

**Simorgh**

**Women's Resource and Publication Centre, Lahore**

**Annual Report**

**2019**

*Attested & Verified*

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## Introduction

The year under review has been productive. We completed some of the ongoing projects and received funds to start work on new projects with commensurate expansion in project staff.

2019 has been a year of change at many levels starting with the Simorgh Collective, when two of our members, Firdous Arshad and Dr. Rafia Ali resigned due to personal and logistical reasons. The new Board or Collective members are Naheed Aziz, who has over 30 years of work experience with UNICEF and as gender consultant and a member of Women's Action Forum, and Tauseef Hyat, who is an educationist and also a member of Women's Action Forum.

2019 has seen the expansion of Simorgh's work to expand which now includes women's participation in the social, economic and political life of the community. Simorgh has also resumed work on our socio legal journal 'Bayan), and strengthened its work on (i) skill development for women's economic empowerment and (ii) SRHR. 'Bayan' is part of the FEMPOWER project, while women's economic, social and political empowerment are the main focus of both FEMPOWER and our new project, 'From the Politics of Vulnerability to the Politics of Voice', our work in the area of general and reproductive health is part of our work with Amplify Change.

## **In-House Matters**

### **Change of Office**

Spatial constraints led to the decision to find an office space commensurate with our spatial needs. As a result also of the grants received, we were able to move to our new premises at 74 A II, Abu Bakar Block, New Garden Town, Lahore, towards the end of December 2019

### **Staff Expansion**

The following have joined our staff under the FEMPOWER and 'From the Politics of Vulnerability to the Politics of Voice' projects:

#### **'Bayan' Team:**

Editors: Enum Naseer (social sciences); Iqra Saleem (law)

Researcher: Ajwah Zulfiqar

Researcher: Shafia Maqbool

Researcher: Arshia Yasin

Monitoring and Evaluation Officer: Zunaira Azhar

Our current staff strength now stands at: 20 including the chowkidar and mali

### **In-House Capacity Building**

In recognition of the fact that on-going staff capacity building is crucial to work quality and impact, in-house capacity building is an integral part of Simorgh's agenda. Depending on need and relevance, capacity building workshops are undertaken by subject specialist resources persons as well as by Simorgh's working staff. They ensure conceptual clarity, provides relevant information, assist in the process of project staff knowledge building and provide space for discussions for project impact assessment.

## Work in Process

### 1. 'Worlds in the Making – Pushing the Boundaries'

Funding: Amplify Change

Timeline: September 2019-August 2020.

Project Location: Lahore and Gujranwala

Target communities: women, female/male adolescents and male allies

#### Background

Simorgh's work on SRHR, child safety and underage marriage began in 2016 with the support of Amplify Change. The SRHR project was designed to:

- Break the silence on SRHR and related issues and open up spaces that would enable us to address the related problems of adolescent health faced by boys and girls particularly menstruation and menstrual hygiene.
- Enhance women's knowledge and awareness on adolescent health, underage marriage and the bodily and emotional safety of children safety through lectures and discussion sessions with doctors and other health care providers.
- Create women's spaces for discussion sharing experiences and problems pertaining these issues
- Involve men in parenting especially with regard to children's emotional and physical health and safety

Implementation activities included:

- i. In-house Capacity Building Workshops
- ii. Contextual assessment at selected target sites through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and individual interviews.
- iii. FGDs and lectures on health and personal law and the importance of the new nikah nama, birth registration etc. by subject specialists
- iv. Production and dissemination of IEC material on adolescent health

- v. Policy Dialogues to link communities with policy makers and service providers to facilitate people's particularly women's access to health and other facilities.
- vi. Free Medical Camps at project sites in response to felt community need as well as to build trust and extend project outreach
- vii. Skill development and setting up market links for confidence building, economic empowerment and improved mobility

### **Project in Process 2019**

1. 6 two-day Sessions on Reproductive Health and child safety were held at selected sites in Districts Lahore and Gujranwala. The expected numerical target of 400 was exceeded by actual participation of 510 women. This may be seen as a reliable indicator of the interest generated by these activities as well as of their relevance to community needs.
2. June-August, 4 one-day sessions were held at selected sites in districts Lahore and Gujranwala for a critical examination of cultural taboos, social norms and practices with communities of women and adolescent girls.
3. June-August: 4 one-day teacher student activity based sessions was held at selected sites in districts Lahore and Gujranwala with young adolescents (female/male) on health and hygiene and safety. The sessions for girls and boys were held separately for greater participant comfort and to ensure ease of communication.
4. Publication and dissemination of illustrated Flip Card Storybook (including content development, editing, printing etc.)
5. Project findings were prepared for the Simorgh website and social network page for outreach and ongoing discussion on health and related issues.
6. An evidence based Policy Dialogue was held in Gujranwala city of the same district with 145 community members, duty bearers, bureaucrats from the health and education department, legislators etc.

The Simorgh team shared its findings with participants and provided the space for government representatives to provide information on public sector health services including mechanisms for reporting and prevention of underage marriage.

