Addressing Violence Against Dalit Women

Insights Based on Field Experiences in Haryana
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Submitted to

THE ASIA FOUNDATION
New Delhi

Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)
42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area,
New Delhi – 110 062
Phone: 91-11-2996 0931 / 32 / 33
Fax: 91-11-2995 5183
Email: info@pria.org
Web: www.pria.org
अनुसूचित जाति और अनुसूचित जनजाति (अत्याचार निवारण) अधिनियम, 1989
सामाजिक जानकारियाँ

अधिकारों का ज्ञान
अत्याचार व उपीड़न से बचाव

गहिलाओं के विश्वस्त्र जातिगत हिंसा
अत्याचार व उपीड़न से बचाव के लिए कानूनी संस्थाओं के संपर्क व पते

अनुसूचित जाति और अनुसूचित जनजाति (अत्याचार निवारण) अधिनियम, 1989
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अत्याचार व उपीड़न से बचाव
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<tr>
<td>ANM</td>
<td>Auxiliary Nurse Midwife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASHA</td>
<td>Accredited Social Health Activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWPS</td>
<td>All Women Police Stations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDO</td>
<td>Block Development Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>CERD</td>
<td>Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIR</td>
<td>Developing Indigenous Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>Gram Panchayat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICDS</td>
<td>Integrated Child Development Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICERD</td>
<td>International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination</td>
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<td>NCRB</td>
<td>National Crime Records Bureau</td>
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<td>NCW</td>
<td>National Commission for Women</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCR</td>
<td>Protection of Civil Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>POs</td>
<td>Protection Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POA</td>
<td>Prevention of Atrocities Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPOs</td>
<td>Protection-cum-Child Marriage Prohibition Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>Panchayati Raj Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRIA</td>
<td>Society for Participatory Research in Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Panchayat Samiti</td>
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<td>PWDVA</td>
<td>Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHG</td>
<td>Self-Help Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJC</td>
<td>Social Justice Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Service Provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ULB</td>
<td>Urban Local Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VADW</td>
<td>Violence Against Dalit Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAW</td>
<td>Violence Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Village Information Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPEL</td>
<td>Women’s Political Empowerment and Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZP</td>
<td>Zilla Parishad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adalat</td>
<td>Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adivasis</td>
<td>Scheduled Tribes, indigenous people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anganwadi</td>
<td>A government sponsored child-care and mother care centre in India. It caters to children in the 0-6 age group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basti</td>
<td>Colony, township</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamar</td>
<td>A Scheduled Caste engaged in leather work and tanning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chowkidar</td>
<td>Security guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalits</td>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharna</td>
<td>A peaceful form of protest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lok Adalat</td>
<td>Public court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahila</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandal</td>
<td>An administrative division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat</td>
<td>Oldest system of local governance in India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Samitis</td>
<td>Committees of the local governance structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panch</td>
<td>Member of the local governance body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabha</td>
<td>Assembly, gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samiti</td>
<td>Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarpanch</td>
<td>Head of local governance body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taluka</td>
<td>A subdivision of a district; a group of several villages organized for revenue purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thana</td>
<td>Police station</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zamindar</td>
<td>Landlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zilla</td>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zilla Parishad</td>
<td>District Council</td>
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Preface

Historically, the caste system left the lowest castes (Dalits) at the bottom of the social, political and economic set up in India. The Indian constitution calls them Scheduled Castes (SCs) and has tried to end their marginalization and discrimination through legal measures. To stop discrimination in particular, the practice of untouchability is banned and successive laws have been passed to stop degrading practices enforced upon Dalits.

Affirmative action in the form of a reservation policy was adopted, giving SCs provisions for securing government jobs to ensure their economic and social development. At the same time, to bring them into the political decision making process, they were also given quotas in representative institutions (parliament, legislative assemblies and local governments). Apart from these constitutional and legal measures, a number of policy initiatives have been initiated in the last six decades at various governance levels to improve the socio-economic conditions of the SC community.

However, even after six decades of Indian independence, the condition of SCs has not improved much. They not only remain at the bottom of the social hierarchy but also face multiple challenges in accessing their rights. Policies have often remained only on paper and society has resisted change. Attempts at social reform have also produced violence.

Dalit women are positioned at the bottom of India’s caste, class and gender hierarchies. They experience endemic gender and caste discrimination and violence as an outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations. A high number of caste related crimes occur against the SC community in general and Dalit women in particular in Haryana.

PRIA has been working to bring about participatory social change, especially for the SC community in Haryana, for nearly a decade now. PRIA has worked with panchayats and municipalities in Haryana so that they can function as true units of self-development to help them achieve the goals of social justice and equity and the MDG of gender equality and empowerment. Through its innovative and participatory approaches, PRIA has established a considerably strong network in the state. PRIA’s presence in Haryana is well recognized by the state and district administrations and with elected leaders. Since 2005, PRIA has primarily worked in Sonepat district on gender issues. At the district level, during 2008-10, a network of women leaders, both elected and non-elected, was formed through the project ‘Women’s Political Empowerment and Leadership’ (WPEL). The ‘Campaign on Sex Selection in Haryana’ strived to develop the political leadership of women and Scheduled Castes in panchayats against the issue of sex selection. Collectives (clusters) were developed and effectively engaged in spreading social education on gender issues with specific reference to sex selective techniques.

Building on its presence and earlier work, PRIA undertook the current Violence Against Dalit Women project, supported by The Asia Foundation.¹

This report seeks to highlight the insights gained from the project. These insights are based on a number of interface meetings with community members and members of local governance institutions/committees and an extensive study of 20 villages and 2 wards of Sonepat district over a period of one year. The research process

¹ For details of the project please refer to Annexure 1.
undertaken was empirical in nature and relied on the principles of participatory research, making use of qualitative tools to support the data collection process. Field animators, coordinators of the Village Information Centres and PRIA staff were all involved in the data collection process. A large part of their role over the past year was to help in the constitution of Social Justice Committees, encourage the Dalit community and their women in particular to open up and share the experiences of atrocities and various forms of violence that have been perpetuated against them. Discussions have been conducted with members of Sanjha Kadam Nari Network and Kishori groups to obtain their experiences on the issue. The preliminary findings of the study were shared with these groups, as well as the animators and coordinators to get their comments and inputs.

This study and project would not have been possible without the support, assistance and guidance of several individuals who have contributed and extended their valuable time and effort. We would like to place on record our appreciation of:

- Mr. Satpal (ex-state office in-charge)
- Mr. Abhijit Sarkar (state office in-charge)
- Social Justice Committee animators (Ms. Sushma, Ms. Anita, Ms. Sunita)
- Village Information Centre coordinators (Ms. Naresh, Ms. Rajbala, Ms. Minakshi, Ms. Kavita)
- Members of Sanjha Kadam Nari Network and the Kishori group

We are indebted to The Asia Foundation for providing us the opportunity to conduct our research.

Last, but not least, we would like to thank all the respondents and participants of this study for their cooperation and sharing painful incidents from their lives, which is not easy to discuss in public. They welcomed our teams into their villages, anganwadi centres, their homes and especially their minds and hearts. They are acknowledged as the backbone of this study.

Ms. Martha Farrell  
Director  
PIALL, PRIA

Ms. Namita Kumari  
Programme Officer  
PIALL, PRIA
An Introduction to Violence Against Dalits/Dalit Women

Human development indicators consistently reflect women’s low status in areas of health, education, political participation and social status. Nussbaum (2000) is of the view that women across the world face special problems associated with their sex. ‘Lack of essential support for leading lives that are fully human... are frequently caused by their being women...Thus, even when they live in a constitutional democracy, such as India, where they are equals in theory, they are second class citizens in reality’ (p. 4).

Violence against women is one of the most brutal consequences of the economic, social, political and cultural inequalities that exist between the sexes. Unabated violence against women and girls accounts for more death and disability worldwide amongst women aged 15 to 44 than war, cancer, malaria and traffic accidents. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime, with the abuser usually someone known to her. In modern armed conflicts, 70% of casualties are non-combatants, most of them being women and children. Women are targeted to bring fear and humiliation and to punish and divide communities (Womankind, 2012). On the occasion of International Women’s Day on 8 March 2007, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said, ‘Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women’s lives, on their families, and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence...yet the reality is that too often it is covered up or tacitly condoned.’

The United Nations in 1993 defined Violence Against Women (VAW) as ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a woman, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life’.

It is estimated that every 26 minutes a woman is molested and every 51 minutes a woman is sexually harassed in India. ‘Eve teasing’ has become a daily hazard for almost all women, something to be put up with, often dismissed as ‘normal’. Studies indicate that the magnitude of unreported cases is several times the official figures (Srinivasan, 1998).

The Dalit community constitutes about 250 million people and almost half of them are women. Dalits are the most marginalized caste group in the hierarchy of Indian society (Mittal, 2010) and highly prone to incidents of violence against them, ranging from verbal abuse to physical assault, sexual harassment, rape and even murder.

3 The word ‘Dalit’ comes from the Sanskrit root dal- and means ‘broken, ground-down, downtrodden, or oppressed’. Those previously known as Untouchables, Depressed Classes, and Harijans are today increasingly adopting the term ‘Dalit’ as a name for themselves. ‘Dalit’ refers to one’s caste rather than class; it applies to members of those menial castes which have born the stigma of ‘untouchability’ because of the extreme impurity and pollution connected with their traditional occupations. Dalits are ‘outcastes’ falling outside the traditional four-fold caste system consisting of the hereditary Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra classes; they are considered impure and polluting and are therefore physically and socially excluded and isolated from the rest of society (http://ncdhr.org.in/ncdhr2/dalits-untouchability/dalits-untouchability, accessed on 19/07/2012).
Table 1.1 presents the various type of violence against Dalits in India between 2006 and 2011.

