
Close the Gender Gap: A Mobile Vaani network campaign

March-April 2013



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Gram Vaani Community Media Pvt. Ltd.

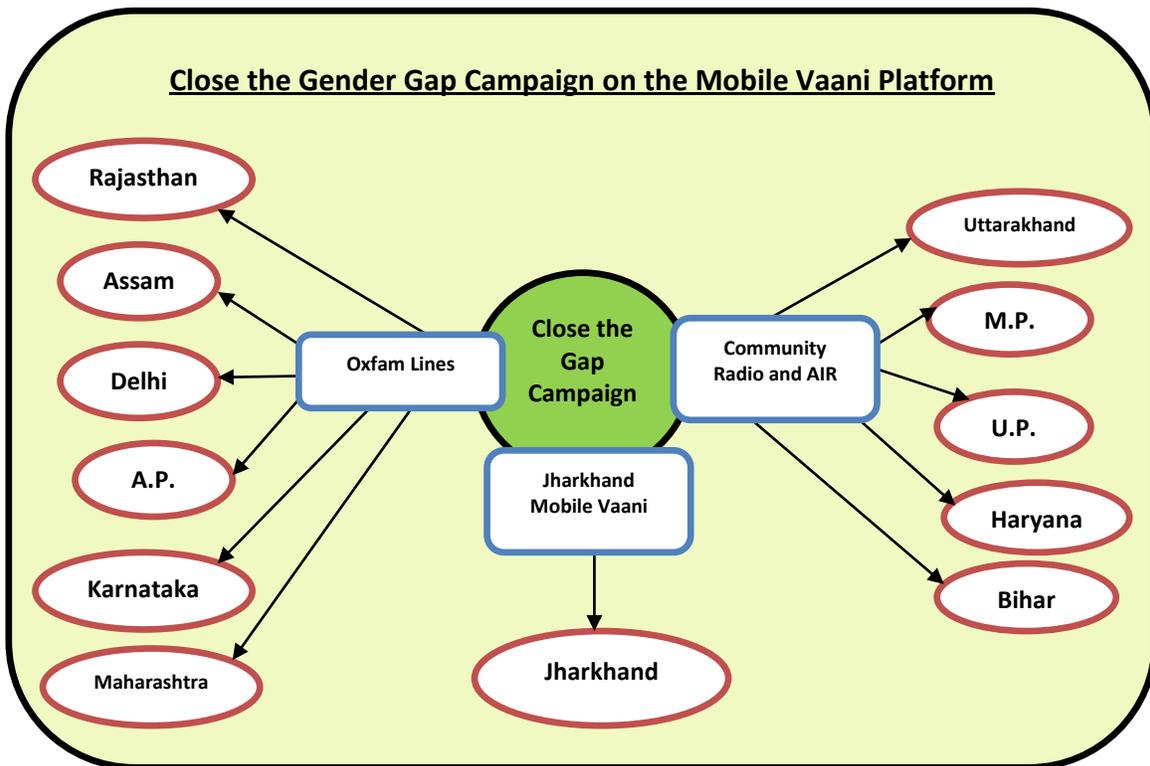
Executive Summary

Women have always been in the centre of the gender debate, but somehow they have always been the ones left behind across societies. Gender discrimination is very apparent in all the states of India today, more so in the rural areas. In Jharkhand, the basic premise of gender discrimination is evident from the grim picture portrayed by the sex ratio 947 females per 1000 males, but this is only one observation among the innumerable instances of widespread gendered discrimination in the state. This campaign “Close the gender gap” was initiated on Jharkhand Mobile Vaani (JMV) to take into account the perceptions of the listeners of JMV about the various aspects of gender discrimination in their society and the ways they believe this can be tackled. Therefore, taking the pretext of International Women’s Day, a five week long campaign was initiated on JMV in the month of March to take cognizance of the gender differences among men and women.

The reach of this campaign extended beyond Jharkhand in many ways. Around the same time, in Delhi, this campaign was organized by Oxfam India in partnership with Gram Vaani and Our Say, Australia. While Gram Vaani set up two phone lines for the people from Delhi and other states to record their thoughts on the campaign, Our Say shared live feed of the content transcriptions from the phone lines on the www.closesthegap.in web page. This was the main web page where the feeds from the online partners Youth ki Awaaz and GotStared.at, who mobilized this campaign over the internet landed, thereby bringing more urban audiences on board. A team from Purple Mangoes engaged audiences in some of the prominent indoor and outdoor places in Delhi to brainstorm about their views on the issue of gender discrimination and stirred up a dialogue about the various gender issues. Halabul, CNN-IBN, Langoor and What’s up Bharat were among the other outreach partners for this campaign. This comprised of the urban outreach for the campaign.

