



Triumph Against Unprecedented Challenges



ASSOCIATION FOR
ADVOCACY AND LEGAL
INITIATIVES TRUST (AALI)
TRIENNIAL
REPORT

April 2018-March 2021



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TRIUMPH AGAINST UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES

**TRIENNIAL REPORT
MARCH 2018-APRIL 2021**

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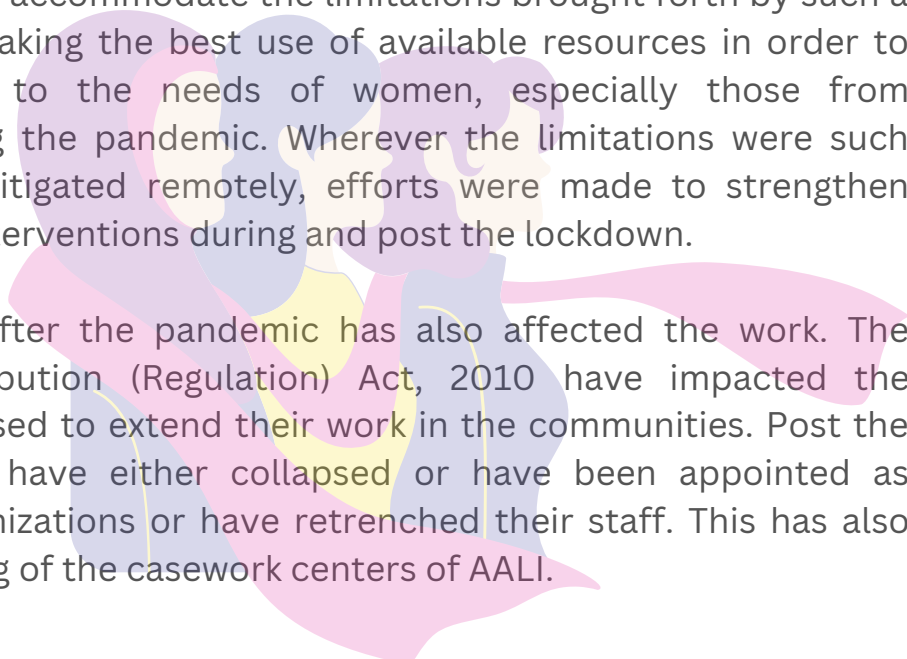
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Introduction

During the period of April 2018 to March 2021, the country witnessed an unprecedented outbreak of Covid-19 Pandemic and its resultant lockdown. The entire country was put on halt and directed to remain indoors for a long and continuous period. The COVID-19 pandemic emerged not only as a public health crisis but also as a women rights concern. The pandemic and a prolonged complete nation-wide lockdown specially had a grave impact on marginalized groups, especially women, children and migrant workers. The vulnerability experienced by women increased manifold as the lockdown had left them exposed to great socio-economic distress. The pandemic posed an increased risk of gender based violence against women, as they were confined to their homes, in close vicinity of the perpetrator and their access to support systems had been limited due to the lockdown. Additionally, women also had to bear the brunt of the adverse conditions created by the pandemic as they were disproportionately burdened with unpaid care-work at home and were made responsible for managing household with limited resources. They were also further made vulnerable due to loss of livelihood and decreased access to quality healthcare, especially such concerning sexual and reproductive health. The economic violence coupled with physical violence further weakened the mental health of the survivors. As a consequence, there had been a manifold increase in cases coming to our organization via phone during the lockdown. The National Commission of Women also acknowledged the drastic increase in the number of complaints received regarding the domestic violence meted out to the survivors from all over India. Thus, the pandemic had put at risk the gains made for women's rights in the past few decades.

AALI's work also faced a set-back during this period. Key activities, as planned previously for the reporting period, were affected and a new, context specific plan was put in place. AALI tried adapting new strategies to make itself responsive to the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdown. Since the pandemic had also led to team members working remotely, the plan had to accommodate the limitations brought forth by such a situation. The plan envisioned making the best use of available resources in order to coordinate a robust response to the needs of women, especially those from marginalized communities during the pandemic. Wherever the limitations were such that the issues could not be mitigated remotely, efforts were made to strengthen strategies so as to improve our interventions during and post the lockdown.

The introduction of new laws after the pandemic has also affected the work. The amendments in Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 have impacted the grassroots organizations which used to extend their work in the communities. Post the new FCRA, those organizations have either collapsed or have been appointed as consultants by the funding organizations or have retrenched their staff. This has also adversely affected the functioning of the casework centers of AALI.



COVID-19 Specific Interventions

Since the beginning of COVID-19 related lockdown in March 2020, AALI has been working on ground to tackle the challenges related to the pandemic. Though, AALI does not recognize itself as a welfare organization, but given the situation during the pandemic it became imperative for the organization to reach out to the communities at this hour of need. We realized that fulfilling the basic needs was of utmost importance at the time when the communities were struggling for food and other basic amenities. Some of the interventions which AALI undertook during the pandemic were-

1. In order to map the vulnerabilities of women during the COVID-19 pandemic, AALI conducted a survey with 890 women from 45 of its intervention districts in the 3 states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jharkhand during the first phase of the nationwide lockdown. Conducted telephonically through surveyors engaged from within the AALI team and its network of frontline defenders, the survey covered various aspects highlighting women’s vulnerability in the pandemic situation including their access to essential commodities and services, access to healthcare, access to information, social and economic inequalities and gender based violence and state response. The findings of the survey have been shared with international networks and institutions such as iProBono and UN Women and also widely circulated among print media.

2. Direct Response in cases of Gender Based Violence – Considering the increased vulnerability of women to violence during the lockdown, AALI widely circulated the helpline numbers of its Lucknow and Ranchi offices. AALI constantly responded to cases of gender based violence during the lockdown by providing free socio-legal advice and counseling, and linking women to state institutions such as the police and one stop centers through telephonic and web-based support. A database of important contacts of state stakeholders from JHK and UP was also created and shared with teams for circulation among a network of frontline defenders.

Violence against Women and Access to Support during COVID-19 related Lockdown

Insights from Rapid Telephonic Survey by Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives (AALI)

COVID-19 and Domestic Violence: The Shadow Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdowns imposed by governments throughout the world has led to a worrying rise in cases of domestic violence as women are forced to live with their potential abusers at home and without mobility. This has presented itself as an unforeseen threat to the human rights of women in many states. The issue of domestic violence against women has been flagged by the United Nations on the 6th of April, 2020 as the Secretary General called for measures against the "horrifying global surge against domestic violence."

In India, a nationwide lockdown was imposed on the 24th of March, 2020 in order to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Mobility in public spaces was curtailed to the minimum. The only commodities and services available and allowed to operate were those that were deemed 'essential'.

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Rapid Telephonic Survey by AALI

- On 27th March 2020, AALI rolled out a perspectives survey to document the status of and increased vulnerabilities of women at the grassroots during the nation-wide lockdown.
- The survey attempted to reflect upon the lived experiences of 890 women respondents at the grassroots who endure a disproportionate impact due to their sex, gender, and socio-economic context.
- The survey covered a number of human rights aspects related to the social and economic condition of the women respondents. Screening and available remedy for protection from gender based violence at home during the lockdown was an important concern of the survey.

Methodology and Scope

- The telephonic survey was conducted by 50 surveyors from AALI's network of caseworkers and access to justice fellows over a period of one week.
- A questionnaire with 50 questions was designed for the survey. It comprised mostly of close ended questions, with space for qualitative information.
- The women respondents comprise of members of AALI's survivors network, community caseworkers and their direct beneficiaries.
- The questionnaire was first piloted by the AALI team over phone with 5 respondents, following which it was shared and discussed with the surveyors.
- Considering the sensitivity of the situation wherein women were speaking to us from inside their homes, due care was taken to ensure the respondents' safety. Measures were taken to ask questions related to violence as discretely as possible and probes were conducted only where privacy was ensured. In case there was possibility of surveillance during the interview, the conversation was suspended and resumed at a later time according to the comfort and safety of the respondent.
- Since most of the frontline workers conducting the survey did not have access to computers or laptops, the data collected by them was documented in hard copy format sheets with question numbers. Photographs of the format were sent to the AALI team on a messenger application through phone, who then entered the data in Excel format.