Table 1.1: Crimes Against the Dalit Community in India (2006-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% variation (2010-2011)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>1217</td>
<td>1349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidnapping &amp; abduction</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dacoity</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>3760</td>
<td>3814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of civil rights acts</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act</td>
<td>8581</td>
<td>9819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>11808</td>
<td>13490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>27070</td>
<td>30031</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from National Crime Records Bureau reports of various years (http://ncrb.gov.in/index.htm) (accessed on 19/07/2012)

In 2007, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) delivered its concluding observations regarding India’s compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). The Committee’s report found that ‘de facto segregation of Dalits persists’ and highlighted systematic abuse against Dalits including torture and extrajudicial killings, and an ‘alarming’ extent of sexual violence against Dalit women. The concluding observation of the committee confirms that India has failed to properly protect Dalits and tribal communities (Human Right Watch, 2007).

Dalit women are positioned at the bottom of India’s caste, class and gender hierarchies. They experience endemic gender and caste discrimination and violence as an outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations. Women are often seen as a symbol of a community’s prestige and this is equally true of the Dalit community. Therefore, an outsider violating the honour of their women signals the powerlessness of the Dalits to protect their womenfolk. And there are people who will not tolerate any assertion by Dalit women and are ready to suppress them and/or their voice at all costs. Incidentally, this phenomenon also poses a major challenge for the empowerment of Dalit women, who are not able to speak out against the atrocities committed against them. A recent three-year study of 500 Dalit women’s experiences of violence across four Indian states revealed that the
majority of Dalit women faced one or more incidents of verbal abuse (62.4%), physical assault (54.8%), sexual harassment and assault (46.8%), domestic violence (43.0%) and rape (23.2%) (Irudayam et al., 2006).

The annual reports published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) on crimes against SCs in Haryana confirm that in the last ten years there has been a significant increase in the overall crime against SCs in Haryana.

**Crimes against Scheduled Castes in Haryana**

![Graph showing crimes against SCs in Haryana]

Source: Compiled from data published by NCRB over a decade

Between 2001 and 2005 atrocities against Dalits in Haryana saw a fluctuating trend (in fact showing a decline in 2003 and 2004). Unfortunately, from 2005 to 2011, there has been a continuous rise in registered cases. One of the many reasons for the upswing in crimes against Dalits has been attributed to the increase in the voices raised by Dalits in the last few years. The NHRC reports that most often violence against Dalit occurs in order to suppress their voice and teach them a lesson for the future.\(^4\)

Representatives of the Dalit community, during interface meetings with PRIA, raised a host of issues that they face—scarcity of drinking water, improper drainage, lack of electricity and other basic amenities while surrounding higher caste communities in the same village have access to these resources. Their deprivation and discrimination is based on their low caste and social position. Dalits are denied entry into temples and their offerings to God rejected by the priest. Abusive language, verbal and physical abuse of Dalit children in schools by teachers and fellow students is another major problem. They experience exploitation and manipulation in relation to the conditions and quality of work and employment. Lack of education, resulting from poor schooling or dropout rates among Dalits, and consequential lack of professional skills, alternative employment opportunities and extreme poverty, force Dalits into taking up degrading jobs, such as scavenging, tanning and other tasks that higher castes refuse to do. The ineffectiveness of labour laws ensures that there is rampant exploitation of Dalits and the internationally banned practices of bonded labour, trafficking and sexual exploitation are common to suppress Dalits and maintain the status quo of power and position of upper castes.

\(^4\) [http://ncrb.gov.in/](http://ncrb.gov.in/) (accessed on 19/07/2012)
PRIA's study of issues faced by Dalit women clearly records that they are often subjected to indecent and inhuman treatment by non-Dalits as a means to establish authority and to humiliate the entire Dalit community. Some specific and serious issues shared by the Dalit women are:

- The issue of alcoholism and easy access to it due to large number of local liquor shops in and around the villages. They reported that most crimes (teasing, mob fighting, murder, etc.) are caused by drunk men.
- Wage discrimination
- While working as bonded labour, they face unpleasant, immoral sexual comments, eve-teasing, sexual exploitation and rape by the dominant castes. Physical pain, unwanted pregnancies and STDs are not uncommon but can be treated; the emotional and mental trauma and its impact on generations to follow is not even taken cognisance of.
- Dalit girls who attend school become vulnerable to eve-teasing, harassment and violence perpetrated by boys belonging to dominant castes. In cases where the school is at a distance from the village, such incidences and insecurity increases. This deters Dalit girls from going to school, resulting in a high dropout rate among them. When the girls do not go to school and live at home, parents prefer to marry them off at a young age. This leads to other problems related to early marriage such as early child bearing, lack of earning capacity, poor health, etc.
- Economic and social boycotts are a common tool used by the dominant castes that influences the overall access of Dalits to economic and social rights. Such boycotts are used as a form of retaliation by the upper castes against Dalits asserting their rights.

But perhaps what is most disturbing is that Dalits themselves are not aware that they are being abused or exploited, as such behaviour is considered to be the norm and accepted as necessary even to live in society. For example, Dalits might not protest at being called by their caste names, as this is the accepted mode of address by all sections of the community. A child made to sit at the back of the classroom or being asked to sweep the classroom is not considered discriminated against or exploited by either upper or lower castes.

Brutal measures to thwart any attempts by Dalits to secure their rights have a deep impact on the community and produce the desired results to silence voices of dissent that challenge existing societal norms. Violence against Dalit women is a systematically utilized tool to deny the entire community opportunities, choices and freedom at multiple levels. It undermines not only a Dalit women's dignity and self-respect but also the right of all Scheduled Castes to the benefits of development.
Factors Contributing to Violence Against Dalit Women

There are several factors which influence the vulnerable status of Dalit women – weak economic conditions, dependence on the resources of dominant castes, low literacy levels and patriarchal norms. Lack of knowledge about legal rights, government schemes and policies adds to this vulnerability.

Economic discrimination

One of the major reasons for the vulnerability of Dalit women is their low economic status. Almost 51% of Dalit women in rural areas and 56% in urban locations live below the poverty line. Since most Dalit women earn a living through daily wage employment, they are also more frequently unemployed than the general population. Further, given their low social status and stigma of being ‘untouchable’, there are fewer employment options available to them.

Majority of landless labourers are Dalit women. They come into contact with landlords and enforcement agencies more often than upper caste women, thereby making them more susceptible to abuse. There are frequent cases where landlords use sexual abuse and other forms of violence and humiliation against Dalit women as tools to inflict ‘lessons’ and crush dissent and labour movements of Dalit communities (Human Rights Watch, 2007). The National Commission for Women (NCW) has commented, ‘In the commission of offences against SC women, the offenders try to establish their authority and humiliate the community by subjecting their women to indecent and inhuman treatment, including sexual assault, parading naked, using filthy language, etc.’ (NCW, 1996, p. 33).

An overwhelming majority (almost 91.66%) of the respondents in the study admitted that abuse by addressing them by their caste instead of their given names is very common. They are not allowed to drink water from the well of the zamindars in whose fields they work. In case they do drink water from the well, the landowner charges them money for every glass of water they consume.

There are a number of cases of rape of Dalit women by landlords, which are not reported or talked about openly. In India, once a woman has been raped, she faces strong social taboos (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

Wage discrimination against Dalits is also a rampant problem in India and this is acute when it comes to Dalit women. An experimental study by Shah et al. (2006) found that in 36% of the villages studied, Dalits were denied wage-paid employment in agriculture and in one-third of the villages they were excluded from construction labour on the grounds that upper caste community members did not want Dalits to ‘pollute’ their homes. In 25% of the villages, Dalits received less than the market wage rate for their labour.

In the project area, a number of cases of wage discrimination were observed, especially in the villages of Karevri, Sandal Khurd and Sandal Nivada. A woman from Karevri recounted how landowners often refuse to pay the full wages after a full day’s work and pay only half the wage.
Other than working as exploited or bonded agricultural labourers, caste discrimination compels most uneducated and illiterate Dalit women into degrading work, such as manual scavenging and manually cleaning dry latrines (Zaidi, 2006). In 2002-03 the Union Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment admitted to the existence of 0.67 million dry latrines, spread across 21 states and Union Territories (ibid). Given the fact that manual scavenging is both a caste based and hereditary occupation, Dalit women face more problems than the men of the community when they hail from the scavenger ‘sub-caste’ (Rajgopal et al., 2006). The Hindustan Times reported that according to the census information circulated among all district headquarters, in rural Haryana there are 72,066 households with primitive tribal groups, 69,864 households with manual scavengers and 80,461 households with legally released bonded labourers.5

**Political discrimination**

It has been found in several studies that the political participation of Dalit women as a large minority community in India remains disproportionately low. The current Lok Sabha has only 12 Dalit women MPs, a mere 2.2% of Parliamentarians.6 The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) reports that Dalit candidates, especially women, are very often forcibly prevented from standing for elections. And if they get

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**Sandal Nivada village**

A Dalit woman took a loan from an upper caste person for her daughter’s marriage. Later she wished to return the amount in small installments, as her income was not sufficient to repay the entire amount in one go. But the landowner denied her this facility and demanded that he would only accept the money when she returned it in one single installment. Since then, the woman has been working as a maid in the upper caste person’s house and has not received any wages for her work. This will continue till she returns the loan in one lumpsum.
elected, they are forced to resign from village councils or other elected bodies. Many Dalits are not allowed to exercise their mandate or are otherwise denied the right to vote; their names are not included in electoral rolls. CERD further reported that the involvement of Dalit women in politics in local governance institutions is noticeably low and full of challenges (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

An overwhelming majority (over 90%) of the respondents admitted a number of problems in terms of accessing local governance institutions. From filing nominations to announcement of the election results, harassment includes caste and sexually based verbal abuse; disparagement of the women’s political capacity; harassment, threats or physical assaults; property destruction; restrictions on freedom of movement; and illegal and fraudulent voting practices. In Karevri village, there is no representation of Dalit women at the panchayat level. The constitutional provision of 33% reservation for women at panchayat level has not been implemented here so far. Women are not allowed to venture out from their homes and usually stay within their own compounds. The sarpanch, who belongs to the SC community, also works under pressure from the general category and cannot provide basic services to his community members.

