's family. Instead, they have been pressuring the girl's family to resolve the case through mutual understanding- as desired by the husband's family. The mother of the girl claims it to be a case of police corruption.

Support and Interlinkages with other institutions and Platforms: As mentioned, by design the police department is expected to be the main source of support. However, from the cases narrated to us by the Dals – we found the following forms of support the Dals had received in resolving the cases.

- **Support of Project Institutions is the most depended upon:** The location coordinators and the block officials of Tejaswini play a critical role in both mediation and facilitating engagement of the police department. They are the first port of call for the women from the Dal when issues are not resolved at their level. As clarified by the members of the DWE initiated Dal in Khajuraho, the local officials do not get involved directly in handling of cases. The officials and staff get involved only if the police or other authorities get formally

³³ FIR is an instrument of the criminal justice process in India. It is a report that the police are obliged to write when they receive a complaint of a cognizable crime. Only upon filing a FIR that police can proceed with an investigation of the case. Usually a complainant files a FIR when he/she wants to initiate a police action and investigation against the perpetrator.

involved in resolving a case -like that of trafficking and child marriage.

- **Support of SHG women is called on and is critical in establishing the collective strength:** As was evident in the case of both Bagota and Kiratpura, women from the SHGs/ VLCs are often called upon to accompany the Dal members in resolving cases. The ability to draw on a larger body of women offers the Dal the collective force in cases where show of strength is important. In the Kiratpura case of providing support to the neighboring village to close the licensed liquor shop, apparently when the police threatened them with action, they were able to retort back saying – “we will gather all the women from all around and come in hordes- how many of us can you shoot at?” The DWE initiated Dals, anchored in AWCs, have no SHG linkage.
- **Support of Village elders is elicited in the handling of specific cases:** Although we did not get any direct example from the women of the Dals in Bagota and Kiratpura, some of the published success stories did talk of ‘village elders’ or the ‘*village panch*’ (a council of elders) and ‘influential people of the village’ (“*varisht*” or elders) being involved in resolving cases of abandonment. In the case of the DWE ward-based Dal, they had included the Qazi in the group who is a respected religious leader of the Muslim community.
- **Support of Panchayats and Frontline Health Workers in VAW is lacking:** The support of these two-community level institution is negligible in addressing VAWG. By design the Tejaswini Dals were to include representatives of the community level institutions and position holders in the village. Owing to their lack of participation, the guidelines were revised to include other members of the community. In Kiratpura

however the initial model of forming the SD has sustained and the group included the Sarpanch who was a woman, the panchayat secretary, the AWW and the local school teacher. As clarified by the woman of the Dal, in cases of VAW, the position holder men and women do not get involved. According to the Dal women, the sarpanch believes that since she has the mandate of the village, she cannot be seen to favour any one group. In Bagota, the Dal women were categorical in stating that they engage with the Panchayat members only to facilitate women in accessing schemes and benefits. According to a woman of the ward-based Dal in Khajuraho, the AWW does not participate in the group activities, even though she is the designated coordinator of the group.

Factors Limiting the Dals effectiveness: The ability of the Dals to be effective in addressing cases of VAWG are limited by several factors, not considering the lack of a rights-based approach and privileging the maintenance of family and marriage.

- **Ability to ensure compliance or resolution of cases may be limited:** By design the role of the Dal in resolution of conflicts is limited. They are to restrict their actions to mediation and counseling. If matters are not resolved – they are expected to reach out to the authorities and police. The support of external agencies offers no real sense of authority. In analyzing some of the unsuccessful cases shared with us, we find that when authorities do not lend them the required support, Dals ability to resolve cases get limited as the parties involved are not obliged to comply and the Dals have no means to enforce compliance without the support of external agencies. This was best exemplified in the child marriage case handled by the ward-based SD. The Dal could not prevent a child

marriage in their community despite their best efforts. The police as well as the local DWE officials asked the Dal to back-off from the case owing to the influence of the father of the girl, a small-time influential political leader in the area. Similarly, in Kiratpura both women leaders have not been able to get justice for their daughters. One of the leader has given up pursuing the case.

- **No assured mechanism for protection from backlash:** The men and women in the ward-based SD in Khajuraho shared that they decided not to pursue the child marriage case because without the support of police and DWE they had no means to protect themselves from any backlash from the community. The officials shared that in case of hostility faced by groups, the police are to come to their aide. However, when police decide to withdraw, or there is targeted backlash, the Dals have no fallback mechanisms for support.
- **Caste and Religious Dynamics limit the reach of the Dal:** Tejaswini SDs were designed without accounting for the prevalent caste dynamics. However, not dealing with caste and caste issues within

the Dal seemed to impose limits to their ability to work across caste groups. The Dal in Bagota comprising of members from the OBC and SC³⁴ communities,³⁵ did not intervene in cases involving women from *Thakur* families³⁶ in the village. According to them, the *thakurs*, as per the caste norms do not like mixing with other caste groups and do not entertain any intervention from the Dals. The Dal member belonging to the lower caste do not like to invite the displeasure of the *thakur* communities and thus stay out of their affairs. As shared by the District Project Manager (DPM) of Chhatarpur, Bundelkhand region (inclusive of Chhatarpur) district is among the most feudal (“*samantwad*”) and *thakur*³⁷ dominated area (“*thakurwad*” or the hamlet inhabited by the Brahmins). Breaching through the deeply entrenched patriarchy, feudalism and caste-based norms is not easy. He however did share that even though Dals may not be able to intervene in family matters of the upper castes, there are instances of where they have raised their voices and fought against discriminatory practices.³⁸

