

A Brief about HELP Foundation, J&K

HELP Foundation J&K is a nonprofit organization (registered as a society with the Registrar of Societies) set up in 1997, by Nighat Shafi, with the objective of providing a helping hand to people affected by the violence in the strife-torn valley. The focus has been on providing education and mental health counseling to women and children, who have been the worst victims of turmoil, relief and rehabilitation to various sections of the society who are severely challenged by physical disability and/or economic deprivation. With a team of dedicated trustees, volunteers and staff, the Foundation has extended its activities in almost all districts of Jammu and Kashmir State.

EDUCATION, CAPACITY BUILDING & TRAININGS:

SHAH ANWAR MEMORIAL SECONDARY SCHOOL:

The school is located in an area which is close to the Line of Control (LOC) between India & Pakistan. This area was worst hit by violence which erupted in the valley in 1989. The district has the most number of widows. In 2000, the Foundation took possession of an existing primary school with only 24 children. The Foundation constructed an additional building with every kind of facility like, computer lab, library, science laboratory and a bus service to carry children from far flung areas of the district. A new class was added every year and the school has become a Secondary school, which is a leading school in the district of Kupwara. In the year 2007 another 3 storey building with 15 rooms was constructed with an attached play ground. At present, the school has enrolled 500 children with 250 orphans who are not charged any tuition fee and are also provided books and uniforms free of charges, also the families of the orphan children are provided regular financial assistance. Rest of the children are charged a nominal fee. The school is equipped with all the latest facilities and has a very impressive record with almost 98% success rate in the matriculation examination, which is very highly impressive in the District Kupwara.

- Started in year 2000 in Border district Kupwara, supports 40 families by employing teachers and other staff.
- Houses 500 students on daily basis with 250 orphans and underprivileged who receive completely free education, Books, uniform, transportation and occasional cash assistance etc.
- Most of the students out of over 200 pass outs have graduated in Medicine, Law, Engineering, Education, Management, Fine Art, Finance and chartered accountancy
- School has state of Art Computer Lab, Science laboratory, Library and accommodation facilities available for 1500 students. School also houses a skill training centre for adolescents.
- School facilitates interschool competitions in Sport and academics and acts as a cluster head for 20 government and private schools in the area.
- Since its inception, school has educated over 800 orphans and needy students. SAM School is the only privately owned school in area that has a track record of producing multitalented students with recognitions and distinctions.

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- In 2010 the Foundation organized a chain of workshops on CHILD DEVELOPMENT and HERITAGE & CULTURE in collaboration with CLC (Creative Learning for Change- an organization by Feisal Alqazi and Priti Jain) New Delhi, for the children enrolled with the school. The Foundation also organized Children Theatre and Creative Writing Workshops, many of the children from the school participated in these workshops. In the same year some of the children were taken to Kolkata to participate in National Youth Festival organized by Young men's Welfare Society.
- The Foundation organized a three day workshop for three consecutive months on Teaching Methodology and Environment in collaboration with CRC in 2011.
- The Foundation has signed an MoU in 2013 with NIIT Foundation, a Delhi based organization for Basic and Advanced computer training courses that were taught at SAM School over 3 years and continuing.
- In association with Sir Dorabji TATA Trust, HELP has worked in Kupwara on two education projects since 2008. The project covered 20 villages on quality education, livelihood and remedial education and skill development. The project is continuing and focuses in developing education standards in Government run schools in the area.

SHEHJAR ORPHANAGE:

HELP Foundation owns an orphanage (Shehjar Home for Orphans) currently situated in outskirts of Srinagar city (Inderhama Hazratbal Srinagar). The orphanage houses 30 inmates who have lost either single or both the parents and have no one to take care of. Since its inception in year 2002, Shehjar Home for Orphans constantly supports those who move out after passing class 10th examinations. Pass outs are supported for higher education and are allowed staying with their guardians so that they are not uprooted for their society unlike other orphanage inmates.

- Orphanage houses **30 children** on an average up to age group of 16 year only.
- Complete educational support is provided to children once they leave the orphanage and opt for higher studies.
- 45 pass outs have successfully completed M. Tech, B. Tech, Medicine, Chartered accountancy, Law etc.
- Each child requires Rs. **25,000** per annum as living cost.
- Most of the children do not have both of their parents and are taken care of by the individual donations received from several donors who support their education, living, food and recreation etc.
- All of these inmates are admitted in nearby private school and additional tuition classes are provided at Shehjar Home with classes in Spoken English, Theatre and Islamiyat & Quraan.
- Many inmates have performed theatre at various national and state level theatre programmes and festivals organized from time to time.