3 States
Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand

45 districts

890 respondents

134 respondents reported undergoing domestic violence during the lockdown

Given the context of the lockdown, this number is not the exact reflection of the prevalence of the violence and only indicates those incidents could be safely reported during the telephonic interview. Despite all measures taken during the survey to ensure free and safe conversation, there is probability that violence is underreported. AALI and its network of frontline responders have been intervening in an average of 2 cases of violence against women everyday since the lockdown.

https://www.aalilegal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/1_Link-to-Fact-Sheet.pdf

3. In addition to linking the women and other marginalized communities to the government systems in its intervention communities, AALI also directly provided monthly ration to the most vulnerable households there. The ration distribution was implemented through AALI's network of Caseworkers and Community Leaders in 44 districts of Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and



Uttarakhand. A total of 16310 families for an average of six months were supported through the distribution drive. The ration packs did not just contain basic food material but also sanitary pads, soap etc. which is an essential requirement for maintaining good health and hygiene.

4. Three volumes of important orders from the Supreme Court and various High Courts covering various aspects of women rights issues arising during the pandemic have been translated compiled and summarized and were circulated among team members.

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4. Three volumes of important orders from the Supreme Court and various High Courts covering various aspects of human rights issues arising during the pandemic have been translated compiled and summarized and were circulated among team members.

5. Resources, like posters related to Covid-19 awareness were printed and widely circulated among the communities to bust the rapidly increasing COVID-19 related myths in the communities as well as drawing attention to Constitutional promises and role of State.





Relief work during COVID-19 by AALI

एक अविभाज्य महामारी: महिलाओं और लड़कियों के खिलाफ हिंसा और कोविड -19
 "UN Women" द्वारा तैयार "AALI" द्वारा अनुवादित

विश्व भर में 15-49 आयु वर्ग की 24 करोड़ 30 लाख महिलाओं और लड़कियों को पिछले 12 महीनों में अंतरराष्ट्रीय द्वारा वैश्व और / या कारिणीक हिंसा का सामना करना पड़ा है; ये संख्या बढ़ने की संभावना है क्योंकि सुरक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और धन की किलता, लगाव और किलता को बढ़ा रहा है।

- फ्रांस में, 17 मार्च को लॉकडाउन के बाद से घरेलू हिंसा के मामलों में 30% की बढ़ोतरी हुई है।
- साइप्रस और सिंगापुर में हेल्पलाइन नम्बरों में क्रमशः 30% और 33% कॉल में वृद्धि दर्ज की गई है।
- अर्जेंटीना में 28 मार्च से लॉकडाउन के बाद से घरेलू हिंसा के मामलों के लिए चलने वाली आपातकालीन कॉल
- मामलों और आपातकालीन आश्रय की मांग में बढ़ोतरी के मामले भी सामने आए हैं। सेवा में 25% की वृद्धि हुई है।
- कनाडा, जर्मनी, स्पेन, यूनाइटेड किंगडम और संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका में घरेलू हिंसा के बढ़ते

सावरस को फैलने से रोकने के लिए, घर में, और लम्बे समय तक रहने के आदेश जारी किए गए हैं। ऐसे में ऐसी महिलाएं जिनके साथी उनके साथ हिंसा करते हैं, वे खुद को उन लोगों और संसाधनों से अलग महसूस कर रही हैं जो उनकी मदद कर सकते हैं।

2017 में 87,000 महिलाओं की इरादात्मक हत्या की गई। इनमें से अधिकांश हत्याएं अंतरराष्ट्रीय या पीड़ित के परिवार के सदस्य द्वारा की गई थीं। महिलाओं और लड़कियों के खिलाफ हिंसा व्यापक है, लेकिन साथ ही साथ व्यापक रूप से, मामले दर्ज नहीं होते हैं। हिंसा का अनुभव करने वाली 40% से कम महिलाएं इन अपराधों की रिपोर्ट करती हैं या किसी भी प्रकार की मदद लेती हैं।

महिलाओं के खिलाफ हिंसा के लिए वैश्विक सार्व प्रथम लक्ष्य US \$ 1.5 ट्रिलियन (तेढ़ लाख करोड़ डॉलर) अनुमानित किया गया था। यह अंकड़ा बढ़ सकता है क्योंकि अब हिंसा बढ़ रही है और महामारी के बाद भी जारी है। COVID-19 मामलों में वृद्धि, सर्वोत्तम स्वास्थ्य प्रणाली को भी तोड़ने का काम कर रही है, इसमें सबसे पहले हिंसा प्रतिक्रिया झेलने वाले भी शामिल हैं।

घरेलू हिंसा के लिए बनाए गए शेल्टर होम अपनी क्षमता तक पहुंच रहे हैं, या लॉकडाउन और सामाजिक दूरी बनाए रखने के कारण नए पीड़ितों को लेने में असमर्थ हैं। अन्य मामलों में, ये शेल्टर होम, स्वास्थ्य केंद्रों के रूप में काम करने के लिए तैयार किए जा रहे हैं।

COVID-19 से सम्बंधित राष्ट्रीय प्रतिक्रियाओं में शामिल होना चाहिए:

- महिलाओं और लड़कियों के खिलाफ हिंसा से निपटने के लिए सेवाएं, जिनमें आश्रय, हॉटलाइन और ऑनलाइन परामर्श का समर्थन करने के लिए संसाधन बढ़ाए जाएं। इन आवश्यक सेवाओं का विस्तार किया जाना चाहिए और राहत की पहुंच सुनिश्चित करने के लिए संकट के संदर्भ के अनुकूल रखना चाहिए।
- कानूनी रूप से एक मजबूत संदेश दिया जाए कि अभद्रता को बढ़ावा नहीं दिया जाएगा। पुलिस और न्यायिकों को यह सुनिश्चित करना चाहिए कि महिलाओं और लड़कियों के खिलाफ हिंसा की घटनाओं को उच्च प्राथमिकता दी जाए और COVID 19 के कारण उभर रही हिंसा को संबोधित करने पर ध्यान दिया जाना चाहिए।
- मनोसामाजिक समर्थन: प्रकोप से प्रभावित महिलाओं और लड़कियों, लिंग आधारित हिंसा से सम्बंधित लोगों, स्वास्थ्यकर्मी और अन्य जरूरी सेवाओं से जुड़े कर्मचारियों को प्राथमिकता दी जानी चाहिए।

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Strategies

Based on feminist perspective and right based approach, AALI believes the law is both, a site for change as well as a powerful tool to ensure social justice. Hence it works with a multi-pronged strategic framework viz. Active Citizenship, Advocacy and Access to Justice.

Access to Justice

- Direct case intervention and legal aid services
- Working towards rehabilitating and socio-economically empowering survivors.
- Public, policy and legal advocacy based on research and information management
- Awareness generation and building capacities of NGO partners and state agencies
- Networking and collaborating with state and non-state actors

Active Citizenship

- Encourage members of civil society to participate in creating a social ecosystem that is egalitarian, non-discriminatory, and rights focused.
- Engage with various groups such as community-based organizations, lawyers, youth, women leaders, teachers' groups, and social workers to improve their perspectives on gender equality, increase their legal literacy, and expand their awareness of rights.
- Collaborate with women from marginalized communities to strengthen their knowledge about their civil, political, social, and economic rights so that they can assert their leadership and decision-making and become agents of change for their communities.