## 2. FEMPOWER

This project is part of a larger consortium with ShirkatGah as lead partner as Omar Asghar Khan Foundation and the West Minster Abbey Foundation as partners.

Funds: Global Affairs Canada (GAC)

Timeline: 2019-2023

Project sites: Punjab: Lahore, Kasur and Toba Tek Singh

National/Regional outreach: Media training workshops and Bayan

### Beneficiaries

- i. Councilors
- ii. Community men and women
- iii. Youth and minorities
- iv. Journalists/media workers
- v. Civil society organizations (CSO's)

This is multi-pronged project in which Simorgh's component comprises 3 separate though inter related activities that are designed to:

1. Enhance and strengthen women's access to political and social participation at different levels of community and national life:
2. Create a conducive environment for women in public political spaces through bias free representation of women in the media
3. Contribute to Knowledge building through the production and dissemination of a socio-legal journal.

While the bulk of Simorgh's work for this project is Punjab specific, its media workshops operate nationally and 'Bayan' has the potential for regional and international outreach

### **Component 1**

- i. Awareness building through information dissemination and capacity building workshops for women communities of women including men and youth for active engagement with need based local issues.
- ii. Confidence building and community outreach through active engagement with social issues through women's hubs and khuli katchehris etc. These activities will also prepare women to actively participate in the electoral process.
- iii. Bridge the disconnect between communities, policy makers, parliamentarians through khuli katchehris and other forums

### **Component 2**

- i. National level Workshops with media workers on women's representation in the print and electronic media

### **Component 3**

Production and dissemination of a socio-legal journal 'Bayan' for critical understanding of laws and local contexts.

#### Activities undertaken so far

- Preparatory Phase
  - i. Hiring of staff for project activities including an editorial team for 'Bayan' comprising Two editors and two researchers.
  - ii. Purchase of project equipment etc.
  - iii. In-house capacity building:
    - Lecture on the Local Government System by Salman Abid
    - A five day capacity building workshop is planned for the first quarter of 2020
  - iv. Situation analysis conducted at Kasur and Toba Tek Singh



v. Bayan socio legal journal

- Selection of Advisory Board Members. Members comprise retired judges, lawyers, social scientists and educationists. While the Board is majorly comprised of members from Pakistan, regional representation is ensured through one member each from Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka including Justice Claire L'Heureux Dube from Canada who was a 'Bayan' advisory board member when the journal was started in 2003.

The first Advisory Board Meeting is scheduled for the first quarter of 2020

- The theme of the first issue has been selected, writers identified and contacted. Papers awaited.

### **3. From the Politics of Vulnerability to the Politics of Voice – Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands**

#### Project Sites

Selected Union Councils in Lahore, Faisalabad and Sialkot

#### Target Beneficiaries:

Semi-employed community women, youth (school dropout girls); university and college students (girls and boys); bureaucrats, parliamentarians, local government representatives, male allies (male family members and local influential men)

This three year project came through in November 2019 and the first steps towards operationalization were taken in December of the same years, starting with the hiring of a researcher and a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (work responsibilities of the latter will cover the other ongoing projects) and purchase of necessary equipment, furniture etc. The budget also met a long standing need namely the purchase of a vehicle for out of station field visits. This will ensure team safety, cut transport costs and facilitate access to out of station sites.

The project has been designed with the view to strengthening and adding to the numerical strength of women in the informal workforce, break the isolation of homebased workers and facilitate their entry into the social and public domain as part of the informal workforce and potential entrepreneurs, as politically active citizens and potential local government representatives through knowledge building and life skills for economic independence and political participation.

End of project milestone will be:

- Increased economic empowerment, access to resources, conscious raising and enjoyment of rights by women, particularly the young marginalized communities.
  - Increased women's productive potential and transition to informal to formal economy through marketing skills, political participation and civic engagements
  - Increased women access to opportunities for self-expression, voice & agency and leadership skills.
4. 'Disputed Legacies – the Pakistan Papers'. Part of a regional research project on sexual violence and impunity, the book was completed and published around July 2019 and was available to the public around September 2019.

A book launch cum seminar was held at Government College University Lahore in partnership with the GCU administration.

This activity was undertaken with the support of FOSIP Islamabad that covered participants' travel and accommodation costs including post discussion refreshments. As GCU did not charge us for the hall and refreshments and provided low cost accommodation at its guesthouse, Simorgh requested FOSIP to reallocate leftover funds for further such small scale discussions at other universities and colleges in the Punjab, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. These will take place in the first quarter of 2020. LUMS has also offered to hold a panel discussion based on the book in the April of 2020.

### **Networking**

Simorgh works closely with other rights based civil society organisations, academic institutions and the women's movement in Pakistan. These connections have been

maintained throughout the year through various activities including participation in lectures, information dissemination workshops and capacity building trainings.

**Conclusion**

Taken as a whole, this has been a productive year. We were sorry to lose two of our Collective members but fortunate in those who have taken their place. There have been moments of financial insecurity that have been offset by new projects that have enabled us to continue with our work and look forward to a productive 2020.