For the rural outreach component of the campaign, in addition to JMV, Gram Vaani brought six of its community radio (CR) stations who are members of its Mobile Vaani network on board. While this campaign was active on JMV and in Delhi, these CR stations ran promos and programs informing their community about this initiative, publicizing the phone line numbers and started a conversation about the issues of gender discrimination and how to close the gap. All India Radio (AIR, Delhi) also broadcasted a feature on this campaign twice. This led to a lot of calls being made on the close the gap lines in Delhi, where people recorded their opinions about closing the gender gap.

Collectively, the campaign reached out to more than 5,00,000 families across the rural and urban areas of Jharkhand, Delhi, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Assam. For closing the gap, the rural and urban India together attested the need for change in the



social norms by educating people so that they change their attitudes towards women and the need for having stronger laws to protect women against the evils of patriarchy and criminal offences carried out against women. While the responses from rural areas stressed more on the change required in the domain of patriarchal attitudes towards women and their control over women's life, the responses from urban areas demanded pro-women policies for increased inclusion of women in political, judicial and other social institutional aspects of public life.

1. Introduction

Jharkhand Mobile Vaani (JMV) has since the last one year emerged as a common platform for the people of Jharkhand to express their views, share their experiences and address their queries/questions/doubts on a myriad of issues they encounter on a day to day basis in their lives. In this capacity the callers and listeners of JMV have actively taken up issues pertaining to gaps in the service delivery systems of various government schemes, lack of awareness on social issues, better understanding of agricultural practices and others issues.

A Mobile Vaani network campaign: Close the Gender Gap



The Close the Gender Gap campaign began on JMV following a soft launch in Delhi on the 4th of March 2013. Every week listeners were provided with a new theme to discuss their perspectives about gender gap. For the five weeks that the campaign ran, five themes were given for weekly discussions. Those themes were based out of everyday experiences of the gendered notions about participation of women in political sphere, their work, their health, violence against women and general perspectives on the gender gap in Jharkhand.

This campaign happened at a time when the users of JMV wanted to do a feature on women on the occasion of International women's day and Oxfam India was also partnering with Gram Vaani for doing the campaign in Delhi. Therefore, the two initiatives were merged to have the campaign. Since, the issue of gender is so widespread that it couldn't have been covered within a week's time, so, different aspects of gender were taken up for discussion on a weekly basis. The callers left their opinions, shared essential information, collected various life stories and interviews and also conveyed their feelings by singing folk songs during the course of this five week campaign. Though this report will majorly cover the perceptions and suggestions of the listeners of Jharkhand Mobile Vaani, the latter part of the report will succinctly touch upon the views and ideas left by people from Delhi, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Assam over the close the gap phone lines.

Major objectives of the campaign:

- To elicit people's perceptions about the gender gap existing in different aspects of women's lives in Jharkhand and their reasons for it
- Bringing out suggestions from the people on how to close the gender gap

Statistics related to the campaign

Duration - 4th March to 10th April (37 days ~ 5 weeks)

Number of items published- 250

Total Number of Calls - 50,503

Outreach - 5,00,000 families

Mainstream Media coverage - CNN-IBN, The Hindu, The Hindustan Times, All India Radio and Panchayat Nama, Jharkhand

Community Radio partners - Henvaani Community Radio, Uttarakhand, Kumaon Vaani Community Radio, Uttarakhand, Radio Dhadkhan, Madhya Pradesh, Alfaz-e-Mewat, Haryana, Gurgaon ki Awaaz, Haryana and Waqt ki Awaaz, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

Districts in Jharkhand from where callers participated on JMV - Dhanbad, Bokaro, Giridih, Chatra, Latehar, Garhwa, Lohardaga, Hazaribagh, East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum, Jamtara, Khunti, Palamu, Deoghar, Koderma, Gumla, Ramgarh and Ranchi.

Participation from 11 other states - Delhi, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Assam

2. Campaign process

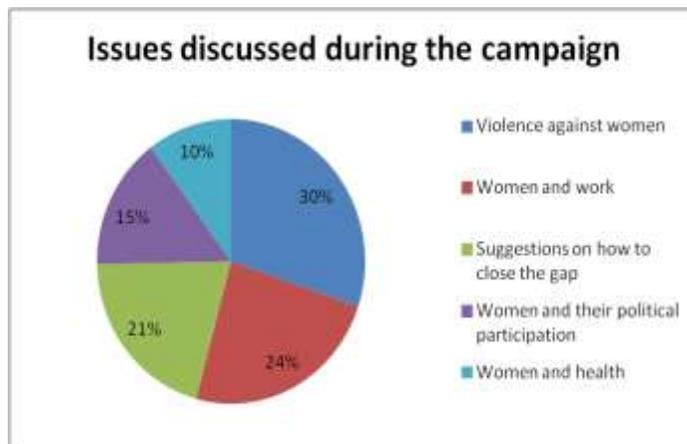
For soliciting content for this campaign, promos were prepared on the different aspects of the lives of women where gender gap is observed and were played on a weekly basis. In total five promos were prepared.