Advocacy

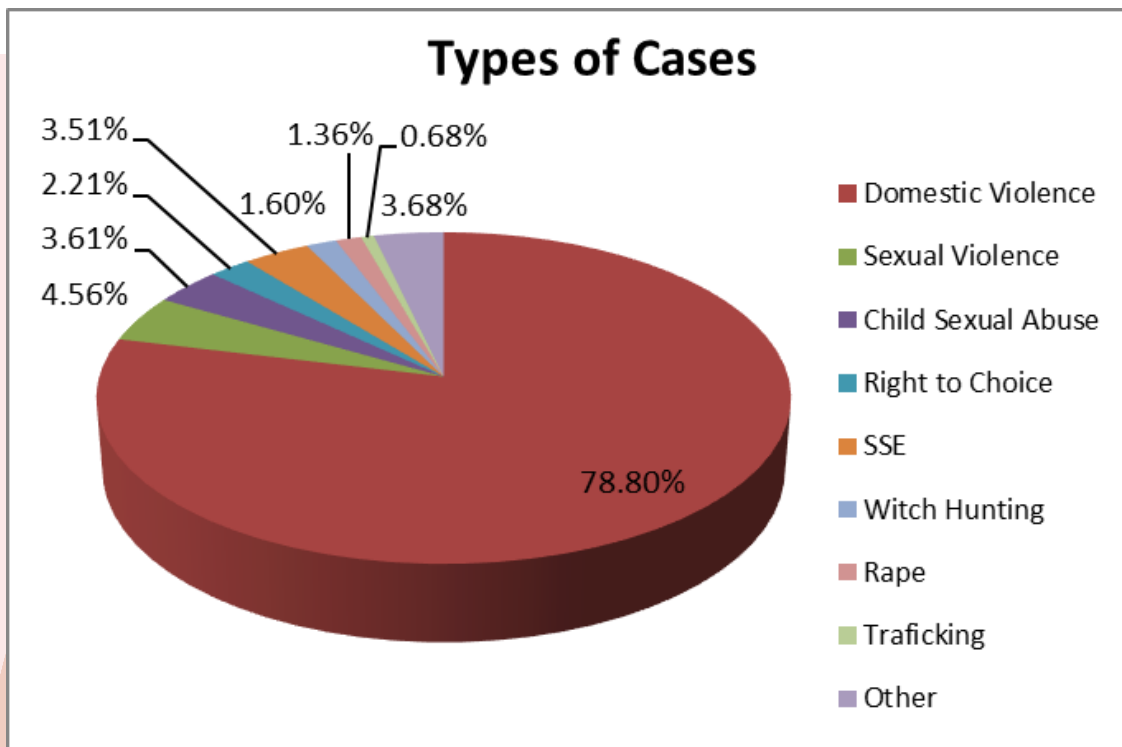
- With state and non-state actors like judiciary, right based institutions, administration, non-government organizations, civil society organizations and collectives at the national, regional, and local levels on various concerns related to women's right and access to justice for women and children.
- Regular collaboration with various national and state institutions and departments to provide technical input and hand-holding support for the proper implementation of gender-focused laws and policies.
- Undertake efforts to create synergy between the state and civil society collectives so that women's voices from the grassroots can be amplified at the national and international level.

Access to Justice

Due to the Covid pandemic and the consequent lockdown, AALI witnessed a manifold increase in the number of cases related to domestic violence reaching out to the organization via phone. Thus, the focus of this period was more on providing support to the survivors of domestic violence, especially to those who were stuck inside their homes and were trying to reach out to AALI through various other means since direct access was hindered due to the lockdown. AALI also worked closely with State agencies like One Stop Centre, the Commissioner Office, etc., in providing socio-legal support to survivors which approached the organization through them or linking survivors to One Stop Centres wherever required. Since, offline workshops were not possible, AALI planned on-line workshops for the lawyers during this period.

Direct Intervention

During this period, a total of 3,219 cases were intervened by the AALI team.



Out of total cases, maximum cases in which AALI intervened during these 3 years period were of Domestic Violence (2315 cases) which shows how prevalent it was during the pandemic. The other major cases in which AALI intervened pertained to issues like Child Sexual Abuse (106 cases) and Sexual Violence (134 cases). Considering the importance of linking survivors to government schemes, in about 103 cases AALI linked survivors to Social Security Entitlements.

Outcome Seen through Direct Intervention:

Through our courtroom interventions, the following major reliefs were secured for the survivors of child sexual abuse:-

- 11% of survivors secured a compensation of Rs. 21,00,000/- in totality.
- A conviction of 10 years along with Rs. 10,000/- fine was secured in one of our cases pertaining to child sexual abuse.

In cases pertaining to Domestic Violence, about 12% of survivors collectively received alimony and maintenance amounting to Rs. 58,78,415. About 6% of survivors were able to secure a decree of divorce and are living violence-free independent lives, and 8% of survivors, through our socio-legal counselling, were motivated to be financially independent in order to be able to make decisions for themselves. Consequently, they could secure jobs for themselves and have now started living financially independent lives. About 3% got separation from their husbands through the Alternate Dispute Mechanism and 6% of survivors, through our continuous follow-ups, were able to take hold of their belongings and stridhan from their marital home with the assistance of One Stop Center, Lucknow.

AALI ensured recording of statement u/s 164 CrPC of two survivors before the magistrate in matter pertaining sexual harassment and child sexual abuse which were getting delayed due to Covid pandemic and also due to laxity on the part of Investigating Officer.

Through our advocacy and intervention of the Commissionerate of Police, we ensured successful registration of First Information Report in several cases, where the concerned police stations denied F.I.R. registration for flimsy reasons in as severe cases as child sexual abuse.

Case Study

i) In one of the cases, AALI provided socio-legal counselling to a domestic violence survivor who is a practicing doctor. She had been facing extreme forms of abuse and violence within her natal family. AALI with the support of police, helped her in securing strategic exit from her house. The survivor is now working in Mysore without any interference from her natal family.

ii) In one of our cases, a transwoman sought assistance regarding her medical clearance which was pending for several years on account of her identity. Through our intervention and several applications to the concerned departments, the medical examination was conducted expeditiously and clearance for the joining was given to her.

Impact: The socio-legal counselling provided to the survivors helped in recognition of various forms of violence meted out both in public and private spheres. Through the court intervention, women's right to seek maintenance/alimony for them as well as for their children are ensured which not only helps them in moving ahead from the violent surroundings but also gives them the much needed financial and individual autonomy.

Considering the Covid'19 Pandemic coupled with the unprecedented lockdown where the state machinery was on complete halt, the usage of Chief Minister's Jan Sunwayi Portal in registration of massive numbers of complaints activated another mechanism for redressal of survivors' complaints. Such complaints, which initially used to take 7-8 days, were addressed in the matter of 3-4 days.

Fact Findings

Case Workers, YWCs, and the AALI team have successfully completed Fact Findings throughout the past three years. When we need support from stakeholders, these Fact findings assist us in developing advocacy grounds that is supported by facts. These factual discoveries help us better comprehend the situations in which we can assist survivors by connecting them with interested parties. The fact findings done by AALI help with advocacy with the stakeholders. For AALI to intervene and find the facts, when the news is available and accessible, is because most of the time police does not consider the facts beyond the obvious, and also because it's easier to dismiss it saying it was 'consensual', so to ascertain the hidden facts our team addresses these cases. These cases later turn into documents for evidence based advocacy. It helps us to understand the challenges better and to identify the gaps in the laws.

Lawyer's Workshop

In the last 3 years, AALI organized a total of 16 State Level as well as District Level Lawyers' Workshops. Through these workshops, AALI were able to create awareness amongst many lawyers. The objective of the lawyer's workshop is to provide legal assistance to the marginalized sections of society, which has long been a contentious issue since it affects even the most disadvantaged people's access to competent, rights-based legal representation. AALI has been working to increase the capacities of district-level attorneys and facilitate the development of a network that can be connected with casework centres to and/or respond in cases using a rights-based approach and gender-sensitive, survivor-centred responses in order to improve the quality of pro bono legal aid services at the district level and create a cooperative response model with caseworkers and attorneys at the intervention areas.

The major outcome of the lawyer's workshop is the lawyers being sensitized towards women's issues. Some lawyers admitted to having been overlooking cases specific to women because of the low monetary benefits attached to them. Such lawyers have become more sensitive to such issues and they are no longer 'normalizing' these cases.

Our engagement with lawyers in the year 2019 has resulted in improved quality of legal support provided by them, a success that has been documented in the form of a booklet called "Strengthening Capacity of District Court Lawyers" comprising 60 case studies from 21 lawyers in the network that is going to be published as an information and advocacy document in the upcoming period.

The Casework Centre Program

In 2018, there were a total of 25 Casework Centres established, 15 in Jharkhand and 10 in Uttar Pradesh. By the end of this reporting period, AALI had established a total of 43 Casework Centres across the states of Uttar Pradesh (18 centres), Jharkhand (23 centres) and Uttarakhand (2 centres).