³⁴ Scheduled Caste (SC) are communities who are historically oppressed, marginalized and rendered socially and economically weak. These castes were officially recognized as SC through Constitutional Reform in 1949, both to end all forms of discrimination against them and to ensure affirmative actions to enhance and equalize their social and economic status. Other Backward Classes (OBC) are also recognized as vulnerable groups by the Constitution of India, and more recently articulated as Socially and Educationally Backward Communities (SEBCs), other than the SCs.

³⁵ They had a token representation from the *Thakur* family for political reasons. The member, however, did not participate in the Dals activities.

³⁶ *Thakurs* in MP belong to an upper caste and is often a feudal title that is adopted by communities of *Rajput* – an erstwhile warrior class that belonged to the *Kshatriya* Caste in India. In MP, they tend to be the largest landowners and feudal lords -strictly practicing the hierarchical norms of the caste systems.

³⁷ The dominant and so-called ‘upper-caste’ *Brahmins*, who are the most powerful in the caste hierarchy.

³⁸ People, especially women are not allowed to walk past a *thakur*’s house with their slippers on. They must carry it their hands. A woman from the *Dal* walked past with her slippers on. The concerned *thakur* abused her verbally and continued to rail against her with others in his community. The *Dal* woman took up the matter and with the force of other women took up the case to the district collector and police. The *Thakur* was made to apologize and stopped harassing her thereafter. As the DPM clarified, although the practice of not wearing slippers has not ended, this incident was first of its kind in the village and gives hope to others that these issues can be challenged.

5. SOCIAL IMPACT

Based on the field visit it is difficult to assess the social impact. What one can safely say is that the women of the Dals feel a sense of great pride in what they do and what they have been able to achieve. They were all unequivocal about the fact that being part of the Dal has given them a great sense of empowerment. The women of the Tejaswini Dal spoke about the personal transformation and how prior to being part of the VLCs and Dals, they would not have dared to even venture into a public meeting like ours. They however kept using VLC and Shaurya Dal interchangeably and they often spoke about – “*jabse samuh main aayein hai...*” (since we became part of the SHG...). Thus, it is difficult to say how much of their sense of confidence is attributed to their role in VLC and how much to being part of Shaurya Dal. Most members of the ward-based group in Khajuraho also had antecedents of being involved in serving and helping the communities and thus were already mobile and actively supporting the leader of the group in her work as an AWW. According to them, the only added advantage of being part of the Dal is that they now have more platforms to interact with the authorities related to the work they do. It is important to note that in most Dals, only women who had permission from their families could be part of the Dals. This was the case for women in Bagota Dal and in Khajuraho.

This not only contradicts the intent of setting up the Dals i.e. to enable women to have greater freedom and mobility to fight for their rights but also reinforces power relations that underly the gendered relations

There is no evaluation of the social impact available in the public domain yet.³⁹ In terms of their early achievement, the only documentation available is the 2014 published report of the DWE on the Tejaswini Dals that states:

The formation of the Shaurya Dal has made a remarkable impact on creating an enabling environment favoring girls and women in the villages. It was observed that a number of cases were resolved through community participation in the villages. The community has also started understanding the importance of Shaurya Dal. In just one year of the implementation it was observed that out of 2,620 villages selected in the first phase, no crimes were reported in 147 villages. Shaurya Dal is being recognized as a forum for addressing violence against women by the community. Women now move freely in the community and have spaces to excel in areas which were predominantly occupied by males in the society.

³⁹ UN Women has completed an evaluation, but the report is available in the public domain yet.

The desire to establish the reduction and reporting of crimes needs to be read with caution and caveats. The apprehension is that to claim success, there may be under-reporting of crime and instances of VAWG, especially since we know from other research that women's increased mobility and assertion of rights itself may cause greater violence and 'backlash' or reassertion of power against them. Besides, in preventing women from reporting violence and resolving cases through mediation that prioritizes the maintenance of family and marriages, one wonders if the decisions are always in the interest of the women concerned

and raises question of Dals understanding of the true import of VAWG.

There is also a further problem with how the officials seek to assess impact. One of the key indicators of the social impact of the Dals is the reduction of crime against women and girls. The reduction of crime is assessed by compiling data filed by women at police stations. However, given the reluctance of the police to support the Dals, it is not clear how much of the data collected from the police can be attributed to the Shaurya Dals.