Week	Promo Topic	Promo Content
1.	General Perceptions	Share general perceptions about the gender gap existing between men and women in their community and give their suggestions on how to close the gender gap.
2.	Political Participation of women	Comment on women's electoral rights and their political participation in villages.
3.	Violence against women	Discuss about the common cases of violence against women in Jharkhand, the reasons that incite violence and the ways to prevent violence against women.
4.	Women and work	Share perceptions about women and their work, with a special focus on agricultural work and gender based division of labour.
5.	Women and health	Comment and reason if women of their house give their own health as much priority as they give to the health of the other members of the family.

The content in the form of opinions, information and entertainment came as a response to the questions solicited in the weekly promo. The people from the community also collected life stories of women and interviews of people as per the weekly theme.

3. Community Feedback and Major Findings

1. Issues discussed during the campaign – Since the promo for the first week of the campaign invited JMV listeners' views about the different spheres where gender gap exists in their society and asked them to elaborate upon the reason for the same, content of 30 percent of the messages left by the callers was about violence against women, followed by 24 percent of the messages about women and their work and 15 percent of the messages about women and their political participation.



While 10 percent of people commented about the issue of women and their health, the remaining 21 percent of people left suggestions on how to close the gender gap among men and women.

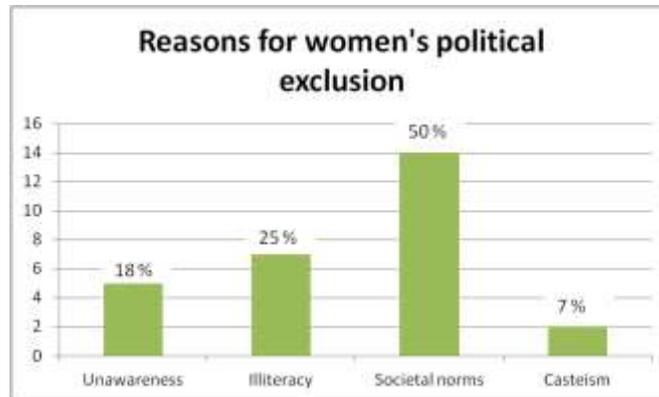
Discriminatory social norms

“People need to change their mentality towards women” – Vasudev Turi
Vasudev Turi from Gunjardih village, Nawadih block, Bokaro district called to speak about women's status in the society. He expressed that women's empowerment can never be achieved by simply thinking and talking about it. As he speaks, there are many families who are murdering their daughters in her mother's womb for the want of a male child. He says that today we might have reached the 21st century but our thinking is still rudimentary. He concluded his message by appealing to put an end to the barbaric acts of female foeticide and called for a change in the discriminatory practices of the society towards women.
<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/10/show/detail/38417/>

2. Women and their political participation – The promo for the second week asked the listeners to share if women are aware of their electoral rights and whether they use it or not.

- Women's usage of their electoral rights - While 74 percent of the people perceived that women do not use their electoral rights, the remaining 26 percent of the people felt that women use their electoral rights and participate in the political arena majorly because 50 percent of the seats in the Panchayat elections are reserved for them.

- Reasons for women's political exclusion - As many as 50 percent of the people attributed hostile societal norms as the major reason for women's political exclusion, followed by illiteracy (25 percent), lack of awareness (18 percent) and casteism (7 percent). It was predominantly observed that patriarchal social norms control decisions of women. Many people in their messages noted that even when government has reserved seats in Panchayat for women, they are mostly puppets in the hands of their husbands. Their husbands don't allow them to participate in the political processes, thereby further marginalizing them. Due to lack of awareness about their electoral rights and illiteracy women are unable to determine their rights and entitlements. People perceived that many times due to the caste dynamics prevalent in the community, deserving women lose out on the Panchayat posts.



Political participation denied

“Women Mukhiya are puppets in hands of their husbands” - Asha Kumari

Asha Kumari from Chandrapura, Bokaro district called to share the real picture of the women representatives who are elected during Panchayat elections. She expressed her personal experiences of gender bias in the region she belongs where women mukhiya of panchayats face discrimination from their own husbands, who replace them in the panchayat offices. The husbands of the elected women representatives deny them the permission to be a part of the Panchayat office dealings. She ended her message by concluding that the men are not very liberal towards the participation of women in politics.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/10/show/detail/38331/>

3. Violence against women - The third promo prompted the listeners to speak about the common cases of violence against women in Jharkhand, the reasons that incite violence and the ways to prevent violence against women.