The casework centres are established in collaboration with community-based caseworkers that support low-income women in their fight for justice. These caseworkers, trained as paralegals, collaborate with AALI's casework model to provide a variety of support services, including socio-legal counselling, linkage and processes with the police, attorneys, protection officers, and other important government stakeholders, as well as facilitation of access to social security benefits and other rehabilitative services.

i) District Visits for Handholding Support to Case Workers:

District visits were planned with the aim of analyzing the existing casework centres and recording the difficulties encountered by the caseworkers when intervening in cases. Travelling for district visits was difficult due to the pandemic restrictions in 2020-21, but by the end of this period, the team was able to complete district visits as scheduled.

One of the most prominent outcomes of this is that the casework centres were seen by survivors as secure spaces where they could seek assistance and believe that their privacy would be respected. As a result of the AALI team's visits to the One Stop Centers during these district visits, the case workers have been receiving full assistance from the One Stop Centers in their respective districts.

ii) Coalition with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs):

In this reporting period, AALI held several consultations with the head of 22 Community-Based Organizations from 14 districts in Uttar Pradesh and 3 districts in Uttarakhand. The districts were chosen based on their population makeup, relevant socio-political issues, statistics on gender-based violence against women, and the infringement of the rights of underrepresented groups. A consensus on the necessity for involvement through the legal system and access to justice was reached as a result of the consultation. Following the consultation, a total of 50 participants were trained across a three-phase training programme that took place between June, August, September and October 2018 in 12 selected districts in Uttar Pradesh and 2 selected districts in Uttarakhand. These consultations help to build the capacity of the CBOs and to create safe spaces for conversations around gender-related issues by coming together.

Refresher Trainings with CBOs on topics like Government Schemes, Victim Compensation Schemes, challenges in the cases of POCSO and PWDVA and discussion on reporting format were held during this period. Also, a workshop on Laws and Policies on Ending Child Marriage in India with CBOs of Jharkhand and Rajasthan was held.

The CBO participants have also started frequently interfering in cases involving women's rights. Additionally, they have begun holding community meetings and bilateral meetings with stakeholders.

Active Citizenship

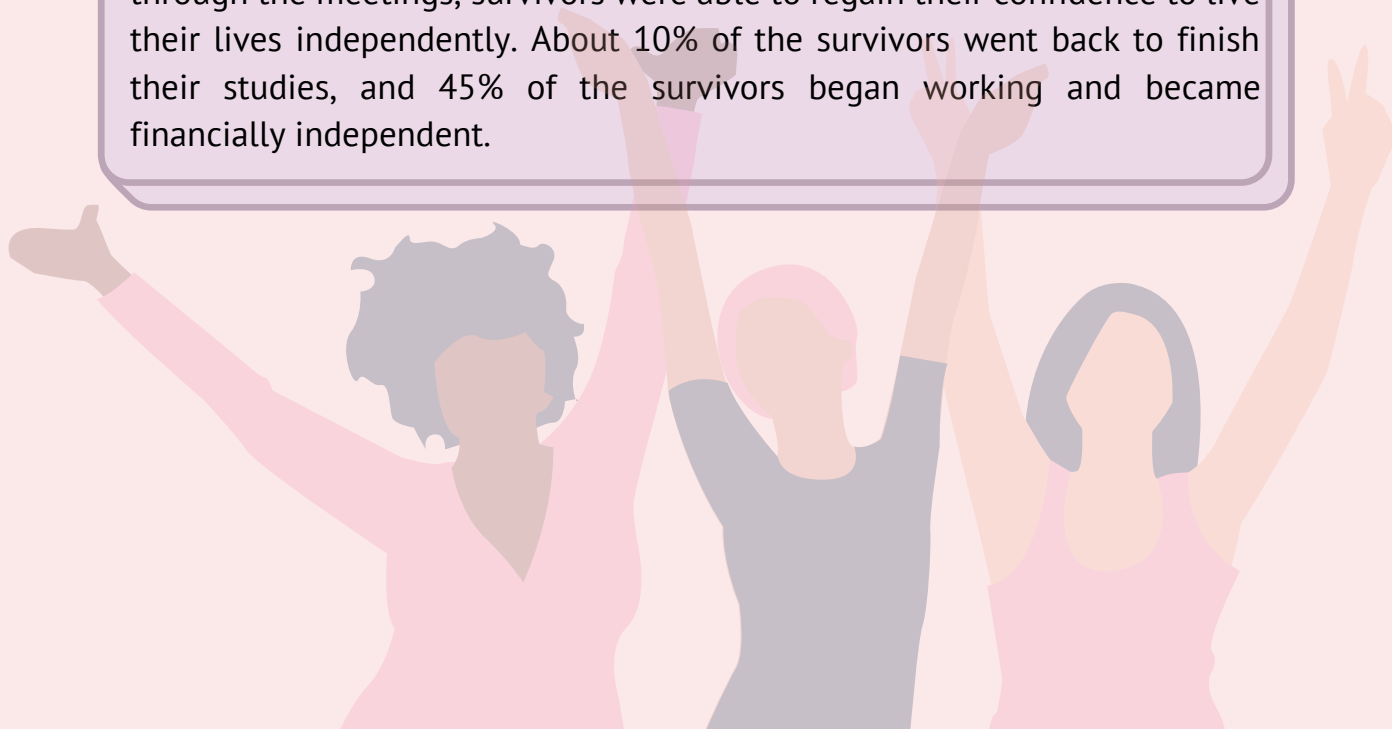
The role of active citizenship is to make it possible for women from marginalised groups to claim their citizenship and seek access to their rights. AALI enables creating awareness and enhancing the capacities of state agencies, youth, stakeholders and community women through active citizenship.

During this period, the focus was majorly on the social-security entitlements and schemes like MNGREGA and its accessibility to the community women. We also aimed to hold survivor meetings in order to build a network of survivors that could offer a secure, honourable, and inclusive setting for women survivors to share their stories and get support. In addition to giving women the chance to share their experience of empowerment with others, it will also foster camaraderie and a network of support outside of AALI.

Survivor Meetings

The pandemic served as a major hurdle in the path of the conduction of such meetings. However, the zeal and enthusiasm of the survivors and their curiosity to learn, enabled the organization to conduct these meetings via online platforms. The topics of these meetings included One Billion Rising, Art Therapy and Skill Development Program, Discrimination & Violence, Menstrual Hygiene, Mental Health, Constitutional Values, Violence and Challenges faced during the Lockdown, Economical policies during COVID'19, Impact of Lockdown on Survivors, Women: A discussion on Women's Right and Screening of the Movie- 'Saand Ki Aankh'.

It was seen that because of the continuous engagement with the survivors through the meetings, survivors were able to regain their confidence to live their lives independently. About 10% of the survivors went back to finish their studies, and 45% of the survivors began working and became financially independent.



Youth Engagements

AALI believes that the youth of the country is the key change makers of the country's future and therefore their sensitization and awareness on topics related to GBV becomes imperative. To this effect AALI conducts various youth workshops with students of schools and colleges in Lucknow and Ranchi and also awareness meetings with the youth in the community. In the period between 2018-2021, AALI also conducted youth outreach sessions at the Dastak Festival during the One Billion Rising Campaign and at the Kabir Festival during 16 Days of Activism on "Women's bodily integrity, right to choice and decision making".

It was seen that after these engagements, the youth gained a better understanding of their rights, including their right to equality, freedom and mobility. It was also observed that they were able to recognize GBV and discrimination that existed in the societal structures around them and also started raising their voices against such practices.

After a youth session with the legal aid cell of the Faculty of Law, Lucknow University, the students of the university approached AALI for mentorship, guidance and resource support on the Jail Reformation and Rehabilitation Program that they are conducting in order to provide legal aid and advocacy support for inmates of 3 jails in Lucknow. AALI supported them with this program for a year after which we were not able to sustain the program.

Women Leadership Program

Between April'18 and March '21, the program extended to 19 new villages of Azamgarh and 14 new villages of Varanasi.

