

Rudramadevi Mahila Mandali

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

Message from the President



Ms. Musku Neelambari
Founder and President, RDMM

We are delighted to share our annual report for 2023-24 that captures the 20th year of Rudramadevi Mahila Mandali (RDMM). As a community-based organization (CBO), it has been a personal and emotional journey for us, filled with joy and pride at having overcome many challenges and becoming more resilient along the way.

In the last two decades, the collectivization of the Female Sex Workers (FSWs) through the formation of CBOs in numerous districts, regional networks and the national network, supported by the Government, NGOs and the international

agencies, has played a significant role in creating an enabling environment for the FSW community throughout the country. Gradually, the structural changes resulting from advocacy and sensitization has enabled the community to overcome self-stigmatization and shame and assert their rights confidently. Throughout our journey, we have been focused on empowering the FSW community by building on their leadership and advocacy skills and enhancing their knowledge of legal aspects and constitutional rights.

The initiation of the HIV/AIDS Targeted Intervention (TI) Program by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), aimed at providing comprehensive services focusing on health, social protection and crisis management to the FSW community has been instrumental in reducing the incidences of HIV and STIs amongst the community; RDMM has been implementing the TI program in Warangal district of Telangana since 2006. In recent years, we have also been focused on alternate sources of livelihood for the community through partnerships that nurture entrepreneurship skills of the community. The non-health needs of our community and their family members have also been our priority.

As we move ahead, we would like to acknowledge the immense support we have received from the State AIDS Control Society (SACS), the District AIDS Prevention and Control Unit (DAPCU), other State and District authorities and departments, health care providers and other NGOs. We express our heartfelt gratitude to all our stakeholders – community, donors, partners, volunteers and media for their support; our accomplishments would not have been possible without their generous support.

Organisational Overview

Rudramadevi Mahila Mandali (RDMM) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working for the health rights and socio-economic empowerment of the female sex workers (FSWs) in Warangal district. The idea of RDMM was conceived in 2003 when a group of nearly 1000 FSWs from 7 mandals of Warangal collectivized, determined to address the stigma and the subsequent violence faced by the community members. We came together to assert our right to live with dignity, in an environment free from stigma and violence. The collective was formally registered, a year later in 2004, as a community-based organization under the Andhra Pradesh Societies Registration Act 35 of 2001.

There is widespread stigma associated with sex work in India, resulting in FSWs experiencing varied forms of abuse and violence including police abuse, harassment, extortion, abuse from clients and agents, intimate partners, public authorities and local residents. Violence is a significant factor, increasing the vulnerability of the FSWs to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS. The stigma and abuse, experienced from the society and the system on

an everyday basis, denies FSWs of their basic rights and makes it difficult for them to access good health care, further increasing their vulnerability to STIs.

During the initial years, we consistently advocated for the rights of our community members at various district and state forums. We conducted numerous workshops and organized rallies to generate awareness and sensitize the key stakeholders – district authorities, municipal corporations, govt. departments, political parties, police, media, other NGOs, public, etc., concerning the issues faced by the FSW community. Over the years, in addition to advocacy and crisis resolution, we expanded our scope of work to address the diverse needs of our community members – health, legal aid, social protection and livelihood.

Over the past two decades, our persistent efforts have succeeded in empowering our community members by building their capacities to collectivize and advocate for their varied health and socio-economic rights, through a comprehensive and integrated approach of establishing linkages with relevant government and non-government stakeholders.

Vision

A society in which sex workers are treated with respect and are empowered with socio-economic rights and opportunities.

Mission

To provide comprehensive equitable health services and enable access to socio-economic opportunities for the FSW community in Warangal district by means of advocacy, networking and direct service delivery.