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- Shehjar Orphanage is the only institution in valley that provides its inmates trainings in Folk art and theatre.

OTHER ORPHANS STAYING WITH THEIR GUARDIANS:

- **200** Orphans under 12 years of age and staying with their guardians are provided scholarships (Rs. 1300/- per month) to support their education.
- **500** orphans from 12-16 years of age are provided monthly educational assistance of Rs. 1000 each.
- **160** orphans have been supported for various professional courses till date.
- **270** widow headed families got livelihood support to sustain the education of their wards.

SHEHJAR CHILDREN THEATRE GROUP:

- Aim of this group is to ease the sufferings of people through the art of theatre.
- Shehjar Theatre Group (STG) has all children (some of them are orphans) artists and is performing locally on continuous basis.
- STG performed at National and International level
- First ever Film festival was held in Kashmir in 2007 organized by STG sponsored in collaboration with Rajiv Gandhi Foundation.
- STG trains artists in Play back Theatre, Same trained artists present case stories of conflict victims at various platforms through the art of Theatre.
- One orphan from STG has been trained by **National School of Drama**, New Delhi in folk art.
- Shehjar Theatre Group has been awarded buy Sangeet Natak Academy, NSD etc.

SHEHJAR LIBRARY:

HELP Foundation established a library in the heart of Srinagar City at Tulsibagh with a special corner for senior citizens with an aim that they get chance to interact with each other. This had helped us in reviving the old and vibrant storytelling culture in Kashmiri. However, unfortunately the library got completely damaged in 2014 floods.

- With over 7000 titles, the community library established by HELP foundation in Srinagar city in year 2004 with over 800 membership and regular visitors.
- One community library (offshoot of Shehjar Library) with more religious books is functional in down town area of Srinagar.
- One more community library with more than 2000 titles is functional in Rawathpora, Kupwara.

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- Under the title of Community development programme, HELP created several Child Friendly spaces in rural areas where Book Reading, storytelling and painting remained the activities from time to time.
- Shehjar Library was known for its activities like interactional sessions between senior citizens, professionals and media & journalism fraternity.
- HELP Foundation is very keen to revive it as its revival will be much helpful to overcome the trauma of people in distress especially the old aged people.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT TO INSTITUTIONS:

- One school in Handwara Kupwara provided cash assistance of Rs. 6 lacs for infrastructure development.
- Flood affected schools in Srinagar supported with science lab equipments, books for library etc.
- Flood affected school in Palhalan Baramulla supported with school desks and computer facility.
- Support to other private institutions (Naqshbandh Public School) providing free education to poor and orphans were also supported in terms of cash and furniture items.

BEHAVIOURAL TRAININGS BREAKTHROUGH WORKSHOPS: HELP Foundation in coordination with MANFORD a Delhi based Organization organize behavioral training workshops "Breakthrough workshops" These workshops are facilitated by a distinguished behavioral scientist Anand David, who does such workshops in 38 countries across world. These workshops target youth, duty bearers, professionals, students, politicians and academicians.

- Almost 150 three day work shops have been conducted so far
- The foundation has covered Universities, Colleges, Duty bearers, Bankers, corporate houses, lawyers, journalists, doctors and many other professionals.
- Recently the Foundation signed MoU with three Universities to conduct Breakthrough workshops for students on regular basis.
- These are though highly paid workshops, but here we charge a nominal fee which goes directly to the education of underprivileged and disadvantaged students of Kashmir.
- During 2011, HELP and CHARKHA, a Delhi based organization conducted a series of workshops on writing skills among children and youth in Kupwara. One of the outcomes of this programme was; a teacher from SAM School (Ms. Shugufta Wani) received a prestigious "Ladli" award from NDTV on writing series of articles exposing different issues related to widows of Kupwara.

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ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:

Empowerment of women is one of the main areas of interest of HELP foundation. HELP believes in enhancing and imparting skill to women unlike giving out hard earned money freely to women as other organizations do on monthly basis. We have established several training and production centres across valley since 2001 to provide free space for women to work, learn and earn.