Capacity Building of Community Leaders

11 residential trainings and two exposure visits were organized with the CLs and YCLs. It was after these meetings that they gained an in-depth understanding on:- gender and patriarchy, Fundamental rights, Criminal procedure, Right to information act, right to education, Identity-based violence, Gender Based Violence, CrPC, Indian Penal Code, FIR, Police hierarchy Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, Sexual violence & Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and addressing challenges and developing strategies for Gram Sabha etc.

Monitoring

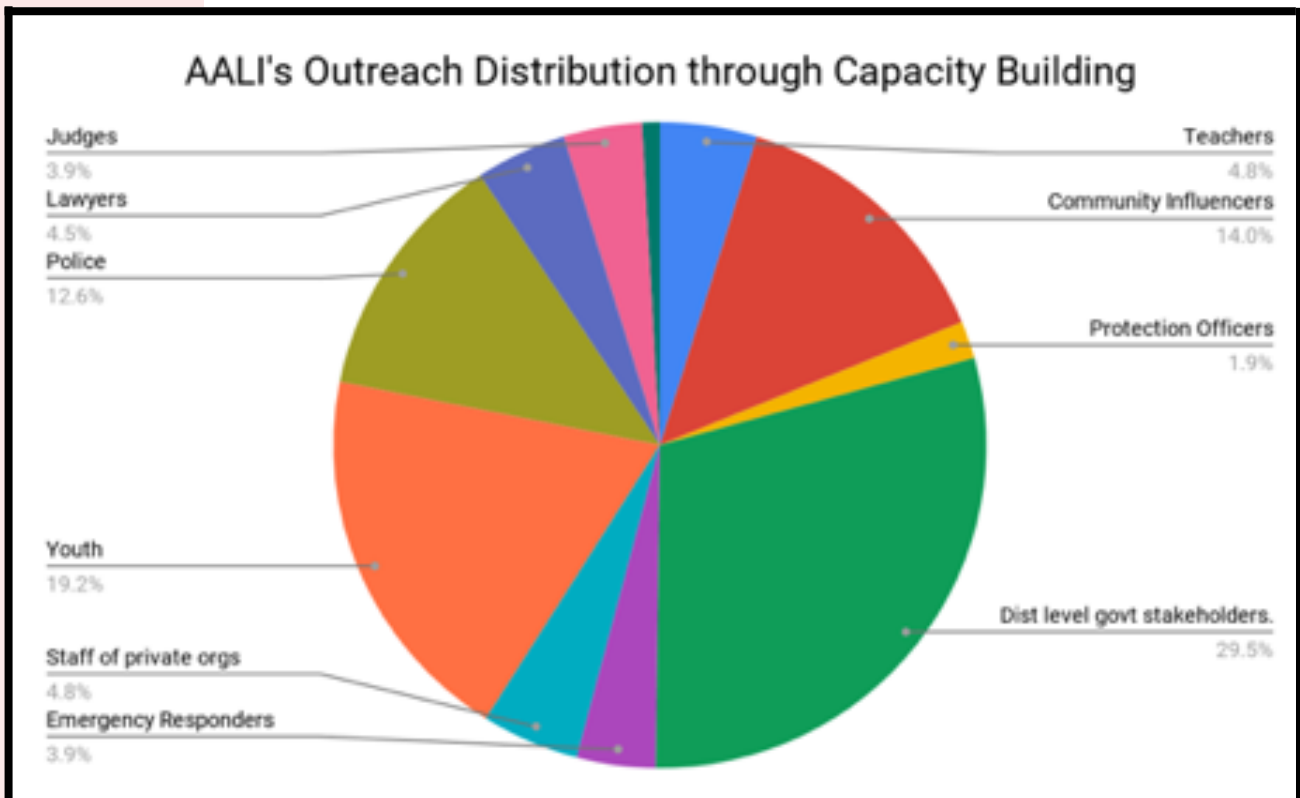
The CLs and YCLs conduct monitoring of Government schemes at the local level, they keep a tab on new schemes launched by the government and inform people in their communities about such schemes. In this reporting period, they also ensured that all covid guidelines and SSE were being followed and granted.

It was also noted that when irregularities and discrimination were found they raised their voice and ensured that the people in their communities were given what was rightfully theirs.

"मेरे गाँव में कभी भी कोटेदार तौल कर राशन नहीं देता था और नहीं हम लोगो को पता था राशन तौल कर मिलना चाहिए, बैठक में जानकारी के बाद जब निगरानी करने लगे तब लगा कि यह गलत है और महिलाओं को तैयार किया मेरे गाँव से लगभग 20 महिलाओं ने निर्णय लिया और जिला अधिकारी के यहाँ शिकायत किया तब पहली बार कोटेदार के यहाँ के तौलने की मशीन लगी।"

हसिबुन देवली, आजमगढ़

Capacity Building of Stakeholders



Stakeholders Workshops

Protection Officers

Protection Officers represent a crucial constituency in terms of AALI's work with state stakeholders for direct intervention in cases of domestic violence. Owing to AALI's continued advocacy efforts, 20 independent Protection Officers were appointed in the state by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. In this reporting period a year long engagement program with 20 protection officers appointed under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 was undertaken. The purpose of this was to acquaint the POs better with knowledge regarding their roles and responsibilities, to discuss their challenges and successes while working on the field and to equip them with hands on skills and strategies to respond to these challenges.

It was seen that after these workshops POs had become much more proactive and were using strategies shared by AALI successfully in their work. It was seen that some Protection Officers had filed as many as 576, 900 and 1078 DIRs in their respective districts within a year.

Police Officers

AALI works with the police to strengthen their responses in cases of GBV and orient them towards gender sensitive and accountable policing. Between April 2018 and March 2021, 736 police officers ranging across the ranks of SSP, Inspector and Sub-Inspector from states of UP and Jharkhand were trained by AALI through multiple workshops during the reporting period. 42 women tele-callers of Dial 100 emergency response are also beneficiaries of training efforts with the police.

Judges and Doctors

AALI organizes capacity building sessions with Medical Officers and Judges to sensitize them towards issues related to GBV. With medical officers, through the workshops, AALI enables them to take on a sensitive and feminist perspective while handling cases of sexual violence. In a training conducted with doctors involved in private and government practice during the reporting period, AALI discussed the roles, responsibilities and ethical guidelines to be kept in mind while responding in cases of sexual violence for treatment and medico-legal purposes

Engagement with judicial officers is an important strategy to ensure that Constitutional guarantees of women and children are protected in the Court of Law and survivor centric adjudication can be strengthened in practice. In this reporting period, AALI collaborated with the State Legal Services Authority to organize a training for 100 newly appointed judges at the district level. The judicial officers were acquainted with the procedural gaps that arise during trials in cases of Child Sexual Abuse under POCSO Act. The training also became an opportunity for AALI to discuss the ways in which the power of the law is harnessed to curtail women's mobility, choice and decision making in relationships by non-consenting families and the criminal justice system.

Community Engagements

AALI works with communities across Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand through caseworkers and community leaders. It was seen that after these meetings, women were able to identify forms of domestic violence, they were also able to understand the right to equality and were able to demand this right for themselves. Over the course of the three years, it was also seen that the mobility of these women also increased and they were able to contact government departments and access their SSE on their own.

During this period, AALI started its work with youth and adolescent girls in the communities. Meetings with youth, to build awareness and perspective building on various issues like gender and patriarchy, fundamental rights, the procedure of Gram sabha meeting, awareness on Covid 19, election and sexual violence were organized.

Outcomes

-Due to the efforts made by Community Leaders, about 8016 families were linked to the government schemes and dray ration.

-Right to food was ensured for approx. 400 families by helping them in getting their ration card made.

-Women have started independently visiting Government departments for accessing entitlements, registering complaints and etc. For example, about 118 women demanded job in MNREGA and they got the job.

-Most of the time, people did not use to get ration since their fingerprints did not match in the biometric system. For many days people had to sit home and had to miss work to put their fingerprints so that they could get ration. And still when the fingerprints did not match, they were not given ration. Women from 12 villages of Azamgarh decided to raise a complaint with DM regarding this issue. They approached DM and demanded him to remove biometric machine. After the meeting, DM accepted their request and issued an order saying that if the fingerprint does not match, person should be given ration on the basis of the Aadhar card.