By means of **Advocacy, Networking and Service delivery**, we work to:

- Protect and promote the rights of the FSWs by facilitating and ensuring their involvement at all levels of decision making
- Reduce instances of crisis and violence against the community by facilitating effective crisis resolution and promoting legal literacy
- Provide access to information and awareness, thereby reducing incidences of HIV and STIs
- Facilitate early linkages for HIV treatment, care and support services
- Provide FSWs with more economic, social and cultural networking opportunities

Geographical Coverage

7 mandals of Warangal district - Hasanparthy, Hanamkonda, Geesugonda, Damera, Khajipet, Khila Warangal and Warangal.

Beneficiaries

2400+ Female Sex Workers (FSWs)

Intervention Areas



Health

HIV/AIDS
Prevention, Care &
Support Services

Sexual and
Reproductive
Health

General
Health



Economic Security

Social
Protection

Livelihood &
Social
Enterprise



Advocacy & Sensitization

Crisis Resolution

Legal
Literacy

Legal Aid

Our Journey

Key Intervention Areas & Milestones

2003

A group of nearly 1000 FSWs from 7 mandals of Warangal collectivize, determined to assert their right to live with dignity, free from stigma and violence.

2004

The collective gets formally registered as a CBO under the Andhra Pradesh Societies Registration Act, 35 of 2001.

Health

- **HIV/AIDS Prevention, Care & Support Services:** Since 2006, RDMM has been providing comprehensive HIV services to the FSWs in Warangal district, with support from the State AIDS Control Society (SACS) through the Targeted Intervention (TI) program. The TI program benefits 2400+ FSWs in the Warangal district.
- **HIV/AIDS Prevention and Community Strengthening:** Through the Avahan I and II Initiative, supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and executed in collaboration with Alliance India, RDMM spearheaded the HIV prevention efforts amongst the FSWs in Warangal through community-led outreach and microplanning. The Avahan Initiative was instrumental in facilitating community mobilization and increasing capacity for community ownership to manage health projects.
- **Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Services:** RDMM provided complementary SRH services to the FSWs and their partners, with support from Alliance India. By means of advocacy and sensitization, we also built the capacity of the healthcare providers and other relevant stakeholders to ensure a non-discriminatory attitude towards the community members. Information and counselling on SRH (menstruation problems, unwanted pregnancy, contraceptive methods, uterine cancer, breast cancer, etc.) as well as referrals and linkages to facilities providing SRH services is being made available to the FSWs and their partners in a responsive environment. The SRH services provided by RDMM have benefitted 1200+ FSWs.
- **General Health Well-Being:** Through the Aarogya Deepa Project, RDMM focused on the general health of FSWs and their families through the Aarogya Deepa Project, in collaboration with Swasti Health Catalyst (SHC) and with support from the Ashraya Hastha Trust. The community members and their families were screened for common ailments such as anaemia, diabetes, hypertension, thyroid, etc. and referrals and follow-up for treatment were ensured, if needed. The project also focused on generating awareness on preventive aspects of healthy living such as nutrition, exercise, meditation, yoga, etc. The Aarogya Deepa Project benefitted 1600+ FSWs and their families.

- o **COVID-19 Relief:** RDMM lead the COVID-19 awareness initiatives and relief operations for the marginalized FSW community and their families in the district through pro-active collaboration on the field with the district authorities. A total of 684 ration kits, 524 hygiene kits, 250 home quarantine kits were mobilized and distributed to the community. With support from GIVE India, we also arranged for 15 oxygen concentrators and plasma transfusion for 80 FSWs or their family member, infected with COVID-19. RDMM also ensured home delivery of ART medicines to the HIV positive community members during the lockdown.

Economic Security

- o **Social Protection:** RDMM works towards reducing the financial vulnerability of FSW community by generating awareness and facilitating their access to social entitlements and welfare schemes. Our team has enabled many FSWs to avail ration card, voter ID, PAN card, Aadhar card, etc. and facilitated the process of accessing relevant welfare schemes such as PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana, etc. RDMM's effort on social protection are being supported by Global Fund's COVID-19 Response Mechanism (GFATM C-19 RM) grant through Swathi Mahila Sangh, Telangana State AIDS Control Prevention Society (TGSACS) and earlier, by BMGF's Avahan III initiative, in collaboration with SHC.