6. OTHER ISSUES

6.1 Limited community awareness

In Bogata, we had an opportunity to engage with a group of women who belonged to different village level SHGs but were neither part of the VLC or the Shaurya Dal. It appeared that none of them had heard of the term Shaurya Dal nor were they aware of the kind of work the group did. We were also told by the officials of both Tejaswini and DWE that owing to budget constraints, no specific outreach measures had been undertaken to raise awareness about the Shaurya Dals amongst their own communities. All efforts in this direction were aimed at the line department and at officials of the district and state. When asked how the village communities became aware of the Shaurya Dals and how did they intervene in the cases that they did, we were told by the officials that this happened through a cascading model and by word of mouth. Initially the VLC women reached out to the Shaurya Dals and once the Dal made interventions, the others in the village became aware of them.

6.2 Effectiveness is Leadership dependent

In Tejaswini Dals in Kiratpura and the DWE Shaurya Dal in Khajuraho, the effectiveness of the Dal was dependent on the initiative of the individuals who were leading the group. The leaders of all the three groups we met were

distinct from the group members either in terms of skills and capacity building inputs they had received and/or the personal motivation they had in working in the interest of women. In the Bagota group, the main spokesperson and the most knowledgeable woman was the president of the federation at the cluster level. Even though she was not the group head, it was evident that she was the most active member and initiator of most activities undertaken by the group. Similarly, in Kiratpura the two leaders who were active members of the Family Counseling Centers and had received substantive trainings from the group that set up the Centers. They were also motivated by the personal battles they were fighting for their daughters. It was clear that all activities of the group were initiated and executed by these two women, while other women in the group seemed to participate and support the activities as and when they were called upon by these two women.

In the ward-based group in Khajuraho – the entire initiative was driven by the leader of the group – a Muslim woman in mid-thirties. As an individual she was already involved in activities within her community. Initially an AWW in her ward, she had gone beyond her call as an AWW, and had worked on preventing child marriage, encouraging Muslim families to enroll their daughters in school etc. She had handpicked

the group – people who had supported her work earlier. By their own admission they were the only effectively functioning Shaurya Dal in the entire municipal area and were often called upon by other wards to help in resolving issues. The Dal members unhesitatingly spoke about her being the prime mover of the group and the Dal.

6.3 Need for financial support

The Shaurya Dals members by design were to volunteer their service and get no remuneration. Keeping the service voluntary is based on the belief that financial incentives might corrupt and disrupt groups and that the group may be motivated by financial gains. In the ward-based group in Khajuraho, the group shared the example of how in a SD, a substantial monetary award was given in recognition of their anti-trafficking work. The money, rather than being given to the group was given to the president as an individual. This led to discontentment among other members and ultimately, they moved out of the group.

Even in the absence of remuneration, it seems that SDs do have expenses and can do with some financial support to meet operation costs, especially when dealing with cases that require travel. Currently the ward-based group in Khajuraho meets their expenses by personal contribution. The Tejaswini Dals seemed to meet their costs by taking contributions that the SHG groups make toward building the corpus of the VLCs. The Tejaswini SD who do not incur out of pocket expenses and are supported by VLC, did not have the same sense of financial support for operation costs as the ward-based SD, who have no fallback for financial support.

6.4 Monitoring of and support to the Dals is minimal

At the State level we were shown formats that are used to monitor both the DWE and Tejaswini Dals. The monitoring formats were to be filled out by each Dal, compiled at the cluster level and district level. The formats included the date and number of meeting held, the transactions at the meeting, the number of different cases handled etc. They also included saving and loans for the Tejaswini groups. These formats were to draw their data from the registers to be maintained by the Dals to document to their activities monthly. The Tejaswini Dals we met claimed that register maintained for the monthly meetings for the Dals, was not different from that of the VLC meetings. The one thing they confirmed is that they report on all the Dal related activities in the monthly meetings that is documented in the register, either by a member who can read or write or by some literate young person in the village. According to the Dal women the registers are maintained at the location coordinators office and given to them only during the monthly meetings. In the DWE ward-based group – they were categorical in stating that they have no reporting systems or formats and they have no directives to hold monthly meetings and maintain registers. They feel that since they do not have any fixed targets to meet therefore it may not be compulsory for them to be monitored.

Future and Sustainability

The Tejaswini Rural Women Economic Empowerment program supported by IFAD is set to end in September 2018. As per the discussion

with one of the location coordinators of Project, there have been attempts to register all cluster level federations of Tejaswini into independent self-sustaining organization under the Societies Registration Act. They have also enabled these societies to get independent entrepreneurship development projects. The Family Counseling Centers are to support their own existence through providing fee-based services. Although one cannot say with certainty, but according to the location coordinator, some of the SHGs in Chhatarpur formed under Tejaswini have begun merging with MP National Rural Livelihood Mission program.

Against this background the future and sustainability of the Tejaswini Shaurya Dals remains uncertain. Likely they too may be standardized as per the DWE Shaurya Dal guidelines of 2016 and may move to being anchored in AWCs. However, as we have learned from the field, under DWE, the mandate and scope of work of the Dals on VAWG has been significantly diminished. Given this, one is not sure whether moving ahead, the Shaurya Dals, notwithstanding their limited understanding of VAWG will even take up the issues that they did as part of Tejaswini Dals.

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