-During this reporting period Govt. focused only covid 19 vaccine and denied to children and pregnant women immunization. After the intervention by community leaders, health department also ensure health rights of women and children.

गाँव के अन्दर जाने वाली सड़कों पर अँधेरा रहता था, हम सभी महिलायें बैठक में चर्चा करके यह निर्णय लिए कि सड़कों पर अँधेरा होना सुरक्षा की दृष्टी से सही नहीं है। उसके बाद हम सभी ग्राम प्रधान के पास गये और बोले सुनसान रास्ता है, अँधेरा रहता है अगर कल हमारे पास कुछ होगा इसके जिम्मेदार कौन होंगे।
(सठियाव गाँव, आजमगढ़ की महिलायें)



गाँवों में स्वास्थ्य विभाग द्वारा सिर्फ कोविड के टीका को लेकर केन्द्रित थी गर्भवती महिला और बच्चों को टीका नहीं लग रहा था, ANM से बात करने पर पता चला कि सभी की ड्यूटी कोविड टीका में लगवाई गई है इसलिए महिलाओं व बच्चों का टीका नहीं हो रहा है। उसके स्वास्थ्य विभाग गये और बताये कि ये गर्भवती महिला और बच्चों का टीका भी बहुत जरूरी है ये तो इनके मौलिक अधिकार का हनन हो रहा है तब जाकर ANM टीका के लिए आने लगी।

(नुराना सरायमीर)

गाँव में नाला नहीं था, सभी ने अपने घर के सामने गड्ढा खोद कर रखा था जब इस्तेमाल किया हुआ गन्दा पानी भर जाता था उसको सिर पर उठा कर गाँव के बाहर खेत में फेंक कर आते थे, आप सोच कर देखिये कि जो गन्दा पानी होता था मल मूत्र वाला उसी पानी को सिर पर उठाते और फेकते इसके बारे में ग्राम प्रधान से बात किया कई बार फालोअप किया तब अब जाकर गाँव में नाला बन पाया और हम सभी भी सम्मानपूर्वक जीवन जी रहे हैं।

(सलमा कुकुरसंडा, आजमगढ़)

Advocacy

In this reporting period, with an objective of holding State institutions accountable towards prioritizing the rights of women and marginalized communities in policy and action, AALI has actively undertaken systemic advocacy with key state and non state actors.

International Advocacy:

AALI had a chance to present its work at the 7th Asia Pro Bono Conference at Hong Kong. Given our extensive work on access to justice and the model of linkages between lawyers and paralegals, we were able to share our strategies and impact with respect to women's rights on an international platform. This has presented a great opportunity for networking and opened up new avenues for establishing linkages, sharing and expanding our work.

Advocacy through Networks:

AALI being part of various networks comprising of regional and national level organizations addressing the issue of domestic violence, took part in consultation meetings and contributed positively to the discussions held. One such meeting was of AMAN network in which AALI had contributed in formulating recommendations for the Government of India to prioritize gender based violence and ensure full and proper multi-stakeholder coordinated response into such cases, as well as take measures to prevent such violence during the lockdown.

AALI has also contributed its observations regarding the functioning of courts in virtual mode during the pandemic in a discussion on the same initiated by the Agami network. AALI highlighted the challenges faced by women litigants as well as women lawyers in accessing and participating in courts functioning online that exposes them to the risk of exclusion from the court processes.

AALI had the opportunity to participate in a National Consultation on Facilitating the Fulfillment of State Obligation under CEDAW Convention, follow up of 2014 Recommendations and preparation for the next Periodic Report for Advancement of Women's Rights and Equality. The consultation was organized by the National Alliance of Women in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, India.

In this reporting period, AALI also conducted two state-level consultations on the Draft Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018 in collaboration with Sangram, Veshya Anyay Mukti Parishad and the National Network of Sex Workers in Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. The major objective of the Consultation was to provide a comprehensive, rights based critique of the Draft Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, the foundations of which were laid in 2016 and come up with an action and mobilization plan to propose modifications to the bill.

Bilateral Meetings

During the reporting period AALI got the opportunity to present its views before the **Law Commission of India** on the subject of gender justice and personal laws. The discussion was centered on the distrust that prevails around the concept of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC). It was a platform for an in-depth discussion on the current situation of women's access to rights, decision making power, women's inheritance rights, maintenance rights, etc. and justice through personal Laws; prominent women's rights organizations from across the country were invited to participate and make informed suggestions, based on their experience at the grassroots level. This was one of the many steps towards possible amendments to the laws with the intention of making them more gender inclusive.

AALI was a key contributor at the **National Consultation held by the National Commission for Women** on early and child marriage. The consultation paved way for identifying the key issues with respect to implementation of the law and informed the plan and strategy of the women's and allied movements, nationally. AALI's experience with pro bono casework, capacity building and advocacy through the use of law contributed to formulating legal strategies for standardizing rights-based intervention in cases of Domestic Violence, besides working towards evidence building.

AALI also participated in a state-level round table organized **by OXFAM** on 'Working Together to End Domestic Violence and Child Marriage'. AALI shared its experience of working with Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 and brought forward some practical aspects of court room practices with respect to implementation of laws related to violence in the private sphere.

AALI also got the opportunity to participate in the National Consultation organized by the **National Commission for Women** to discuss the implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. AALI has also been selected as a master trainer by the NCW and has been empanelled to conduct trainings for state and non-state institutions on SHW.

AALI contributed in the Civil Society Review of the Sustainable Development Goals in New Delhi and presented on the issue of sexual violence and gaps in state response as deterrent to achievement of Goal 5 (Gender Equality) under the SDGs.

AALI wrote a few advocacy letters during the reporting period. Through Advocacy letters, AALI seeks to raise the issue of state accountability towards ensuring the realization of the constitutional and fundamental rights of the community, especially of the marginalized sections. Following advocacy letters were written by AALI during this period:

- Advocacy letter to the State Legal Services Authorities in Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand demanding their intervention through District Legal Services Authorities in providing legal aid to inmates of prisons, probation/observation homes, Nari Niketan and other state run shelter homes for release during the pandemic. Relevant orders of the Supreme Court in the context of contagion of the pandemic in child care homes, prisons and Nari Niketan have been relied upon for the demand.

- Advocacy letters to the State Commissions for Women in Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand demanding monitoring of the situation of Nari Niketan in both states during the pandemic. We have enlisted a number of demands such as ensuring safe release and transportation of those wanting to leave the Nari Niketan of their own volition, facilitation of access to essential services and commodities for women housed in these homes, and protection of women from all forms of violence in the NariNiketan during the pandemic.

- AALI had also written an advocacy letter to the Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court requesting the court to take cognizance of the increasing vulnerabilities of women during the pandemic in the light of increasing gender based violence in the state. We made a request in the letter for urgent intervention in the matter through directions to treat domestic violence and sexual violence cases as urgent matters, reopening the court treasury for women to collect maintenance, intervention by the UPSLSA in cases of domestic and sexual violence, full functioning of emergency helpline numbers and response services and the like.

Researches Undertaken-

Implementation of Laws related to Acid Attacks in UP- In this reporting period, AALI has successfully completed writing the research report on implementation of laws related to acid attack in Uttar Pradesh.

Implementation of Laws related to Witch Hunting related violence in Jharkhand- AALI has also successfully completed the proposal, design, research tool development, primary and secondary data collection including field work for the research on implementation of laws related to witch hunting related violence in Jharkhand.

Implementation of Laws related to Witch Hunting related violence in Jharkhand- AALI has also successfully completed the proposal, design, research tool development, primary and secondary data collection including field work for the research on implementation of laws related to witch hunting related violence in Jharkhand.

Study on condition of women prisoners in Jharkhand- Several attempts were made to obtain permission of primary interviews for the women prisoners study, but unfortunately we did not find a lot of support in the state authorities. . We have been speaking to, as well as following up with, the Home Department, Jharkhand as well as the Inspector General, Prisons, Jharkhand, for permission for the study. At this stage, a secondary source and RTI based research has been conducted and a short paper based on the same has been drafted.

Casework Analysis- AALI has also undertaken the task of analyzing the casework data of 160 cases taken in by the Casework Unit in 2018 to develop insights regarding women's struggle with violence and journey with access to justice. Center for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT) provided technical support to AALI in the effort.