- Over **36** community based short-term training centres were established by the foundation from time to time to provide skill trainings to local girls in Cutting and tailoring and other Kashmir art works.
- A complete Community resource centre has been established in Kupwara that trains girls in various activities. The centre has a daily footfall of 250 trainees round the year.
- Five successful training centres in Srinagar and Kupwara were transformed into production centres where hundreds of widows and underprivileged work to earn their wherewithal.
- Products manufactured at various centres of the foundation are marketed across the country through Exhibitions under the brand name of SHEHJAR.
- Shehjar participated in several national exhibitions like Dastkaar, Suraj Kund, Kala Goda, WCC Chennai, and other events and expositions.
- Shehjar is presently supporting almost **300** underprivileged families through fair wage system.
- Food and spices processed at Shehjar Food Centre are famous for its quality and guarantees adulteration free spices backed by over 200 women workers.
- Various tailoring and Ari work centres are functional in Kupwara, Srinagar and other districts that continuously provide trainings to more than 600 girls.

Women Self Help Groups and financing:

- HELP is implementing a project in Kupwara for formation and credit linkage of **500 WSHGs**. So far the Foundation has successfully formed 460 groups with savings linkage with banks and over 60 groups have been credit linked with banks.
- Financial literacy programme is executed in 46 villages of Kupwara District with the support of NABARD. Over 1500 men and women have been benefitted with this programme over two years since 2015.
- HELP foundation is also facilitating Joint Liability Groups in which people avail collateral free loans from banks jointly for starting their small business units.
- HELP foundation in coordination with KASHMIR WOMEN CREDIT COOPERATIVE LTD., a proposed women bank in Kashmir, provided low interest loans to over 600 women.

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- The foundation is working with SEWA- Gujarat based organization for women empowerment and skill development.
- Over 225 girls in batches of 25 women were sent to Ahmadabad-Gujarat in 2012, to participate and learn from the existing women groups in Ahmadabad.

Economic Revival Initiative

- Livelihood support after floods was provided to 230 families
- Small business owners like grocery stores, carpet looms, medical stores etc were provided cash advance to revive their businesses.
- One lady was supported with **Rs. 5 lac cash** to establish bandage and surgical item manufacturing unit in Srinagar.
- Several other affected people were

Mothers Schools in Kupwara.

- A community based activity programme was initiated by HELP with Women Without Borders organization in year 2013. Over 300 women were trained in these community based schools on peace building measures and special focus on domestic peace. Women participants at community centres were trained in conflict resolution and gender issues giving rise to domestic violence and instability.
- This programme was executed on pilot basis in 30 villages of Kupwara. However, the extension was deferred due to Floods of 2014 and subsequent unrests in valley there on.
- In collaboration with TATA trust, HELP is working in 20 villages of Kupwara to form and consolidate mothers groups in each village. These groups are also trained to work for adolescent education and facilitate social security schemes. These groups have significantly helped in reducing the number of out of school children and dropouts.

Volunteerism: Many national and foreign volunteers have worked with HELP on women issues and empowerment related topics. HELP has been continuously enrolling volunteers who are deputed to work with women in rural areas of Kashmir.

BESIDES, 40 underprivileged children were trained in Hotel management and catering services from NIHM, Srinagar.

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DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND AWARENESS GENERATION:

HELP Foundation, J&K has started responding to disasters and natural calamities in comprehensive way from devastating earthquake of 2005. Since then, there has been number of calamities and a national disaster in Kashmir. Given from a low scale incident of political unrest to a large disaster, HELP is ready to provide relief to the victims. In political unrests of 2008, 2010 and 2016 food, non-food, medicine and lifesaving articles were provided to people at large. During 2014 floods a large scale intervention to cover masses was done by HELP covering thousands of families in just 3 months and reached to people with over 9 Cr. Funds. Following are the main achievements till date;

- During 2014 floods In Kashmir; a humanitarian relief programme was carries out for Rs. 9 Cr. That lasted over three months.
- **75** temporary shelters were constructed that cost Rs. 75000 each.
- Free medicine worth 4 lacs was distributed among affected people.
- Non food and Food items were provided to **14000** families
- Health and hygiene items and Winterization support was provided to almost **4500** families.
- During 2008 and 2010 unrests, food and medicine was provided to over 800 families.
- Recently in 2016 food, medicine and hygiene kits were distributed in Hospitals.
- Over 50 pellet hit eye patients were supported for advanced surgeries at LVP Eye institute Hyderabad covering each patient with over Rs. 45000 cost.