- Types of violence – People discussed about a life cycle of violence that women have to endure throughout their lives. They talked about the rising incidences of female foeticide and other physical incidences of violence such as eve teasing and molestation which prevent women from venturing women out of their homes freely. The people specifically discussed the cases of sexual violence such as rape, incest and sexual harassment at work place observing that girls are not safe anywhere be it within or outside their homes. Talking specifically about the instances of violence pertinent to the rural areas of Jharkhand, physical and mental torture owing to women being branded as witches was discussed. Around 40 percent messages on violence against women

attributed domestic violence as the main cause of violence in Jharkhand that constitutes of dowry deaths, physical, verbal and psychological abuse carried out within one's household.

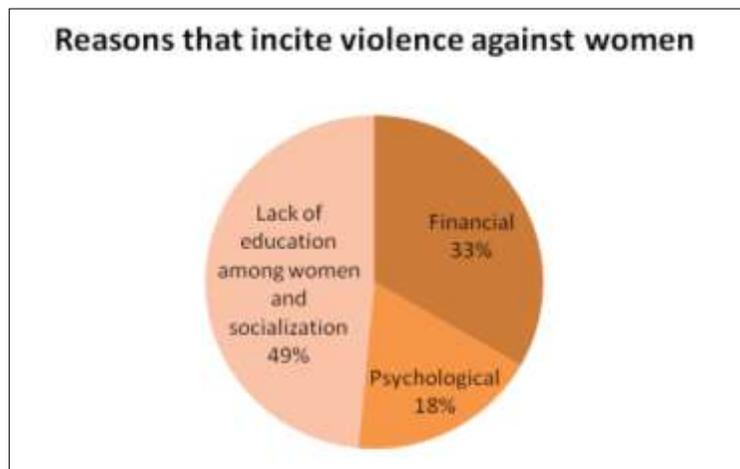
Life cycle of violence against women

“Women endure a life full of violence” - Janardan Mahto

Janardan Mahto from Baghmara block of Dhanbad district called up to talk about the life cycle of violence that women have to live through. He said that violence against women starts even before the birth of a girl child when the mother's womb is made into a tomb because of female foeticide. He further says that even if the girl somehow manages to come into this world by taking birth, then she is discriminated against men throughout her lifetime. Since the beginning her family doesn't pay proper attention to her food and health making her more vulnerable to diseases, there are instances of violence within the family and in public spaces that continue to take place during her existence. He therefore insists that the need of the hour is that the parents or guardian takes initiative to inculcate awareness among women to help them understand their rights and prevent them from falling prey to violence.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/10/show/detail/39935/>

- Reasons that incite violence – 49 percent people perceived women's ability to tolerate violence as one of the major reasons that incite violence. People felt that lack of education among women and their socialization to silently suffer violence gives strength to the perpetrator to continue violence. 33 percent people blamed financial reasons for provoking violence. The custom of dowry was included in this domain since the family of the groom subjects the newlywed wife to a multitude of physical, verbal and psychological abuses for material gains. The remaining



18 percent of responses spoke of psychological reasons for incitement of violence against women. These included superstitions such as witch hunting, men being jealous of women for marching ahead of them in various spheres of life and sexually explicit portrayal of women in media that incites men to think indecently of women, thereby having the appearance of women provoking them to rape, molest or eve tease them.



Superstitious beliefs incite violence

“Men are never called witches, women are” – Khushboo Kumari

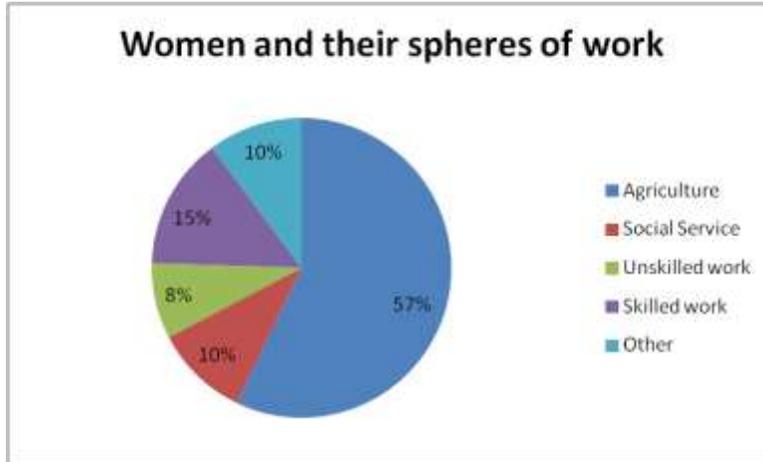
Khushboo Kumari from Balumath, Latehar shared her thoughts on the gender gap existing between men and women in Jharkhand. According to her, women are still discriminated against in today's modern era because they are not given freedom to choose the point to which they want to study, the way they want to dress up, the way they want to live. Going into the details she tells that in the rural areas of Jharkhand people taunt the girls who keep mobile phones with them while going out of their houses. If this is not enough, she expresses that in this male dominated society, the women who deviate from the social norms are branded as a witch and fall prey to violence and societal exclusion, whereas men are never branded as a witch.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/10/show/detail/40070/>