Outcomes of Advocacy Initiatives by AALI-

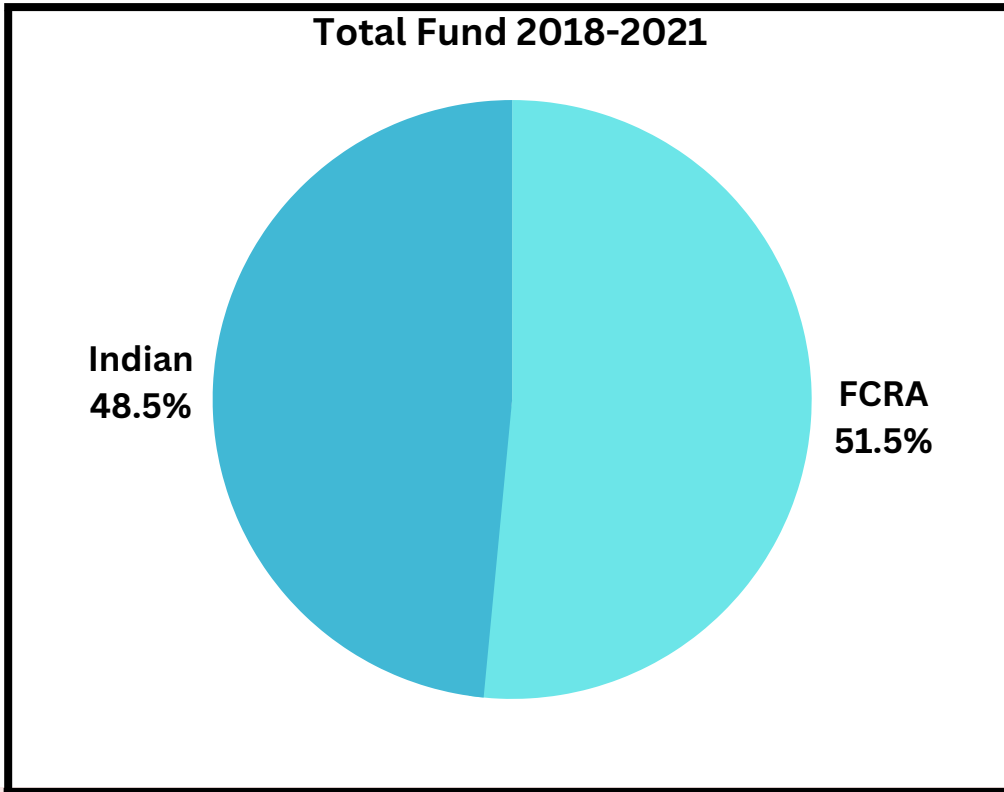
Due to its advocacy initiatives with state and non-state actors like judiciary, administration, civil society organizations and collectives at the national, regional, and local levels on various concerns related to women's rights and access to justice for women and children. This includes regular collaboration with various national and state institutions and departments to provide technical input and hand-holding support for the proper implementation of gender-focused laws and policies.

- AALI also got an opportunity to provide technical input on a Standard Operating Procedure for Family Counseling Centers in Uttar Pradesh in collaboration with the Office of Additional Director General of Police (1090 Women Power Line). With the finalization of the SOP in this reporting period, AALI was also brought in as technical resource to train counselors providing services in all 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh on approach and methods for gender sensitive counseling of families.
- AALI has been approached by the Additional Director General of Police, Uttar Pradesh to develop a consolidated circular for the Uttar Pradesh police enumerating their role and practices to be adopted for a rights-based, legally robust response to cases of gender based violence against women and children. The circular is currently being developed by AALI.

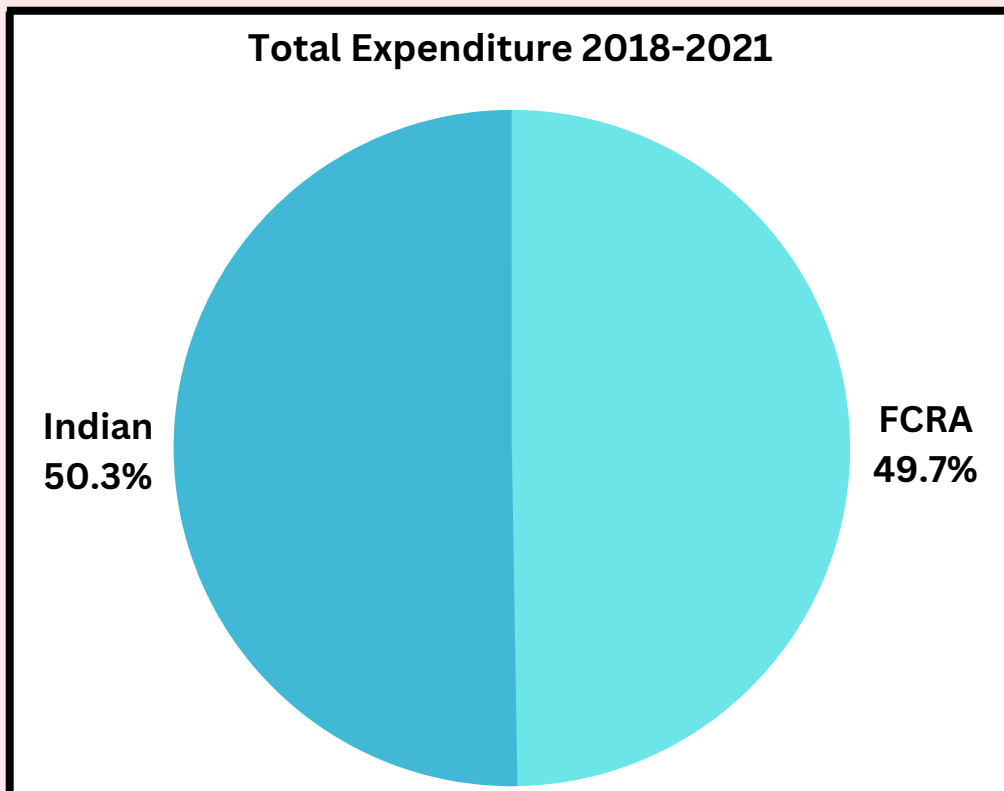
- Recommendations proposed by AALI through the Uttar Pradesh expert committee report to ensure interim and immediate relief for women who have been evicted from their homes by their husbands have been partially accepted. In budget announcement for the year 2020, the Government of Uttar Pradesh has proposed to ensure a monthly pension to divorced women and a monthly stipend of Rs. 500 to homeless women.
- The Director, Department of Women and Child Welfare, Uttar Pradesh has invited AALI to provide technical support in building the training calendar and module for capacity building of the protection officers appointed under Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 throughout Uttar Pradesh. AALI did training of all 75 district One Stop Centers during this reporting period.
- AALI has provided its insights to the NITI Aayog Administrative Secretariat to the On-line Dispute Resolution (ODR) Committee chaired by Justice A K Sikri for formulation of an action plan for ODR in India. In furtherance of our insights AALI was invited to the closed-door virtual round table on 'Mainstreaming ODR in India and the role of justice delivery providers in rural India' held on 23rd September 2020.

Organizational Insights

Financial Dashboard



The Indian vs Foreign Funding diversity ratio is approximately 45:55 each year.