Further, in terms of women exercising authority when successfully elected to local governments, the field research shows that only about one-third of women were able to freely and independently exercise their right to political participation against tremendous odds. Most women were made to act as proxies for dominant caste men. Most elected Dalit women feel they are treated differently from other local government representatives primarily due to being female and Dalit.

In Gadi Haqiqat village in Sonepat district, the sarpanch of the village belongs to the general category and till date has not visited the area in which the Dalit community resides. If a member of the Dalit community approaches him with problems, he refuses to even listen to what they have to say. The men belonging to the Dalit community attend the panchayat meeting but women are not allowed to participate. No representation of Dalit women at the panchayat level exists.

Local level officials under the influence of dominant castes further prevent the participation of Dalit women in political activities. This was a clear trend that emerged from the discussions. Not allowing Dalit women to participate is a means to weed out potentially independent-thinking and active Dalit women and to ensure that local government development benefits remain in the hands of dominant castes and do not reach the Dalits.

It was also shared by the villagers that overt discriminatory practices are prevalent in local government offices, including prohibitions on Dalit women sitting on chairs alongside other elected representatives or drinking water or tea from vessels used by dominant caste elected representatives. The respondents also shared that during panchayat meetings the task of Dalit women elected representatives is limited to serving tea to the members. Some Dalit women attempt to actively participate in meetings and take decisions, but are silenced or ignored and their views are never sought. If they persist, they are subjected to ‘no confidence’ motions to remove them from office, or denied information and support which is necessary to undertake their official duties. This situation of discrimination is further intensified where government officials refuse to address caste and gender discrimination or proxy representation.

All these obstacles prevent Dalit women from exercising effective political authority, which then compromises their ability to deliver more caste sensitive and gender responsive development outcomes. Instead, they witness development schemes and funds, even those earmarked for Dalits, being siphoned off to dominant caste communities, further exacerbating the development gap between the communities.
Cultural and religious norms

The very fact of being a Dalit signifies a subordinate position vis-a-vis the rest of Hindu society, and exclusion from cultural activities is a clear way of demonstrating this. Consequently, Dalits are routinely prevented from taking part in religious and cultural rituals and festivals, with clashes ensuing if they choose to disobey the prohibitions.

In Haryana too deep rooted traditional and religious factors contribute to the incidents of violence against Dalit women. An overwhelming majority (84.2%) of the women responded that Dalits continue to face the same social restrictions they have been subjected to for centuries. Dalits are routinely and frequently denied entry into places of worship. Some Dalits shared incidents of ill-treatment by the priest and non-acceptance of their offerings. In Gadi Haqiqat, entry of lower castes to one temple in the village has been allowed but objectionable comments are routinely passed when Dalits do go.

There are very strict prohibitions on marriage and other social interactions between Dalits and non-Dalits. Upper castes violate the rights of Dalits to marry and choose their spouses. Inter-caste marriages are frequently extra-judicially punished by acts of public lynching, murder, rape, beatings and other sanctions against the couple and their relatives. More than half (58.33%) the respondents admitted that usually children of Dalits and non-Dalits do not interact or play together. Dalit girls and women are additionally vulnerable to forced prostitution and caste based practices of prostitution deny Dalit women the right to marry.

Dalits in village Gadi Haqiqat are still subject to the practice of untouchability (in places such as outside the temple).

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Sitauli village

Discrimination and violence took place when a Dalit woman was instructed to give up a portion of her land so that a gali (side lane) could be constructed in the village. She was bluntly ordered by an upper caste to sacrifice this part of her land in the interest of building the lane. When she questioned the rationale of this step, she was severely abused by the upper caste in the presence of the sarpanch and the block development officer who was undertaking a field visit in the village. Nothing was done about the abuse and they walked away.

‘I was happy to give away a part of my land and all I did was to ask a question. In return I was abused by an upper caste person openly and was shocked to see that the sarpanch and the BDO did not utter a word against the culprit. This is unacceptable.’
Limited access to social infrastructure

It has been argued that atrocities pertaining to civic facilities are frequently related to lack of essential facilities or limited access to facilities in Dalit localities. The unavailability of basic facilities can be seen in most Dalit hamlets. According to a report published by Human Rights Watch (2007), only 9.84% of households belonging to a Scheduled Caste have access to sanitation and 20% lack a safe source of drinking water. One of the reasons is that residential segregation of the Dalit community results in absence of various facilities available in other sections of the habitation.

Residential segregation of Dalits is prevalent in the project villages. Besides segregation of residential locations, the same can also be seen in schools, in access to public services and in access to services operated by private players.

More than half the respondents (58%) do not have access to basic amenities. In Bhuri village, respondents informed us that SC dwellings were considered the least important when it came to development or providing basic infrastructure such as sewerage, roads or toilets. There were also cases reported of higher caste people creating obstacles in development work taking place in lower caste localities.

In Kami and Gadi Haqiqat villages, one of the major problems faced by Dalit women in particular was the absence of toilets in their homes. When they go out to the field to relieve themselves, they often face harassment and teasing.

The right to an education free from discrimination is not secured for Dalit children. Dalit children face consistent hurdles in their access to education. Most respondents (66.66%) admitted that Dalit students are enrolled in government schools that lack basic infrastructure, classrooms, teachers and teaching aids. They are made to sit at the back of the classroom and endure verbal and physical harassment by teachers and students alike.

According to the UN special report on the right to education, teachers have been known to declare Dalit pupils ‘cannot learn unless they are beaten’ (Human Rights Watch, 2007). The effect of such abuse is borne out by the low literacy and high dropout rates for Dalits. Upper caste hostility toward Dalit education is linked to the perception that Dalits are either incapable of being educated or, if educated, will pose a threat to village hierarchies and power relations.

Dalit girls face far more problems in accessing formal educational facilities, as there are insufficient government schools available at the local level. The present study finds that in Killoradh village the numbers of dropouts amongst Dalit girls is very high. Killoradh village does not have a secondary school.

Lack of access to health facilities emerged as another serious issue during the discussions. Caste based occupations (such as scavenging) that many Dalit women
are made to perform routinely exposes them to serious and sometimes fatal health hazards. In addition, the Dalit community in general and Dalit women in particular are frequently refused admission to hospitals and denied access to health care and treatment (Shah et al., 2006). Respondents from all the villages admitted that they do not have efficient basic health facilities available in their hamlets. Dalit women who deal with government officials in attempting to access healthcare for themselves and their children frequently encounter discrimination from auxiliary nurse-midwives and anganwadi workers.

Millennia of unequal and unjust social equations continue to deprive millions of citizens their basic developmental rights and individual freedom. Women bear a higher burden in this regard. What interventions can bring about desired social change?
Addressing Violence Against Dalit Women

The Indian government, as a signatory of CEDAW,7 has various laws and supporting mechanisms to protect women against violence. A number of measures and initiatives have also been adopted to address in particular caste based violence and discrimination against women.

The state and national government departments dealing with development of the SC community also offer a number of schemes and provisions for their upliftment. Some of them are:

- Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989
- National Scheme of Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their Dependents (NSLRS) (1992)
- Scheme of Special Educational Development Programme for Scheduled Caste Girls belonging to very low literacy brackets (1996)
- Grant-in-Aid to Voluntary Organizations working for Scheduled Castes.

There are separate legal services and provisions to help women feel more secure when they are victims of violence.

**Free Legal Aid:** Section 12 of the Legal Services Authorities Act 1987 (read in conjunction with Rule 19 of the Haryana State Legal Services Authority) specifies persons eligible for free legal aid at the expense of the state. The rule states that every person unable to engage a lawyer due to poverty, indigence or situations of incommunicado is entitled to free legal service at the cost of the state. This entitlement to free legal aid is not dependent on whether the specific person in need of aid makes an application before the magistrate/sessions judge; rather the onus is on the judge her/himself who is duty bound to inform the accused/victim of his/her right to obtain free legal aid. The exception would be when the accused/victim is not willing to take advantage of the free legal services provided by the state.

**Permanent Legal Aid Clinics in Villages and Jails:** Under the National Legal Services Authority (Legal Aid Regulations) 2011, legal aid clinics are required to be set up in either a village or cluster of villages. Para legal volunteers are expected to attend the permanent legal aid clinics on scheduled dates to provide legal aid to litigants. Haryana State Legal Services Authority has also established permanent legal aid clinics/centres in all the jails/sub jails of the state. It is the duty of the advocates empanelled under the Legal Aid Counsel scheme to regularly visit central/district jails/sub jails at specified intervals as directed by the District Legal Services Authorities and Sub Divisional Legal Services Committees to give legal advice to the accused/convicts.