- Ways to prevent violence against women – Among the people who commented on the ways to prevent violence against women, 39 percent of the people perceived the need for stricter implementation of law and order. Another 28 percent people highlighted the need for making women aware about the various laws and policies designed by the government for their protection. They felt that women need to be educated about what they should do when they encounter any kind of violence. 19 percent people believed that women should be trained in self defense techniques because it is easier to rely on themselves than on someone else in case they are attacked by an unknown person. 9 percent of people were of the view that women are better off when they are self employed or economically independent because being financially independent helps them walk out of an abusive relation easily. Lastly, 5 percent people were of the opinion that mobile phones are a powerful tool to ensure safety of women as these help the women remain connected with their families and can call for help, if need be.

4. Women and work - During the fourth week, the listeners were asked to reflect upon the contributions of women in their lives and the work they do, in addition to their contribution to the household work. Since majority of the listeners earn their livelihood from farming, the promo also solicited their views about the contribution of women to the agricultural work. It specifically asked the reasons from the listeners if they feel women's contribution to agriculture is less than or more than the contribution of men.

- Women and their spheres of work – All the people spoke highly of women’s contribution to the household work and agreed that women are first to get up and last to rest. They gave detailed accounts of the chores that women perform in typical rural Jharkhand household by singing songs, reciting poetry or simply giving an opinion. In

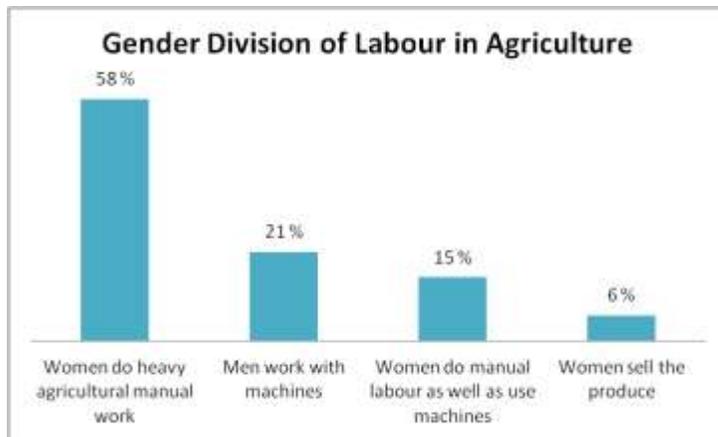


addition to their household work, women were perceived to be doing agricultural work (57 percent); social service as ANM, Sahiya, Anganwadi worker and Panchayat Samiti member (10 percent); skilled work being a doctor, engineer, teacher, bank clerk etc. (15 percent); unskilled work such as manual

labour building roads, working in factories (8 percent); and other works such as being a tailor, beautician etc. (10 percent). However, the irony of the situation here is that people think women majorly are involved in skilled work whereas the reality is exactly the opposite of it.

- Gender division of labour in agriculture – While detailing the nature of tasks men and women perform in the arena of agriculture, 58 percent people responded by saying that women do most of the backbreaking manual jobs whereas the tasks of men in

agriculture are mostly performed by the use of machines. 15 percent responses also highlighted the efforts of some extraordinary women farmers who handle both the manual tasks and mechanized tasks of their farming. Additionally, a few people also responded by highlighting that women also



perform the task of selling the agricultural produce such as harvested vegetables. The responses underscored gender division of labour at play in the agricultural tasks such that the harder backbreaking tasks are performed by women and men’s tasks are made easy by the use of technology and mechanized equipments.