- o **Livelihood & Social Enterprise:** In collaboration with Swasti Health Catalyst and with support from Social Venture Partners – Hyderabad Chapter, our team conducted skill building and entrepreneurship trainings for FSWs and facilitated their access to govt. schemes such as PM Mudra Yojana Scheme (PMMYS). 543 FSWs availed loans in the range of 20k to 1 lakh and started a small business such as vegetable shop, tailoring, etc. RDMM continues to provide mentorship and address the challenges faced, working towards sustainability of the enterprises.

Legal Aid

In collaboration with Swathi Mahila Sangh and with support from the GFATM C-19 RM Grant, RDMM is working to create awareness amongst community members about their constitutional rights and relevant legal acts and IPC sections, to enable them to protect themselves and manage crisis independently.

The program, initiated in 2023, has generated awareness amongst 500+ FSWs till date.

Impact

2004-2024

2400+

FSWs are receiving timely HIV & SRH services, thereby significantly reducing their chances of getting infected with HIV and STIs.

60+

FSWs are receiving counselling and follow-up for ART retention, thereby enabling them to lead a healthy life.

1800+

FSWs received social entitlements and accessed welfare schemes, providing them with economic security.

540+

FSWs availed entrepreneurship training and accessed govt. loan, leading to their financial security through an alternate source of livelihood.

Through collective action and advocacy, RDMM has played a significant role in reducing the stigma and discrimination faced by the community, thereby empowering them with a dignified life, free from all forms of violence.

Partnerships

- Alliance India
- Telangana State AIDS Control Society (TGSACS)
- Andhra Pradesh State AIDS Control Society (APSACS)
- Swasti Health Catalyst, Bangalore
- Social Venture Partners, Hyderabad Chapter
- Ashraya Hastha Trust, Bangalore
- Swathi Mahila Sangh, Bangalore
- Navyasri Mahila Welfare Society, Warangal
- GIVE India
- LEPRASociety

Targeted Interventions(TI)

Program [2006 – Ongoing]

RDMM has been providing comprehensive services focusing on health, social protection and crisis management to the FSW community in Warangal district, with support from the Telangana State AIDS Control Society (TSACS) through the **Targeted Intervention (TI) program**.

The TI programme is the flagship prevention initiative of the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) for HIV and AIDS prevention, targeted towards the prevention of new infections among the populations most at risk, also termed as the HRGs - female sex workers (FSWs), men who have sex with men (MSM), injecting drug users (IDUs) and Hijras and transgender people (HTG).

Health – HIV/AIDS Prevention & Treatment Services

By means of intensive outreach and counselling, we create awareness about HIV and other STIs amongst the community, leading to the adoption of safer sex practices. The community members are provided with a range of services - regular screening for HIV and STIs, access to condoms, varied forms of counselling, referrals and follow-ups concerning anti-retroviral therapy (ART) and for management of opportunistic infections such as tuberculosis.

For HIV positive community members, we ensure linkages with the Govt. antiretroviral therapy (ART) facilities and follow-up to ensure ART adherence and management of opportunistic infections such as tuberculosis.

At present, 62 FSWs living with HIV/AIDS are counselling and follow-up for ART adherence and other relevant referral services.

Social Entitlements & Welfare Schemes

RDMM persistently works to generate awareness concerning constitutional rights. We regularly conduct trainings for our staff and other community members on the legal and constitutional provisions important for them. Our team facilitates access to social entitlements such as Transgender certificate, voter id card, PAN card and ration card, thus enabling the community members to access social welfare schemes.

Crisis Resolution

Crisis resolution committees to deal with instances of violence faced by the FSWs; trainings on legal aspects are also provided.

In 2023-24, TI Program implemented by RDMM has benefitted 2400+ community members.

RDMM was felicitated by Telangana State AIDS Control Society (TGSACS) for Best HIV/AIDS Services to the FSW community on World AIDS Day, 2019.