**Special Cells for Women and Children:** These cells work towards ensuring that women and children are recognized as individuals with equal rights and opportunities in society, including the opportunity to live

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7 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN in 1979 and came into force in 1981. It has been ratified by 187 states and is considered as the key instrument for the promotion and protection of women’s rights.
peaceful and violence-free lives. As provided under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 and Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006, the Department of Women and Child Development, Haryana has appointed full time Protection-cum-Child Marriage Prohibition Officers for each district.

The department has also appointed one consultant at the headquarters to coordinate the work of the Protection-cum-Child Marriage Prohibition Officers and ensure effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act 2005 and Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006. Since the nature of the responsibilities under Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act and Prohibition of Child Marriage Act requires effective co-ordination with the police, special cells for women and children have been established in the Office of the Superintendent of Police in each district to ensure effective implementation of these two acts.

**All Women Police Stations:** In order to encourage reporting of crimes against women and a more sensitive handling of such cases, the constitution of All Women Police Stations in Haryana is an important step. These police stations have great value in making police services more accessible to women, as these interventions have been designed keeping the socio-cultural environment in mind. Rural women in particular are very reluctant to approach male police officials.

Legislation, legal services and socio-economic development and programmes alone can never bring about social change. It is important that the institutions representing society and those that provide contemporary leadership, namely, locally elected bodies become active in bringing about social change. It is equally necessary that the principal stakeholder, i.e., the woman, is empowered to be able to claim her rights.

Towards this end, PRIA’s approach involved:

**Strengthening institutions of local self-governance, in particular Social Justice Committees:** The initiative primarily engaged with local governments at all levels to enable them to become effective in addressing the issue of violence against women, particularly Dalit women, in their respective areas. It sought to strengthen the responsiveness and accountability of local governments on this issue. Adequate support was provided by promoting an enabling environment for local governments to demonstrate their social and politico-administrative powers to deliver concrete results in ending violence against Dalit women.

**Capacity building of women:** Women were the focus of the project and hence empowering them as primary stakeholders to claim their rightful space was an important area of intervention. Capacities of elected women representatives were built to raise the issue in meetings. Leadership and analytical capacities of young Dalit women were raised to enable their engagement with panchayats and municipalities on the issue.

**Building multi-stakeholder involvement on the issue of violence against Dalit women:** Supportive mechanisms to panchayats and municipalities in implementing the provisions and legislation to protect Dalit women against violence was provided through multi-stakeholder awareness generation. Efforts were made to bring civil society groups (CSOs, CBOs, youth groups, media, academia) together to collectively voice the issue of violence against women at different levels. Constructive engagement of CSOs with local governance institutions encourages accountability and brings pressure for appropriate changes in policies and administrative mechanisms.
Strengthening Local Level Institutions

Panchayats and municipalities are the nearest governments for the people. They are responsible for planning and implementing economic development and social justice in their respective areas. The 11th and 12th Schedules of the Constitution (73rd and 74th Amendments) list out 29 and 18 matters respectively for which panchayats and municipalities are empowered to function as units of self-government. Women and child development and prevention of violence against women and children are two of the 29 areas for which a panchayat is responsible. Similarly, under the 12th Schedule, municipalities are responsible for social development in their areas (Article 243W 3).

Past experience suggests that not enough has been done to engage local governments on social issues like violence. Village panchayats regard violence against women, particularly domestic violence, as customary and an issue that is the private matter of a family. It is important that panchayats and municipalities fulfill their constitutional obligation and begin to recognize violence as an obstruction not just to women’s development but overall social development (Pawar and Patil, 1994).

The study finds that ineffectiveness of institutional support adds to the vulnerability of Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular.

During the interface meetings with the Dalit community, it was learnt that most cases of violence against Dalit women either go unreported or are resolved through mediators leading to compromises, which is sometimes in the form of money. The nearest institutions of redressal in panchayats, i.e., Social Justice Committees (SJCs), are defunct. This shows the apathetic attitude of the administration towards social justice issues. At district and block levels too a similar situation prevails. Functioning of district committees formed under Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 is ineffective and very few people are aware of its existence. Interestingly, Haryana has not constituted a State Scheduled Caste Commission or State Human Rights Commission, which are considered the last stop for delivering justice to Dalits/vulnerable communities.

The research also reveals lack of experience and support among local self-governments to work on social development issues. Infrastructural needs have been the priority of panchayats and municipalities. There is a greater need to engage and dialogue with local governments on their role in ensuring social justice in their areas. Capacity building of institutions like Social Justice Committees will support the Dalit community in leveraging entitlements made available through various social security schemes and development initiatives.

Social Justice Committees

In order to protect the interest of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) from social injustice and other forms of exploitation, panchayati raj institutions have to constitute Social Justice Committees (SJCs) at all levels.8

8. See Annexure 2 for roles and functions of SJCs in Haryana.
The SJC has a distinct identity within the panchayat structure. It is empowered to identify development requirements in the village with particular emphasis on the needs of marginalized communities and make recommendations to the panchayat at all levels to include these demands in its budget. The panchayat has a duty to undertake the implementation of these projects upon receiving sanction from the administration.

**Functions of Social Justice Committees**

- Promotion of education, economic, social, cultural, sports, games and other interests of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes and other weaker sections
- Protection of such castes and classes from social injustice and any form of exploitation
- Promotion of welfare of women and children.

**Structure of Social Justice Committees**

The SJC shall consist of not less than five members, including the sarpanch. The sarpanch shall be the ex-officio member and chairman of the Production Committee and Amenities Committee. One panch member nominated by the gram panchayat with majority shall be the ex-officio member and chairperson of the SJC. The SJC shall consist of at least one woman member and one member belonging to the SC community.

**Setting Up Social Justice Committees**

Forming SJCs was the first intervention that PRIA undertook as field surveys found that in most of the project villages SJCs were not present. Critical steps in the formation of SJCs include:

*Preparation of caste profiles:* These were developed for a better understanding of the caste dynamics and discriminatory practices against Dalits in the project villages. These were successfully completed where rapport already existed with the community.

*Strategies to build confidence and rapport:* This was required in some gram panchayats like Mohana, Rajlugaddhi, Bhuri, etc. This was done through organizing camps and awareness programmes, organizing interface meetings, etc. A series of interactions with the community and mapping of stakeholders was also conducted. The process of interaction and stakeholder mapping was included in the process of preparation of caste profiles of the gram panchayats.

*Meeting with sarpanches:* Separate meetings were conducted with elected representatives and the sarpanch to understand the forms and extent of caste discrimination and practices. Most sarpanches claimed that they had not received any complaints on this issue. The fact that they were aware that such discrimination existed but was not reported was an important realization of the gravity of the situation and the need for a SJC became a strong felt need.

*Meeting with block development officers:* Meetings were held with the block development officers of Sonepat and Ganaur blocks regarding the setting up of SJCs at the gram panchayat level. The block development officers were also unaware about the statutory requirement for the formation of such a committee and shared that an SJC did not exist even at the block level. Continued persistence led to the block development officer of Sonepat block calling a meeting of all sarpanches to inform them about the formation of SJCs in their villages. This proved to be a crucial step in the setting up of SJCs.

*Identification of members:* Members were identified through various meetings that were initiated by the field animators and on the basis of nominations by the sarpanch. Membership to SJCs was based on three criteria.
**Interest in social service:** Nominated members were individuals who wanted an opportunity to do honorary work and possible recognition within the community for the work.

**Leadership potential:** Some members, identified by the field animators, were those who participated actively during the community interactions. They demonstrated their awareness regarding social issues and the potential to become community leaders.

**Pushed by sarpanch:** In the gram panchayats where PRIA did not have any prior programmatic interventions, membership to SJCs was mostly because of the push given by the sarpanch. In some gram panchayats when members showed disinterest and reluctance to belong to such a committee, the sarpanch had to exert considerable pressure on them to accept membership. For example, in Uldhepur village, the nomination of SJC members was mostly forced and at the discretion of the sarpanch. He chose those members who had good relations with him and would agree to his suggestions. It is to be noted that committees formed under duress will require more intensive support in the future to perform positive leadership roles and take the initiative to resolve cases of social injustice.

**Orientation of SJC Members**

Once the committees had been formed, as per the mandated rules and guidelines, the next step was orientation of all its members. A one day orientation brought together 30 participants which included SJC representatives (sarpanch and ward panch) of 10 gram panchayats and village level activists. The orientation aimed to strengthen the positive engagement of SJCs with the panchayati raj institution.

The objectives of the orientation programme included:

- Building the understanding of participants on the various provisions of the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act 1994.
- To identify some of the key issues which are required to be taken up at the gram panchayat level in the context of ensuring social justice.
- To understand the role and functions of SJCs.

The orientation was based on principles of participatory training, where the knowledge of the participants and their experience of the issue was used to build an in-depth understanding on the issue, as well as information based on collective knowledge.

To make the learning and sharing participatory and interactive, a variety of methods were used to engage the participants and elicit their views and responses. These included screening of a film on panchayati raj, PowerPoint presentations to explain the role of SJCs, small group discussions to understand the various forms of violence that are faced by the Dalit community and the ways that these can be prevented. The use of an envisioning exercise to identify and prioritize key issues to be addressed proved to be an effective way for the participants to face the reality of violence against the Dalit community.

*Participants learning about the role of standing committees in gram panchayats at Chotu Ram Dharamsala, 13 February 2012*
The orientation programme culminated in the development of action plans that were made by different village groups. These plans included incorporating issues of specific villages and actions that can be taken up by the respective SJC(s) to address the same.

As part of public education and advocacy on the issues of violence against Dalit women and role of SJC(s), four pamphlets were produced and disseminated in the orientation.