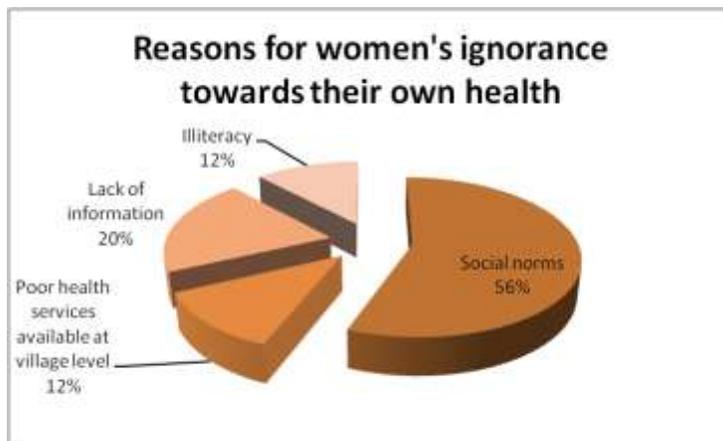
**Women perform backbreaking
manual labour**

“Women look after more than 50 percent of agricultural work” – K. K. Mahto

Krishna Kumar Mahto from Narra Panchayat, Chandrapura Block, Bokaro district called up to share his thoughts on women and their share of work in farming. He says that women and men complement each other on farming related tasks. Elaborating more on the matter he informs that as men sow the seeds, women take out the seeds of Dhan. While Men plough the fields to prepare the farm land, women transplant the rice crops. He explains how women perform the manual tasks of harvesting the yield and how men using their mechanized equipments collect the yield and carry it back to the godowns. He acknowledges the manual labour put in by the women members of the family by saying that of the entire work of farming, women take care of more than 50 percent of the work.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/10/show/detail/41139/>

5. Women and health – The promo for the fifth week asked the listeners to comment if they think that the women of their house give their own health as much priority as they give to the health of the other members of the family. They were further asked to elaborate on the matter and provide the reasons as to why women don't give their own health priority over the health of other members of the family. The responses detailed on the reasons for women's ignorance towards their own health, attributing 56 percent weightage to social norms because it is due to the socialization of women that they look after the needs of their family first, and eat the last and least themselves, thereby ignoring the demands of their bodies. In their responses people reflected that women are taught to tolerate health ailments unless they become acute. Citing the long duration of hours women remain engaged in their work, women and members of their family felt it to be the key reason because of which they are unable to pay attention to their own health. Among other reasons for women's ignorance towards their health, 20 percent people stressed on the lack of information about health, 12 percent people cited lack of education and remaining 12 percent people felt that poor health services available at the village level for women prevent them from paying attention to their own health.



“Women pay less attention to their health” – Prateek Kumar

Prateek Kumar called from Giridih district to talk about women’s attitude towards their own health. He shares that since women have been socialized to keep their family before themselves, they keep on working from dawn until dusk indulging in household chores and agricultural labour without resting. Since they are always in the midst of their daily chores, often caring for their children and family, they don’t find time for paying attention to their own health and need of their bodies for proper nutrition.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/10/show/detail/42234/>

4. Recommendations on closing the Gender Gap

Through their messages, people identified the areas to work upon for closing the gender gap.

1. Change in societal norms –

Around 31 percent of people felt that a change in the societal norms is needed so that men and women get equitable status in the society.

- Change in thinking towards women by not killing them in womb, discriminating them throughout their lives
- Abolition of social customs such as dowry, witch-hunting etc.
- Social acceptance of widow remarriage

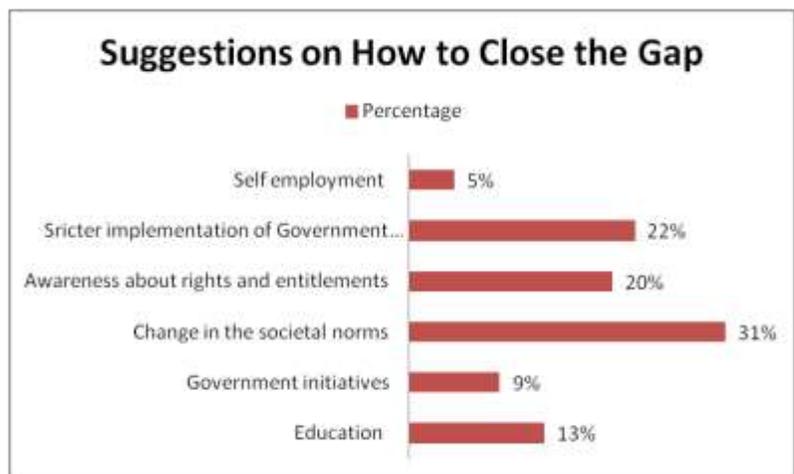
2. Stricter implementation of government schemes, policies and laws –

22 percent people insisted on having stricter implementation of government schemes, policies and laws

- For preventing violence against women
- For preventing harassment at work
- Ensuring that women benefit from the entitlements such as 50 percent reservation at Panchayat level

3. Awareness about rights and entitlements –

20 percent people were of the opinion that making women aware of their rights and entitlements around existing government schemes, policies and laws



- a. About electoral rights and political participation
- b. To seek lawful recourse for violence – Domestic Violence Act, Dowry Prohibition Act etc.
- c. Regarding work – equal work, equal pay irrespective of gender
- d. Regarding health – provisions set by NRHM, RSBY etc.