Mine Risk Awareness in Border areas: Several villages in four districts situated across International Border and Actual Line of Control with Pakistan were covered under “Conventional Weapon Risk Reduction” programme supported by Handicap International. Under this programme Risks associated with land mines and IEDs were discussed with people associated with these areas. Besides, some livelihood and physical rehabilitation was provided to victims of mines across border.

- Awareness programme on safety measures in areas installed with land mines across international Border with Pakistan and ALOC were carries out.
- **100** beneficiaries were facilitated to get supported with artificial prosthesis.
- Advocacy for helping land mine victims in border areas is being done at Sate level.
- New livelihood opportunities for mine victims and feasibility survey completed in all the four districts.

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PROTECTION OF RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILD

HELP foundation, J&K is continuously working for protection of rights of children who have been the worst victims of over two decade long conflict in Valley. HELP has established a Legal Aid Cell to assist orphans and widows in legal disputes of property and others. This cell is headed by a reputed High Court lawyer Ad. Altaf Ah. Khan. The LAC is been recently set up in year 2016 and as supported over 40 cases in different courts of the State. Besides;

- Child protection committees were formed in 46 villages of Kupwara in year 2009. These committees still exist and work for inclusion of excluded children in community development programmes of NGOs and government.
- 19 Child friendly spaces were created for interactive learning and protection of rights of Children in Kupwara.
- Free telephonic helpline round the clock in Srinagar is available for children in distress, children in need of care and protection, missing children, abused and abandoned children.
- **650** cases of Children in need of care and protection (CNCP) have been helped since 2012 in Srinagar under the services of “CHILDLINE Srinagar”.
- Counseling and guidance sessions are regularly done with psychologically traumatized children like; in Juvenile homes, child care institutions, schools, hospitals etc.
- Awareness programmes, outreaches and community shows, street shows etc are conducted to secure the rights of Children especially in the cases of Child labour, child beggary, sexual abuse etc.
- **6** cases of restoration outside State have been successfully done so far by the Service centre.
- Medical aid to 260 children including leucemia patient was provided to needy people in last 4 years.
- HELP is constantly advocating for enforcement of JJ Act 2013 in J&K and has succeeded in getting a committee constituted recently to work for establishment of State and district level Child Advisory Boards (CABs).
- HELP Foundation through its volunteers and field staff has exposed a decade long sexual harassment case in Sopore area of District Baramulla. The person associated with this heinous crime was arrested and handed over to police and victims were counseled over a long period.
- School was set up for 20 visually disabled children at Saidakadal, Srinagar, besides getting 8 children trained in Braille/Vocational Training from the National Institute of Visually Handicapped, Dehradun and 3 girls trained in special education from Delhi University.

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MENTAL HEALTH

- HELP Foundation started mental health intervention in Kashmir with the establishment of Child guidance and counseling centre in year 2003. Leading psychiatrists like Dr. Maqbool. Dr. Arshid and others were serving with the support of Aman Charitable Trust.
- In year 2013, help foundation established a complete mental health centre that has facilities available like; suicide prevention, domestic violence, drug de-addiction, educational service for slow learners etc.
- Centre is run in the name of Mariam Centre and has served **thousands** of people including Traumatized victims of violence & unrest in Kashmir.
- Centre also facilitates Medical health camps, screening camps, school mental health programme etc.
- School Mental Health Programme is an outreach programme of HELP through Mariam Wellness Centre where school teachers are trained in identifying slow learners for remedial education.

CHARITY WORK/AID AND ASSISTANCE

- Sustenance allowance to 300 old aged widows on monthly basis
- Medical aid to 150 patients on an average per year.
- One time medical/ cash assistance to 50 critical/ surgery patients per year.
- Regular medical aid to CKD, COPD and therapy patents. 15 such patients avail cash assistance of Rs. 20000 per month.
- Marriage aid to 50 girls annually with over 15,000/ cash and kind assistance.

Religious activities

- Food distribution programme in Ramadhan for 500 to 800 families annually.
- Qurbani distribution programme for 15000 families annually.
- Occasional assistance to families/downtrodden other than food in the month of Ramzan

Rehabilitation to visually impaired

- Physical rehabilitation to 15 visually impaired children in year 2007
- **Five** visually impaired persons were provided livelihood support for making candles, book binding, paper bag making etc.
- Braille classes were offered to 15 special children over three years.