*Caste Based Violence Against Women:* This pamphlet raises awareness about caste inflicted violence against women in general and Dalit women in particular. The pamphlet also provides important contact numbers of institutions at the district and state levels for women to report any case of violence.

*Role and Responsibilities of Social Justice Committees:* This pamphlet details the roles and responsibilities of SJC(s), as well as the various rules and guidelines regarding formation and functioning of SJC(s) in Haryana.

*Scheduled Castes and the Role of Social Justice Committees:* This pamphlet details out the provisions under the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities Act) 1989.

*Social Welfare Schemes for Scheduled Castes:* This pamphlet provides relevant information about various social welfare schemes in Haryana intended specifically for Scheduled Castes. The pamphlet fills the gap in the lack of awareness of the Dalit community about the various measures that are available for their welfare and improvement.

**Challenges to Formation of Social Justice Committees**

Undoubtedly there were challenges in almost all the villages in the project area. In most villages, the panchayat and the sarpanch had apprehensions about the role of SJC(s) and its members. Sustained and continued interactions to overcome these objections resulted in SJC(s) being formed in most villages at the end of the project period. Many of them are now quite successfully implementing their mandates.

The apprehensions of the sarpanch of Gadi Hakikat panchayat could be observed when he clearly stated, “Mein koina banau yeh Samiti. In pancho ko aap jitna jagruk karoge utne ghane yeh sar par baithenge”. (I will not form these committees. The more the awareness of the ward panches, the more they will raise their demands).

The panchayat in Thuru village, although headed by a woman sarpanch, is in reality run by her husband. She remains a figurehead with no involvement in the decision making of the panchayat. The husband, convinced that women’s empowerment is not good, did not support the formation of the SJC. “Aap mahilaon ko zyada jagruk karke, unhain bhadka rahe ho. Isse gaanv ke parivar toot jayenge” (You are instigating women by making them more aware, and if they become empowered it will result in broken families in the village.)
In Mohana panchayat, the sarpanch stated that an SJC would only be formed if the block development officer issued a letter. PRIA’s interface with the block development officer resulted in obtaining the letter. The block development officer also organized a meeting of all sarpanches to stress the importance of SJCs and a resolution to this effect was passed in the meeting. This resolution was then used as an advocacy tool for setting up SJCs in all the targeted gram panchayats.

Animators often noted during SJC meetings that SC members were not able to express their views openly. The meetings were dominated by the higher castes.

Most panchayat members were initially unaware of the rules and guidelines regarding the functioning of the SJC. Even on becoming aware of the same, they did not seem to respond positively. It took a number of interface meetings with the sarpanch to convince him about the need for developing mechanisms for redressal of caste issues and violence in the village.

General category members questioned the rationale as to why interface meetings were restricted to Dalits. Their argument was that issues of social injustice are common and prevalent even among non-SCs and awareness on the same had to be raised. This shows that gender sensitization of SJCs as well as sensitivity towards caste based issues are important and need to be addressed.

Based on the experienced gained by the PRIA on the formation of SJCs, it can be concluded that an SJC will be effective only when some prime outcomes are achieved. These include conducting regular meetings, increased

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**Sandal Khurd village**

Setting up the SJC in the village was the most challenging as the sarpanch and block development officer were not very supportive. A number of meetings were held in the hamlets to develop a relationship of trust with community members; the process was also used to identify stakeholders who could be included in the SJC. It took several visits spread over ten weeks for field animators to even meet the sarpanch and talk about the formation of the committee. Every time they would go to visit him, he was reportedly busy with some other work. Though it was obvious from his actions that he was not inclined to constitute the SJC, he did not openly voice his resistance.

Parallel to meeting with the sarpanch, a meeting was scheduled with the block development officer of Sonepat block. Repeated interactions and discussions led to him calling a meeting of all sarpanches. A letter of consent was given by the block development officer for the constitution of SJCs. A follow up meeting was held with the elected representatives immediately after the meeting called by the block development officer. Written consent was obtained from the sarpanch and the panch members to set up the committee. Finally, on 13 January 2012, a Social Justice Committee was formed in Sandal Khurd.
ownership of members of the processes of the SJC, documentation, and formulation and implementation of action plans that incorporate issues of the Dalit community. Follow-up will be required for the implementation of the action plans created by the various SJCs.

PRIA field animators have monitored and ensured that such processes do take place as scheduled:

- Regularizing and prior scheduling of monthly meetings. SJC members are responsible for fixing the date, time and venue of the meeting.
- Documenting the minutes of the meeting.
- Setting the agenda of each meeting. Each monthly meeting has a different agenda and these include discussions on roles and responsibilities of the SJC, issue of violence against Dalit women and the overall issue of discrimination faced by the Dalit community.

As a result of this monitoring and follow up, the monthly meeting of the SJC in Sitauli village is convened on the second Tuesday of every month.

A follow-up of the initial orientation training was done with all SJC members. The objective was to build a common understanding on the roles and responsibilities of the SJC. The members were asked to reflect on the visioning exercise facilitated during the initial orientation and identify certain key issues that they had come across in their villages.9

**Mobilizing the Dalit Community and Increasing Their Participation**

Two processes aimed at mobilizing the Dalit community and increasing their participation. These were wall writing and interface of the Dalit community with members of the SJC.

*Wall writing:* First a written consent was obtained from the sarpanch to display information about the SJC on one wall in the village. The wall writing comprised of a slogan that stated the provisions of Section 22 (i) of the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act 1994 and also disclosed the names of the SJC members. The location was accessible to everyone in the village, especially women and girls, including those from the Scheduled Castes. This process contributed to the acceptance of the members of the SJC in Sitauli panchayat and helped to make the process transparent and accountable.

*Interface of the Dalit community with members of the SJC:* An interface meeting was conducted in Balmiki Basti with the objective of identifying the key issues of the Dalit community. During the interface meeting, the Dalit community raised the problem of drinking water, various types of atrocities committed by dominant castes, unavailability of toilets, etc.

SJC members were oriented about the process of convening a gram sabha and its mandatory requirements such as requisite quorum and the need to set up an agenda for the meeting.

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9 See Annexure 3 for a list of the identified key issues and the action plans of SJCs in the 20 villages.
Village Information Centres

In order to strengthen local self-governance mechanisms in Haryana, PRIA with the support of partner organizations had initiated the establishment of information resource centres in the past. These resource centres pro-actively supplied information to citizens and elected representatives. The relevance and success of these centres to the people and the community at large (on issues related to governance) led to PRIA catalysing the setting up of Village Information Centres (VICs) in four villages (Khizarpur, Rajpur, Mahra and Rohana) of Sonepat district.

VICs serve as a geographical point where information is locally and easily available to communities, citizen leaders, elected representatives, members of various local governing bodies, the state administration, voluntary organizations, the media and academia. The material available ranges from pertinent state laws and policies, policy papers on development, amendments made to the laws, government notifications and development schemes. Forms related to pension schemes, birth or death registration as well as RTI applications have been made available at these VICs. In addition, these centres are used as spaces for holding discussions and deliberations on the information available and to conduct need based trainings for citizens. Orientation programmes on RTI/NREGA/social welfare schemes have proved beneficial in providing overall awareness.

These VICs are useful tools in motivating women and candidates from SC communities in filing nominations to stand for elections. These centres also help in strengthening linkages with block and district administrations.

In this project, the VICs were also motivated to address violence against women through:

*Mapping of community based groups and need based trainings:* All the VICs were engaged in the first quarter to conduct a mapping of the CBOs at the gram panchayat level (SHGs, mahila mandals, sub-committee members, etc) and organize village level meetings on the issues of female foeticide and girl child education. These were organized mainly to create sensitivity and awareness on the issues of violence against women. Since citizen leaders have been part of a number of PRIA orientation programmes earlier, they had adequate capacity and knowledge to facilitate the meetings on issues of violence.

*Information dissemination related to schemes:* Information related to schemes like ladli yojana, Indira Gandhi marriage scheme for poor BPL girls, widow pension scheme, etc, were also mapped and provided to the beneficiaries through organized camps at the centre.

The VIC was thus able to provide information and create greater sensitization on the issue of violence against women. It also helped in promoting convergence of beneficiaries with the schemes meant for promoting their welfare.

Information centres set up by the administration in collaboration with CSO volunteers tend to make them more effective. Camps at various locations are required to make the people aware of these centres. There is also a need to build the capacity of VIC coordinators to organize these camps effectively.
Empowering Women

There are various laws and legal institutions to help a victim of violence. However, the key problem is that Dalit women not only face challenges while seeking legal and judicial redressal for violence, but also while attempting to access and enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Dalit women are often placed in a contradictory and difficult position of choosing between their families/communities and the attempt to seek legal redressal for atrocities. It is not unusual to find them being disowned or ostracized by their own family members and the community at large. Dalit men have been known to turn their wives away for daring to raise their voice against injustices. A complex psycho-social blend of external impositions such as threats of retaliation and violence by the caste perpetrators (threat of loss of livelihood) and internal patriarchal and cultural understandings propel such unfortunate situations (Irudayam et al., 2006).

In our year-long interactions during the course of the project we learned that despite complaints to authorities, victim and witness protection programmes are not effective at the local level. Worse, threats and continued victimization by perpetrators scare or force victims to withdraw their testimonies. Social rehabilitation or temporary shelters to remove victims from these difficult circumstances are woefully inadequate or non-existent. Insufficiency in providing even temporary safe shelters and protection to victims discourages Dalit women from filing cases and seeking justice or redressal of their cases. More than 85% of women in Sonepat district during group discussions mentioned that even though Dalit women raise their voice in protest, they are often not heard by the local authorities. Since they need employment, after a while they realize the futility of their protests and return to work.