4. Education -

13 percent people felt that educating women can help them in gaining equitable status in the society

5. Government initiatives -

9 percent people believed that government should come out with special policies and initiatives for

- a. Ensuring security of the women and their all round development
- b. To stop migration
- c. Reservation for women in more spheres since they are prone to exploitation

6. Self employment -

Around 5 percent people felt that making women financially independent through self employment initiatives like microfinance can go a long way to ensure their say in the household

“Kasari Panchayat manages to close the gap” – Raju Kumar

Raju Kumar called from Chatra to talk about the evenness that exists in the social structure in the region. In an interview for Jharkhand Mobile Vaani, Sarita Devi, a resident of Kasari Panchayat said that there is no visible gap in her village. The Women equally participate and assist the Men in agricultural practices, handle the household activities and also participate in micro investment community initiatives by local Self Help Groups. She also said that simply depending on government schemes is not enough, hence they all took initiatives within their community and started doing micro finance to help each other. A twelve member group started doing micro financing with an amount of fifty rupees from each which is given on a minimal interest to anyone in financial need.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/10/show/detail/38438/>

Self employment measures

5. Media and partnerships

Close the Gap campaign in Delhi was spearheaded by Oxfam India in partnership with Gram Vaani and Our Say, Australia. Gram Vaani set up two different phone lines, for enabling discussions in Hindi and English separately about the existing gender gap and the ways to close it. Live RSS feeds of these conversations from all the phone lines were posted on the www.closesthegap.in web page managed by Our Say, Australia.

Urban Outreach Partners

The online partners for this campaign were Youth ki Awaaz and GotStared.at, who mobilized this campaign over the internet. The discussions on their web portal landed on the www.closesthegap.in webpage, thereby bringing more urban audiences on board and engaging them virtually. A team from Purple Mangoes engaged audiences in some of the prominent indoor and outdoor places in Delhi to brainstorm about their views on the issue of gender discrimination and stirred up a dialogue about the various gender issues. Halabul, CNN-IBN, Langoor and What's up Bharat were among the other outreach partners for this campaign. In addition to all this, the facebook page of Oxfam India kept everyone informed of the activities and events. This led to people calling from not only Delhi but from states like Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Assam. This comprised of the urban outreach for the campaign that led to the swarming of calls on the English and Hindi phone lines in Delhi.

Rural Outreach Partners

For taking the campaign to the communities in rural areas, in addition to the communities of Jharkhand, Gram Vaani brought six of its community radio (CR) stations on board, who are members of its Mobile Vaani network. While this campaign was active on JMV and in Delhi, these CR stations ran promos and programs informing their community about this initiative, publicizing the phone line numbers and started a discussion about the issues of gender discrimination in their communities and how to close the gap. These CR stations were Henvalvani Community Radio based in Chamba, Uttarakhand, Kumaon Vaani Community Radio in Mukteshwar, Uttarakhand, Radio Dhadkan in Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh, Alfaz-e-Mewat based in Mewat, Haryana, Gurgaon ki Awaaz in Gurgaon, Haryana and Waqt ki Awaaz, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. Furthermore, All India Radio (AIR, Delhi) whose reach transcends well beyond Delhi also broadcasted a feature on this campaign twice on the Rainbow FM at 102.6 MHz. Together, all these efforts led to a surge in the calls from Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Collectively, the campaign reached out to more than 5,00,000 families across the rural and urban areas of Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Delhi.

Content

Participation of people from a range of geographies and cultures led to the sharing of diverse experiences cutting across the rural and urban segmentation. The perspectives shared by urban-rural participants have been discussed below.

Reasons –

The participants across rural urban areas shared the following reasons responsible for gender gap:

- ❖ Gender discrimination starts at home and it is the Indian traditions that give rise to the huge gender gap that exists in the society today. It is the social customs like dowry that give rise to the feeling of un-wantedness towards daughters when they are born, hence the practice of female foeticide is a on a rise.
- ❖ Participants from the urban areas especially felt that the skewness of women in parliament, judiciary and other administrative positions has played a detrimental role in being able to close the gender gap.
- ❖ Both rural and urban participants believed that government administration’s inability to control crimes against women has further led to diminished opportunities for women as their concerned families restrict their movement outside their houses.