Key Intervention Components

TI Program

Outreach	By means of Area Mapping and Prioritization, the TI Outreach staff reach out to the hard-to reach, uncovered and hidden community members, including their sexual partners who are located outside the TI geographic areas.
Counselling & Support Group Meetings	<p>Need based Individual and Group Counselling ensure that FSW community members get and Information and Psychosocial Support on 1. HIV/AIDS 2. Sexual & Reproductive Health 3. ART Treatment Adherence 4. Positive Living and Positive Prevention</p> <p>Support group meetings periodically held our drop in centre, provide a safe space for the FSWs to share their problems and concerns and learn from each other.</p>
Advocacy	Creating an enabling environment for the FSW community to receive stigma free services by repeatedly sensitizing important stakeholders about the issues and concerns of the community. Events are organized on special occasions such as International Women's Day, World AIDS day, etc. to sensitize and strengthen partnership with critical stakeholders.
Referrals & Linkages	Through Coordination and Collaboration, Linkages are established with various govt. and non-govt institutions to ensure that the health and non-health needs of the FSW community are met 1. Social Entitlements and Welfare Schemes 2. Legal Aid 3. Treatment for General Health and Opportunistic Infections 4. Skill building and Livelihood 5. Nutrition
Community Systems Strengthening	Community Participation is encouraged and feedback is sought through varied means to improve the quality of TI intervention

Organizational Capacity Building

RDMM is being mentored and provided with technical assistance by Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC) project of Family Health International 360 (FHI 360) since 2024 through LEPRO Society on organizational development and on sustaining services to the PLHIV community.

Through EpiC project, RDMM board members and staff shall self-assess their performance, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, along 9 core areas of organizational development –

1. Organizational Strategy & Governance
2. Finance Management
3. Human Resources
4. Program Management
5. Program Quality
6. Client Needs & Participation
7. Monitoring & Evaluation
8. Networking, Partnerships & Knowledge Management
9. Resource Mobilization

A Capacity Development Plan (CDP), prioritized by a participatory process, shall be made in consultation with the EpiC team. The identified priority areas shall be strengthened through workshops and mentoring visits conducted by the EpiC team.

Glimpses of our work



Inauguration of a grocery shop at the RDMM office, managed by the community



Felicited for Best HIV/AIDS services by the District Collector in presence of DMHO officials and the DPM



Group photo with District Officials after completion of District Level Awareness Program on HIV/AIDS



HIV/AIDS Screening camp

Glimpses of our work



Awareness camp on HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment during the Medaram Sammakka Saralamma Jathara



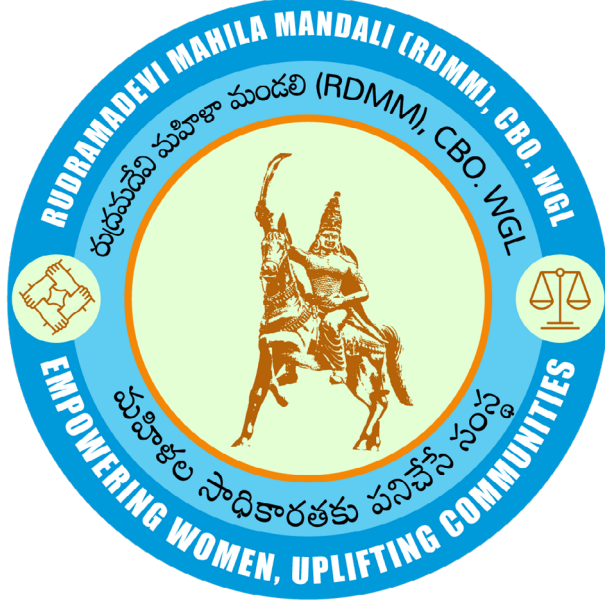
Advocacy and crisis management meeting with the Police Commissioner, Warangal



Legal Awareness program



HIV/AIDS Screening camp

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