Due to lack of awareness of legal measures, fear of retribution from upper castes, lack of unity and solidarity within their own community, lack of support from family members and severe financial constraints victims do not approach the legal authorities. When they do muster the courage to file a complaint, legal authorities often under the influence of upper castes dismiss the cases altogether.

Incidents of verbal abuse are frequent but are not discussed openly. The villagers from Sandal Nivada also mentioned the common practice of rich persons and landlords taking girls from the Dalit community for a night but the affected persons do not openly share such incidents and they are rarely reported to the authorities. There is also fear of policemen taking further advantage of the women in such situations.

A complainant has to fight long and struggle hard in order to get justice. An incident of abduction and eventual charring to death of a Scheduled Caste girl occurred in Ganaur block. The Dalit girl was abducted by upper caste persons. Three days after she went

“'No one is going to hear us. All the legal authorities are completely influenced by the upper castes. It is therefore very rare that culprits get punished.’

Dalit women

“A seven-year-old lower caste girl was raped by a 19-year-old upper caste boy in Sevli village. The parents of the girl reported the matter to the police who then arrested the culprit. But the (higher caste) elders in the community intervened and arranged an out of court settlement by paying Rs 3 lakhs to the victim's family.’

SJC pradhan, Bhuri village
missing, the victim’s family went to the police station to ask for help in tracking down the girl. The police did not give credence to the story and claimed that the girl had willingly absconded. They trivialized the issue and even suspected her of eloping with a boyfriend. It was only after a long dharna in front of the District Commissioner’s office and his consequent intervention that the police took the case seriously, lodged a complaint and began investigations.

The ineffectiveness of the legal system becomes obvious when no legal action is taken against upper caste men after gang raping a woman. Usually community (high caste) elders intervene and arrange an out-of-court settlement.

Legal Empowerment

Awareness of laws and how to make use of them was imparted by the PRIA team along with members of Sanjha Kadam Nari Network (PRIA’s partner CBO in Haryana) in group meetings organized in Dalit hamlets. It was envisaged that participants after getting information on their rights, the laws that support them in securing the same and the fact that a network like Sanjha Kadam Nari Network was there to give them local advice and guidance would be motivated to exercise their rights.

PRIA reinforced its awareness programme by working closely with some legal institutions functioning at the grassroots level. These included:

**Daily Lok Adalat**: Experiments with conducting daily lok adalats was started in Sonepat and results have found to be encouraging. At present, daily lok adalats are being held in 21 districts of Haryana.

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10. [http://hslsa.nic.in/LA.htm](http://hslsa.nic.in/LA.htm) (accessed on 11/08/2012)
Every court of the sessions division converts into a daily lok adalat and judicial officers hold sittings as per requirement depending upon the workload of cases coming for settlement every day in each court. This way there are as many daily lok adalats as the number of courts in that sessions division. The daily lok adalat is assisted by one lawyer or social worker on the panel.

In various camps, meetings and workshops organized by PRIA at the village level, local people were encouraged to bring up their issues in the daily lok adalat.

**Legal Literacy Camps:** Sustained efforts by the PRIA team has motivated a panel of 25 advocates in Sonepat and they have been entrusted (encouraged by the state government) with the responsibility of creating public awareness regarding various legal acts through camps conducted at the village/panchayat level. They also provide free legal services to eligible persons. Camps are organized twice a week (on Wednesdays and Sundays) and the schedules for the camps are planned for every quarter. In a quarter, 10 legal literacy camps are organized. Para legal volunteers appointed by the panchayat support the coordination of these events.

After a series of interface meetings with government officials at the state level, PRIA was able to get the provision of free legal aid for the communities in the project area.

A chowkidar (security guard) of a school was brutally injured and beaten up by some men belonging to a higher caste when he stopped them from consuming alcohol close to the school premises. A police complaint was lodged but through dialogue and intervention by village elders the matter was sorted out and verbal apologies made to the victim. No concrete legal action was taken against the perpetrators nor was any compensation paid to the victim, who had incurred medical expenditure as a result of the assault.

**All Women Police Stations:** All women police stations are an example of an innovative response. Unfortunately they have failed due to the lack of a wider integrated policy to facilitate the process of implementation. Women police stations are viewed as token measures and suffer from several inadequacies. Ingrained gender bias acts against the interests of women. Women complaining or asserting their rights (whether in the family or socially) are not viewed favourably and at times even with suspicion by women police officers themselves. This negative attitude of police personnel has resulted in women not accessing these services and thereby being denied justice.
The inefficacy of all women police stations was clearly visible in all the 20 case study villages. Both the negative attitude of the police who might be of a higher caste themselves or the power of money of the accused are important factors that play a role in how Dalits are treated. Ironically, there is no police woman from the Dalit community in these stations. The gendered mindset wherein female officers are seen as incapable of physical combat or lacking in physical strength also has a negative impact on the way police stations run under women are viewed. Many all women stations suffer from lack of adequate personnel, infrastructure, support and cooperation from higher authorities. When the PRIA team visited a few of these all women police stations they found they were not operating at full staff strength and several vacancies had not been filled. Further, they were poorly equipped in terms of vehicles, essential supplies, toilet facilities and adequate water supply. There was a marked absence of competent personnel to provide support roles in these stations.

PRIA field animators reported that women's issues are not seen by male and even female police officers as hard core police issues. Such an attitude creates a tendency to dismiss the work of the all women police stations as secondary, lacking in substance and merely a provision to establish 'gender equality'. A vicious cycle has set in: there is lack of attention paid to the quality of all women police stations and this resultant low quality reinforces the image of police women being less competent than men.

Opportunities for training and skill development are few and since there is limited interface between mainstream police officials and women who work in the all women police stations, exposure to other aspects of policing is also minimal. Lack of hands-on learning of certain skills is missing and this is then held against police women in matters of promotion.

All women police stations are considered ‘punishment postings’, outside the ambit of real police work, both by male officials and female officials. In addition, the implicit pressure to register all complaints pertaining to women only at the all women police station creates problems for women who may not be able to travel long distances and denies them the right to approach general police stations for redressal of their complaints.

In the absence of proper training and gender sensitization, it is unlikely that police stations are going to become more effective in handling cases of violence against women just because more women have been recruited. The system has failed to recognize that gender discrimination is endemic and systemic; that police women have mostly men as their role models and therefore their approach to addressing situations of violence against women is male dominated.

**Political Empowerment**

Due to the reservation policy, elected representatives including women from the Scheduled Caste community are now in positions of responsibility in local governance institutions. But most of the time they are perceived to be a 'proxy' for elite groups or male kin. And when Dalit representatives claim equal access and 'assert' their rights, it often invites the wrath of the higher castes in the form of atrocities and physical violence. Therefore supporting Dalit leadership in local self-government is essential for the overall development of the community and women in particular. They need knowledge and skills to articulate the concerns of their community and influence the decision making process.

Several village level camps, workshops and orientation programmes with a special focus on the Dalit community were conducted during the project period. Participants were oriented on various aspects of governance, including

In order to extend the impact of the awareness programmes and reach out to every community in the targeted areas, PRIA also conducted a series of meetings with various stakeholders at different levels. These included a series of pre-election voter awareness camps in Sonepat, Panipat and Mahendergarh where about 120 members from various CSOs participated. The objective of the meetings was to discuss the strategies and issues to be focused on during the election campaign in order to strengthen Scheduled Caste leadership during and post local body elections.

**Village Level Committees**

In 2006, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Haryana introduced Village Level Committees for the welfare and improvement of women and children and to ensure greater participation and ownership of the village community leading to improvement in service delivery. The Village Level Committee comprises of all women panches, three educated adolescent girls, a leader from the local mahila mandal (women’s group), a representative from each of the self-help groups in the village, a representative of war widows, social activists and a lady school teacher as well as representatives from ANM, ASHA and anganwadi workers.

A woman panch nominated by the gram panchayat heads the committee and the anganwadi worker is the convener. Every village in Haryana now has this committee of women in-charge of the overall development of women and children. About 6500 village committees have started functioning and hold monthly meetings on notified dates and venues. Approximately 0.1 million women have been catapulted into decision making roles through this mechanism.¹¹

With support and coordination from the Sanjha Kadam Nari Network, PRIA organized orientation and sensitization programmes to encourage women, especially Dalit women, to become members and take on leadership roles in these committees.

**Mahila Samitis**

PRIA has worked to form and mobilize mahila samitis. With the combined effort of PRIA and the local police, mahila samitis were formed at the panchayat level. These samitis were specifically formed to address the issue of violence against women. Each samiti comprises of at least four members and the samiti is accountable to the sarpanch. The PRIA team organized workshops and camps in order to train and sensitize these samiti members.

A Multi-Stakeholder Approach

PRIA uses a holistic approach to address the issues of the poor and the marginalized. Involving multiple stakeholders is necessary because communities, particularly non-Dalits, do not recognize or even understand the extent or impact of violence against Dalits/Dalit women. Media personnel and CBOs too need to be sensitized on this issue.

Involving a local CBO creates a supportive mechanism at the grassroots level for effective implementation of laws and protection of women. Sanjha Kadam Nari Network, a CBO based in Sonepat, was included as a partner to help undertake the activities under this project.

The network is vibrant and raises gender issues at public platforms on a regular basis. However, their efforts alone cannot resolve the crisis. It is essential that other stakeholders be included to addresses the systemic and cultural roots of the pervasive and violent forms of discrimination against Dalit women.