Suggestions –

For closing the gap, the rural and urban India suggested the following:

- ❖ The need for change in the social norms by educating people so that they change their attitudes towards women
- ❖ The need for having stronger laws and better implementation to protect women against the evils of patriarchy and criminal offences carried out against women.
- ❖ While the suggestions from rural areas stressed more on the change required in the domain of patriarchal attitudes towards women and their control over women’s life, people from urban areas demanded pro women policies for increased inclusion of women in political, judicial and other social institutional aspects of public life.

Media Coverage

Leading dailies and news channels thoroughly covered this campaign.

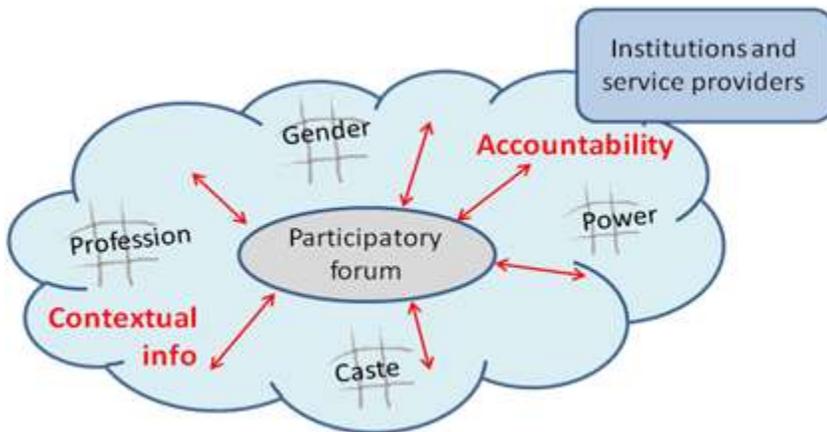
- The launch event was covered by noted newspapers and news channels such as CNN-IBN citizen journalist wing <http://cj.ibnlive.in.com/>.
- An article detailing the campaign initiative and call for participation was carried out by The Hindu <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-metroplus/bridging-gaps/article4506532.ece>.
- Similarly, The Hindustan Times also carried a story about this initiative in their editorial section titled “They do mind the gender gap”

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/ViewsEditorialSectionPage/ColumnsOthers/They-do-mind-the-gap/Article1-1050960.aspx>

- The campaign was covered in every detail by Panchayat Nama through its weekly “Suno-Suno” page, where the comments and experiences shared by the callers of JMV were featured along with their names and locations.

6. Theory of change: Bringing impact through community media

The figure below captures our theory of change of using participatory communication to enhance two community level dynamics, that is, access to **contextual information**, and sustained **accountability loops**, which leads to social change.



Jharkhand Mobile Vaani aims to enable just these information and accountability loops

We know that rural communities are segmented based on caste and power dynamics, with some segments being more aware than others, and able to avail more services than others. This becomes a vicious cycle that we claim can be broken through equitable access to community media forums. These forums allow communities to share information which helps them learn from each other by hearing stories in their own context, and thus improve awareness of their rights and entitlements significantly more than traditional forms of externally originated broadcast communication. This increased awareness helps create demand for services, which is transparently shared on the same forum and improves accountability by allowing communities to cite deficiencies and gaps in service delivery. This also helps generate critical data on service delivery that can be used by policy makers to understand problems and arrive at data-driven objective solutions.



7. About Gram Vaani

Gram Vaani [meaning 'voice of the village'] is a social technology company based at IIT-Delhi. We started in 2009 with the intent of reversing the flow of information, that is, to make it bottom-up instead of top-down. Using simple technologies and social context to design tools, we have been able to impact communities in significant ways - more than 2 million users in over 15 Indian States, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Namibia and South Africa. More interesting than this are the outcomes of what we have done: Thirty rural radio stations able to manage and share content over mobiles and the web, corrupt ration shop officials in Jharkhand arrested due to citizen complaints, Women Sarpanches in Uttar Pradesh sharing learnings and opinions, citizen monitoring of waste management in Delhi. Our work has won several awards:

- International Knight News Challenge, 2008
- National Level Manthan Award for technology for development, 2009
- Economic Times Powers of Ideas, 2010
- Profiled in the top-10 innovative companies of India by Fast Company, 2011
- mBillionth Award in the news and journalism category, 2012
- Canada Rising Stars in Health award, 2012
- Finalist in Ashoka Changemakers 2012 and Vodafone Mobiles for Good 2012 contests

Contact Us

Website: <http://gramvaani.org>

Phone: +91-99100-12946 (Aaditeshwar Seth)

Email: contact@gramvaani.org

Delhi office: TBIU Unit 9, Synergy Building, 2nd Floor, IIT Delhi, New Delhi 110 016.