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- HELP Foundation organized cricket match for physically challenged persons in Kupwara in 2016 in collaboration with Handicap International.

SURVEY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS:

WIDOW SURVEY IN KUPWARA: In year 2013, HELP Foundation conducted a district wide survey on Economic and Social Status of widows of Kupwara. The survey was funded by MHA, GoI through SEWA, Ahmadabad. The major finds of the report were as:

- Widows not having any financial support varies between blocks: In Kupwara and Kalarooch more than 45% of widows have not been registered under any financial support scheme from Govt. or any NGOs; in Kralpora, Rajwar, Ramhal and Langate this percentage is between (38-44%); in Tregham, Sogam and Wavoor it is (30-35%) and in Tanghdhar and Teetwal, the average number of widows not receiving any assistance from Govt or NGOs is 21% only.
- Across all the blocks, average 12% of the widows are below age of 40 years and except Sogam and Tanghdhar, average 50% of them have not been registered in any benefit scheme.
- Around 8% of women lost their husband in cross-firing/custodial death/disappearance/killed by forces.
- Very limited disability related pension beneficiaries were noticed (only 3-4) across eleven blocks.
- Depending on the blocks, around 8 -23 % family has monthly income of Rs 10,000 or more. Significant co-relation has been noticed between monthly income (more than Rs 10,000) and reluctance to request for any additional assistance.
- Average 80% of widows in the district indicated that any form of financial assistance will help their basic livelihood need and around 20% specified it will help educating their children. Widows of three blocks Kralpora, Ramhal and Wavoor have indicated medical assistance. Hypertension, trauma and related psychiatric difficulties were significant in Kralpora among all the blocks.

MAPPING AND SURVEY OF CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS IN KASHMIR AND LADAKH:

The review has been conducted in the 12 districts of J&K State- Ladakh and Kashmir Division. J&K is the state where Juvenile Justice Act is not implemented as it is in other states of the country. The state has its own JJ Act enacted and officially implemented in 2013 but unfortunately neither it is fully functional in the state nor ICPS is fully operational. So reviewing the Child care institutions on the lines of Juvenile Justice Act and model rules is almost impossible and state government has not taken yet any steps to make these homes as per the law and other standards. Almost 95% homes in these 12 districts are neither registered under any state or neither central legislation nor their parental organizations are registered under any Act. These institutions are run by the religious organizations (mostly Muslim) and they also hesitate to have relations with government or in other words to get registered, If the parent organization is registered, but they have not taken any steps to register home under any act or rule of the state.

MAPPING AND PROFILING OF SURVIVERS OF PELLETS DURING 2016:

HELP has commissioned a baseline survey for needs assessment of the visually impaired pellet survivors in Kashmir. Help Foundation has completed the survey on 15th March with the help of volunteers and local NGOs in 10 districts of Kashmir (Srinagar, Budgam, Baramulla, Bandipora, Kupwara, Pulwama, Kulgam, Shopian, Ganderbal, Anantnag).

Five hundred thirty-five (535) visually impaired pellet survivors have been directly engaged during two months mapping exercise. In addition to this primary data, secondary data has

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been collected from State Police Department, Health Department, State Human Rights Commission, Local NGO's who worked in hospitals during the unrest and other non-government reports of Jammu and Kashmir.

The analysis of the primary data based on the survey results of 535 visually impaired pellet survivors found that:

- 91% survivors are visually impaired in one eye
- 9% survivors are visually impaired in one eye

| Age, Gender and Marital Status | Education Level | Survivors residence Region/District |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ❖ 22% survivors are aged between 7-17 years | ❖ 2% Survivors are post graduates | Kupwara 8%, |
| ❖ 76% Survivors are aged between 18-40 years | ❖ 10 % survivors are Graduates | Baramula 22%, |
| ❖ 2% survivors are between aged 40-70 years | ❖ 22% Higher Secondary | Bandipora 8% |
| ❖ 97% male | ❖ 25% Matriculate | Kulgam 5% |
| ❖ 3 % female | ❖ 21% Primary | Pulwama 22% |
| ❖ 83% unmarried | ❖ 2 % Middle/Technical education | Shopian 10% |
| ❖ 16% married | ❖ 18% No formal education | Anantnag 5% |
| ❖ 1% divorced | | Budgam 7% |
| | | Ganderbal 1% |
| | | Srinagar 12% |

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