Involving the Youth

Youth are the future and their involvement in the awareness campaign on violence against Dalit women was considered crucial. PRIA has earlier formed 5 Kishori groups of young girls belonging to the Dalit community in a number of panchayats in Sonepat district. These groups help in raising the issues of young Dalits girls in the community and with panchayats and municipalities. Leadership and analytical capacities of these young Dalit girls were built through orientation.

The orientation was organized at the ward level. The young girls are encouraged to identify, express and prioritize their problems. PRIA used to facilitate monthly group meetings but after a period of handholding these groups organize these monthly meetings on their own. PRIA regularly tracks the development of these meetings and provides supports whenever necessary.

PRIA has trained more than 50 youth groups on various issues of female foeticide, violence against women, RTI Act, health issues, political participation and leadership, human rights violations, etc. Special attention to the inclusion of youth has resulted in positive outcomes like young Dalit girls providing support in filling nomination forms.

The Importance of CSOs

Civil society organizations can play a pivotal role in providing concrete shape to the ideas of social justice. They can make citizens, specially marginalized sections, realize that they can get social justice through governance institutions. These organizations can put enough pressure on the government and on elected representatives to ensure that basic necessities like primary education, health facilities, housing, safe drinking water, electricity, roads, etc, are ensured to these vulnerable sections without any discrimination. They can also enhance and build the capacity of these marginalized groups so that they not only become aware of their rights, but also assess their needs and demand the same from the system itself. This process of articulating their demands ensures an accountable and efficient government.
It is very important to institutionally collaborate with other organizations working on Dalit issues in Haryana. This will help in focusing Dalit issues during local government elections. Facilitating and organizing such programmes proved to be a challenge and was only possible in areas where partner CSOs had been working for a long time. Recognizing the importance of CSO engagement at the grassroots level, PRIA and its partner organizations have been working towards increased mobilization and participation of people in campaigns against female sex selection, violence against women, political participation, etc.

Role of Media

PRIA has always understood the importance of media in influencing the masses. During the project, local media personnel were sensitized so as to spread awareness at a wider level about such issues.
Conclusions and Ways Forward

PRIA’s intervention in Sonipat district on the issue of violence against the Dalit community and in particular Dalit women has highlighted that discrimination and violence by the upper classes is still rampant and largely goes unreported. Despite policies, legislation and constitutional amendments to address issues of protection of rights and inclusion of the Dalit community and women, the reality on the ground shows that change has not taken place. The socio-economic and political conditions of the community have not improved to the extent envisaged.

There are three important constituencies that PRIA needs to work with in order that the lives of the people from marginalized communities improve and they attain an equal position and status in society.

Social Justice Committees

Social Justice Committees are mandated by law and have to be constituted in all panchayats to ensure the protection of interests of the socially and economically backward sections of society. However, they are yet to be constituted in several panchayats and those SJCs which have been formed remain largely non-operational due to several factors, such as:

- Lack of awareness and orientation on their roles and responsibilities.
- Inability to handle the attitude and approach of the upper caste members of the committee in spite of Dalits being in majority.
- Lack of support from the very institutions mandated to help fulfill their objectives.
- Blind acceptance of discriminatory practices against them which reinforces their subjugated position and perpetuates dominance of upper castes.

However, mere constitution of SJCs will not resolve the issue of violence against the Dalit community and its women. As a first step towards addressing and ending the violence against Dalit women, it is crucial to:

- Conduct awareness raising programmes that increase the knowledge base of the Dalit community on their rights, process of addressing complaints and their resolution.
- Develop a collective understanding on the definition of violence and the need to break the culture of silence and passive acceptance.
- Develop links with legal aid cells, the police (especially women police) and women’s cells so that complaints are lodged and action taken on the same.
- Develop links between SJCs, gram panchayats and the district administration to ensure that recommendations of SJCs are followed through and justice obtained.
Dalit Women and their Communities

Years of subjugation and oppression which has resulted in low self-image, low levels of confidence and an intrinsic belief in the 'natural' caste hierarchy that exploits them cannot be addressed merely through the formation of policies and constitutional bodies alone. Systemic and intensive interventions that secure the constitutional rights of every individual, that analyse the basis of such discrimination and the ways that it can be stopped is a crucial step towards the elimination of all forms of violence against Dalit women.

Varied forms of caste based violence and practices that perpetuate female subordination need to be addressed in a focused manner. This issue is complex and multi-dimensional and is often confused with other forms of non-caste based violence and exclusion, such as domestic violence and foeticide, diverting attention away from this main issue. This dilution of programme objectives makes the task of breaking the culture of acceptance and silence around gender based caste violence more complex. There is a need to recognize that verbal abuse, physical assault, sexual exploitation and discriminatory traditional practices perpetuated on Dalit women are strategic ways of the powerful and dominant upper caste to inflict political lessons, crush dissent and maintain the status quo.

In order to bring about change, the following actions and steps are an important part of social transformation:

- Promulgation of the active participation of Dalit women in local governance bodies and politics to ensure their inclusion in community matters.
- Awareness raising of Dalit women on the gendered perspective of discrimination in the form of social taboos and violence perpetrated on them by the larger society and specifically by upper caste men.
- Information dissemination about various development schemes and measures related to education, livelihood, health and political participation, amongst others, in order that they can access the same to improve their overall condition and become empowered.
- Building of women’s networks, collectives and other forums that build solidarity amongst women and provide a platform to share their problems and challenges as well as a means to seek support in redressal of the same.

Dalit Youth

Dalit youth are on the one hand the most vulnerable members of the community in the struggle against violence, but on the other are also the most important group that can catalyse change within their community in the efforts to end violence against women.

Young Dalit women and men are caught up in inter-generational conflict where refusal to accept caste based discrimination and violence is met with resistance by members of their own family and community, the dominant upper caste and the very law enforcers who are mandated to protect them. This situation of social ostracisation of young people from this community is compounded by poverty, lack of education and lack of access to employment opportunities, leading to situations of conflict and further violence.

The situation of young girls in these communities is distressing as they are caught up not only in the violence they face in their daily lives from upper caste men but also in the inability of their families to protect them. The
gendered dimensions of the situation where violence against young girls is condoned on the grounds of tradition and culture leaves them no place to turn to for justice or respite.

The condition of young Dalit boys is perhaps even more poignant. The inability to bring about change in their socio-economic situation and to prevent discrimination and violence against their community (specifically their women) leads to high levels of frustration and tension amongst these young men – they are potential time bombs ready to explode.

In order that young men and women are able to bring about effective and sustainable change within their communities and the larger society, there are several processes that need to be initiated.

- There is an urgent need to work with the youth, both men and women, in order that they access measures and policies that have been constituted for their empowerment and protection.

- Build linkages and relationships with legal aid cells, the police (especially women police), the local administration, media, local CBOs and women’s groups whom they can approach for support and resolution of cases of violence and discrimination.

- Intensive work on ways of conflict resolution and recourse to the law as a means of securing justice and breaking the cycle of discrimination and violence.

- Gender sensitization of young men as one of the ways of supporting the empowerment of women in their community.

- Developing youth as leaders armed with knowledge and awareness of government policies and schemes, and a vision of bringing about social transformation through legal measures.
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ANNEXURE 1
Details of Violence Against Dalit Women Project

Project Rationale
Haryana completed local governments elections in June-July 2010 and a new leadership emerged in the state. These leaders, particularly women and Dalits, up new roles and responsibilities in their respective communities. In order to enable the newly elected members to discharge their responsibilities more effectively, especially in addressing social development issues, in particular sensitive issues like violence against women, it is important to orient and sensitize the leadership at the beginning of their tenure in the governance system. Article 243G in Part IX and Article 243W in Part IXA of the Constitution provides for the empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and municipalities to function as institutions of self-government. The village panchayat and municipality is the vital link in this chain. They are responsible for planning and implementing economic development and social justice in their respective areas.

Panchayats and municipalities will achieve the goals of social justice and equity for women and the millennium development goal of gender equality and empowerment only if they function as true units of self-government and address the issues of discrimination and violence against women in their respective areas.

The project aims to engage local governments at all levels to become effective in addressing the issues of violence against women, particularly Dalit women, in their respective areas. The initiative will also make effort to bring together all actors (civil society organizations, media, academic and administration) to collectively voice the issue of violence against women at different levels. The proposed action will also create supportive mechanisms at the grassroots level for effective implementation of laws and mechanisms for protection of women, particularly Dalit women, against violence.

Objectives of the Project
- To enhance the leadership and analytical capacities of young Dalit women and facilitate their engagement with panchayats and municipalities on the issue of violence against Dalit women.
- To promote an enabling environment for local governments to demonstrate their social and politico-administrative powers by providing adequate support and necessary action to deliver concrete results in ending violence against Dalit women.
- To engage civil society groups (CSOs, CBOs, youth groups, media, academia and others) in creating awareness and building capacities of local institutions in addressing issues of violence against Dalit women.
- To facilitate institutional support to local institutions in the implementation of the provisions and legislation to protect Dalit women against violence.

Criteria for Selection of Project Area
Haryana is an economically progressive state (per capita income was Rs 19,340 in 1998-99, as compared to the national average of Rs 14,395 at current prices) with a work force participation rate of 39 per cent in 2001. But it ranks low on the social development index – a poor sex ratio (862 per 1000 males), low literacy rate (56 per cent)
and high infant mortality rate (102). The poor sex ratio reveals a gloomy picture of the status of women, but it is not the only factor that shows discrimination against women. Social evils like high incidence of violence against Dalit women, female foeticide and dowry are rampant.

Sonepat, the chosen intervention district, is one of the most prosperous districts of Haryana, having urban townships. It lies in close proximity to big cities like Gurgaon and Delhi. PRIA's past experiences of working in Sonepat reveals that despite economic development, social inequities are high. A number of problems such as gender violence or caste based discrimination still persist at the societal level. Some of these have contributed to a tremendous imbalance of power relations between men and women.

Local governments in Haryana and particularly in Sonepat district have ignored and sometimes accepted perpetual violence against Dalit women as part of tradition. It is important that local government becomes responsive and accountable in taking up such cases proactively and address these issues in transparent ways.

**Project Approach**

The project aims to strengthen responsiveness and accountability of local governments in addressing the neglected issue of perpetual violence against Dalit women. The initiative also aims to empower women by building their capacities and strengthen the constructive engagement of multi stakeholders (CSOs/NGOs/youth groups/media/academia) with local governance institutions as a local support system and accountability seeker to raise the issue of violence against Dalit women. This will hopefully facilitate appropriate changes in policies and administrative mechanisms in the state.

**Project Coverage**

Sonepat is administratively divided into 7 blocks – Sonepat, Ganaur, Kharkhoda, Rai, Gohana, Kathura, Mundlana – and 4 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) – Sonepat, Ganaur, Kharkhoda and Gohana. The 7 blocks consist of 316 Gram Panchayats (GPs) and the 4 ULBs consist of 78 wards.

PRIA has worked intensively at the grassroots level in rural and urban areas of the district.

A total number of 20 GPs from Sonepat and Ganaur blocks and 2 wards from Sonepat and Ganaur ULBs have been selected for this project.

**The basis for selecting Sonepat & Ganaur blocks and ULBs**

- Highest numbers of GPs block-wise (133 GPs out of 316).
- Main administrative offices fall within the project area, i.e., district headquarters in Sonepat, both blocks have sub-divisional headquarters and municipalities, which is an added advantage to exchange ideas and network with governments functionaries.
- Presence of PRIA’s network, partners and stakeholders from earlier work done in the state.

**Duration of the Project**

The project was for a period of 12 months.
ANNEXURE 2

Social Justice Committees in Haryana

According to the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act 1994, Social Justice Committees (SJCs) should be formed in all the three tiers of local governance – the village, block and district. As per Sections 22, 83, 85, 139 and 140 of the Panchayati Raj Act, SJCs and other standing committees should be formed in Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad levels.

The SJC has a significant role to play in the Gram Panchayat and is mandated to perform the following functions:

- Protect and promote the social, economic, political and cultural interests of Scheduled Castes, backward classes and other poor and marginalized sections.
- Protection of any social injustice to these sections.
- Promote women and child development.
- Convergence of poor and weaker sections with schemes related to social justice and empowerment.

It is also laid down that in those Gram Panchayats where there is more than one village, an SJC should be constituted in each village. The membership can include the Ward Panch and Gram Sabha members.

Rules for Formation and Functioning of SJCs

Membership

SJCs should have at least 5 members. The members are to be appointed on the basis of their capacities, experiences and social concerns. The following members must be members of the SJC:

- Sarpanch, Ward Panch
- At least one female and one Scheduled Caste member.
- The committee can include members from women groups, youth groups, etc. The proposal for including such members can be given to the appropriate panchayat tier.

The names of members at every tier should be included in the committee in writing and the same should be available at the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad (whichever is applicable).

The chairperson of the SJC will be nominated by the members through the Gram Panchayat.

One person can be a member of more than one committee at a time.

The committee has the right to change and appoint new members.

In the absence of the chairperson in any scheduled meeting, the meeting must be conducted under the aegis of any member of the committee.
Functioning

The roles, responsibilities and timeline of the activities for the SJC will be ensured by the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad (whichever is applicable).

At least one monthly meeting is to be held of the SJC.

The secretary of the committee will release the notice for meetings and ensure that a copy of the same is distributed to each committee member.

The SJC will perform those actions which are laid as per the Act or as assigned by the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad (whichever is applicable).

Recording and Action

The SJC will maintain a register for recording the proceedings of the meetings. This is to be duly signed by all members of the committee after the meeting.

A detailed report will be given by the SJC to the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad (whichever is applicable) and a decision on the same will be taken in the latter’s meetings.

The entire records of the SJC should be part of the records of the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad (whichever is applicable).

The Gram Panchayat can demand the proceedings of the standing committees and decide on the decisions taken by the SJC, as per resources and local conditions.
## Annexure 3
### List of Issues Raised and Action Plans of SJC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Panchayat</th>
<th>Issue raised</th>
<th>Action plane for SJC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sitauli</td>
<td>Out of the 20 houses in the Balmiki Basti only two houses have toilets. The Women and girls feel insecure and there have been instances of molestation of Girls and Women going to the fields.</td>
<td>Raising the issue in the Village Level Meetings undertake by SJC and motivate them for some contribution towards construction of toilet. Keeping it in the agenda of Gram Panchayat. SJC will follow up on submitting applications construction of toilets in the Sitauli Gram Panchayat. The Sarpanch belongs to the SC Community and works under the pressure of the dominant class. All the decisions related to the Village are taken by the dominant class. The Sarpanch and the Panch only sign the proposals prepared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mohana</td>
<td>Lack of electricity facility in many SC hamlets</td>
<td>Tracking the resolutions already passed and following up on those resolutions. Identifying the hamlets in which there are major issues due to lack of electricity and submitting a resolution for the same in the Gram Panchayat Meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gadi- Hakikat</td>
<td>Issue of Anganwadi</td>
<td>Discussing the issue with the Elected representatives. Submitting a resolution with the recommendation that the location of Anganwadi should not be changed and also a resolution asking for a proposal to be passed regarding the facility of toilet in the Anganwadi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In the SC Hamlet drains are very narrowly built and remain mostly water logged.</td>
<td>Submitting a resolution to the Gram Panchayat and also raising the issue in the Gram Sabha Meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Livelihood issues of Dalit Women</td>
<td>Meeting with Self Help groups already formed in the Gadi Hakikat and finding out the possibilities of optimally utilizing the savings for generating livelihood / revenue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Killoradh</td>
<td>Poor sanitation in the SC hamlets due to dumping of garbage in the open drains.</td>
<td>Passing a resolution in the Gram Sabha Meeting. SJC has identified that the primary reason of the insecurity of the SC families is due to the wine shop which the girls cross while travelling from Killoradh to Hulleri. This shop is also known for its past wherein instances of violence such as mob fight, murder and a instance when a young man was drowned in the canal beside the shop. At present SJC is looking to pass a resolution ordering closure of the shop.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Rajpur</td>
<td>No toilet facility in the SC hamlets</td>
<td>Encouraging women and others in the Gram Sabha for some contribution towards construction of toilet. Keeping it in the agenda of Gram Panchayat.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wine shop in village located in the main road which has confined the movement of the girls and women within the village</td>
<td>Conducting special Gram Sabha meeting on problems due to wine shops and giving a proposal to Gram Panchayat for its closure. Mobilizing the villagers to raise their voice on the issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Uldepur</td>
<td>Poor sanitation and Drainage facility in the SC hamlet.</td>
<td>SJC will be taking up the issue in collaboration with the panch members and the sanitation committee. In addition to it will be undertaking a meeting in the SC hamlets and spreading awareness about the cleanliness issues and how each household can take responsibility</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The issue of drinking water in the Sc Hamlet</td>
<td>Meeting in the SC hamlet and identifying the location for a handpump. Discussing the issue at the Gram Panchayat meeting and submitting a resolution for a handpump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chitana</td>
<td>Water logging in SC Hamlets</td>
<td>Tracking the resolutions already passed and following up on those resolutions. Identifying the hamlets in which there are major issues due to lack of electricity and submitting a resolution for the same in the Gram Panchayat Meeting.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Problems of drinking water in SC hamlets</td>
<td>Submitting a resolution for provision of Tube well in the SC Hamlet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kairevri</td>
<td>Poor sanitation and Drainage facility in the SC hamlet.</td>
<td>Putting it in the agenda of Gram Panchayat</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of adequate water supply in the SC Hamlet</td>
<td>Discussing the issue with the Gram Panchayat and looking at the possible situation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Anganwadi does not have a toilet</td>
<td>Putting it into the agenda of the Gram Panchayat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kami</td>
<td>Poor sanitation in the SC hamlets</td>
<td>Awareness to people related to sanitation. Appointment of sweepers after consultation with Gram Panchayat members</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discrimination against Children from the Dalit Community in the Anganwadi</td>
<td>Members of the Social Justice Committee taking ownership and monitoring the activities in the Anganwadi Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Shehzaadpur</td>
<td>No toilet facility in the village</td>
<td>Encouraging women and others in the Gram Sabha for some contribution towards construction of toilet. Keeping it in the agenda of Gram Panchayat.</td>
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<td>Wine shop in village which has stimulated increasing cases of violence against women and affects the working capacity in the land.</td>
<td>Conducting special Gram Sabha meeting on problems due to wine shops and giving a proposal to Gram Panchayat for its closure.</td>
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<td>No training center on tailoring for women in the village</td>
<td>Keeping the agenda of setting up of tailoring training center in the Gram Panchayat meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ahir Mazra</td>
<td>Poor sanitation in the SC hamlets</td>
<td>Awareness to people related to sanitation. Appointment of sweepers after consultation with Gram Panchayat members.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Issues in the School E.G – lack of discipline among the teachers, discrepancies in the manner in which Mid-Day Meal is distributed, Discrimination against SC Children</td>
<td>Monitoring activities of the school. Facilitating interface meetings between all the stakeholders (Teachers, parents, ERS) and monitoring meal day meal services, Checking if students have dropped out from the school and follow up on such issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>