Institutional Building

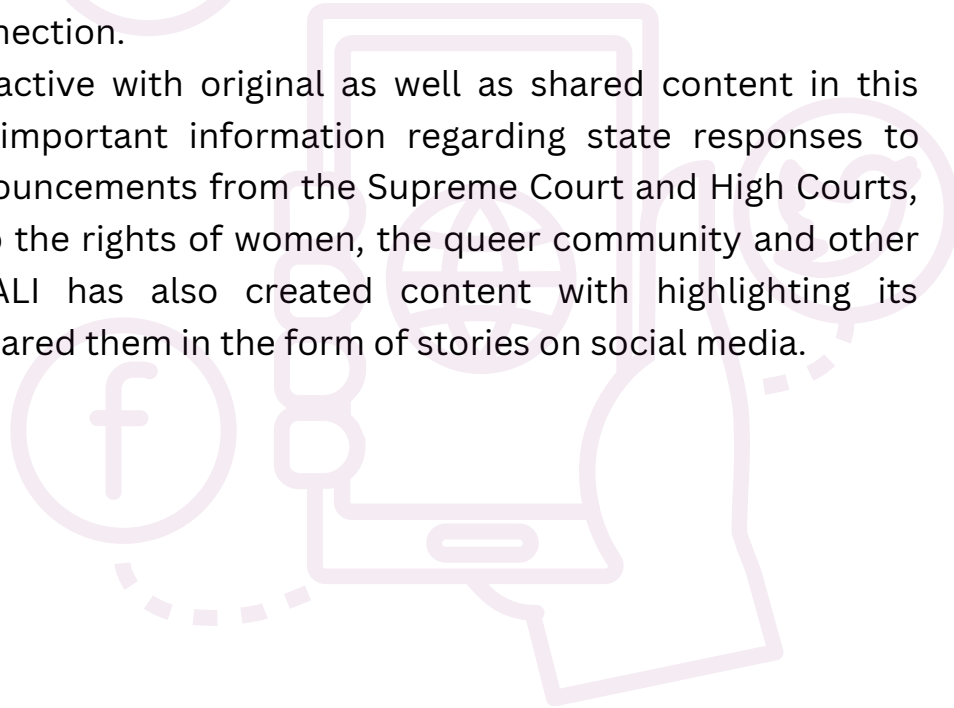
1. In this period, a new Socio-Legal Intervention Unit was established in the organization.
2. The organization was able to raise funds for COVID-19 relief through funders amounting to Rs. 87,18,930/- and other contribution came from AALI's corpus and Staff one day contribution amounting to Rs. 3,34,000/- for Ration distribution in F.Y. 20-21. We have expended 100% of the raised amount.
3. New induction manuals were drafted, employee data base was set up, process maps of programs and projects were drafted.
4. During the lockdown, the mental health problems within the team were on a rise and to combat these weekly sessions on mental health were organized for the team. These included sessions on:-
 - i) Challenges related to work from home, burn out, and managing teams remotely.
 - ii) How to keep up the motivation, focusing on team building activities and open sessions on productivity and time management.
 - iii) Guided sessions on keeping mental health a priority.
5. In November 2018, AALI completed 20 years. On this occasion- a workshop on Practicing Feminism: an examination of legal and advocacy interventions by AALI was held. On this occasion a review of AALI's 20-Year Journey with Strategic Recommendations for Moving Forward was also done.

Communications

In this reporting period efforts were made to develop a communication strategy, generate and expand people engagement on social media and highlight AALI's work through print, electronic and social media. Some of the significant ways in which progress towards this has been made are the following:

- AALI Organized a press conference on safe working spaces for women and the implementation of the SHW Act, 2013 on the occasion of International Women's Day 2019.
- Discussion on Doordarshan on the topics like Child Marriage, Child Care Institutions (CCIs), POCSO, National Girl Child Day, women's safety and female feticide.
- Live-talk on All India Radio on The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
- Comment on Adultery Law on "Ladies Finger".
- Live-talk on All India Radio on Stalking and Process of Lodging FIR.
- Discussion on Protection of Women on Domestic Violence Act, 2005 on All India Radio.

- AALI's work as influencer on issues of women's rights and access to justice has been recognized in the national and regional print media and electronic media through features on AALI's perspectives and interventions on platforms like Doordarshan and Nav Bharat Times on the occasion of International Women's Day and World Social Justice Day.
- Evidence based media advocacy has been undertaken on the occasion of International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women marking the beginning of 16 Days of Advocacy campaign. In keeping with the theme of Generation Equality: Stands against Rape, AALI shared relevant data regarding institutional response to sexual violence against women at the grassroots and challenges faced by women rights defenders. A social media campaign recognizing the spirit of women rights defenders was also run during the period.
- A social media campaign illustrating testimonies and success stories from our structured intervention with lawyers in the year 2019 was also initiated during the One Billion Rising week.
- The first of AALI's planned biannual newsletter was made and circulated to its network featuring its interventions, successes and challenges in the year 2018.
- Progress has been made in drafting a comprehensive social media policy to guide communication further.
- During the reporting period, AALI's media advocacy has mostly been concentrated on highlighting the vulnerabilities of women in the pandemic situation and ensuring that support systems are sensitive and responsive to their needs. AALI has engaged with the media on a number of occasions, including interviews on national channels such as Doordarshan as well as state level print media such as NBT, Hindustan, and the Pioneer. Findings from the vulnerability mapping survey done by AALI during lockdown phase 1 were published in Hindustan, NBT, Voice of Lucknow, Amar Ujala, Voice of Capital, and Gaon Connection.
- Our Facebook has been very active with original as well as shared content in this period, which have included important information regarding state responses to COVID-19 and actionable pronouncements from the Supreme Court and High Courts, especially in matters related to the rights of women, the queer community and other marginalized communities. AALI has also created content with highlighting its successful interventions and shared them in the form of stories on social media.



Challenges

- With the unprecedented Covid'19 Pandemic and sudden state-imposed lockdown, there was no redressal mechanism left for the survivors who were facing domestic violence within the confinement of the four walls of their marital and natal home. Services of shelter homes such as One Stop Center were converted into temporary quarantine centers for an uncertain period of time, having no recourse available to the survivors for safe shelters.
- The COVID-19 pandemic had made all capacity building engagement difficult. The entire methods of training were difficult to implement through the online mode since concentration span gets reduced during on-line sessions. Thus, our activities had to be re-planned and adapted to be used in a limited manner.
- Inadequate technical know-how of our field workers also posed major challenges in conducting on-line sessions.
- Adverse Mental health of the team members due to the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown also posed great difficulty in carrying forward the projects. The staff faced double burden of office work along with the household work which created a lot of mental pressure on them.
- Various emergency helpline numbers were either dysfunctional or continuously busy at the time when they were needed the most for ration and other medical needs.
- During the Covid'19 Pandemic, when the state actors became unresponsive, the CM's Jan Sunwai Portal was used excessively for seeking redressal of survivors' grievances. Many of the survivors did not have mobile phones / android phones, thus, coordination for One Time Password in order to register their complaint became an uphill task.
- The various commissions i.e. National Human Rights Commission, State Human Rights Commission, National Commission for Women and State Commission for Women mandated an email id along with a mobile number for registration of complaints. The email id, which the majority of the survivors did not have, became a major barrier in accessing the commission for registration of their complaint. The survivors, who had an active email id and reached out to the aforementioned commissions, have not received a response till date.
- The courts only took "bail matters" in the name of urgent issues and did not touch upon other matters of extreme importance i.e. maintenance u/s 125 CrPC, domestic violence u/s 12 PWDVA, recording of statements u/s 164 CrPC pertaining to sexual violence and so forth.
- Another major challenge was that since there weren't many shelter homes where women who might be evicted from their homes could find a safe place to stay, the women refused to go through the legal procedures even after sharing their stories and asking for assistance from the caseworkers.

Way Forward

- AALI aims to expand its interventions geographically by establishing new casework centres in remaining districts of UP, Jharkhand and start case work centres in the state of Bihar.
- We need to identify two expert Counselors and one mental health expert so that we are able to cater to the needs of the survivors in a better way, this is why our next plan would be to have a proper and structured collaboration for the same.
- Regular Advocacy with the District Judge of Lucknow pertaining to the regular transfers of Additional Charge of POCSO Courts. In addition to this, pursuit to ensure in-camera trial and proceedings in cases of Sexual offences and other offences related to women.
- Expanding the premises of Case work Unit and focusing more on the rehabilitation of the survivors keeping especially in mind the financial security and financial autonomy of the survivors through a well established structure and documentation.
- Advocacy with the Commissioner of Police regarding better and improved implementation of law and quick FIR registration in all crimes against women.
- We have identified a few survivors for capacity building as core agents of the group, so we need to start meeting with them so that ownership of the survivors meeting gets shifted to the hands of survivors and AALI could be in a position of support.
- As part of advocacy issues, we will be writing letters to CJ of Allahabad High Court and District Judge of Lucknow pertaining to the issues of correct updating of dates of the cases as there had been found many discrepancies in the dates uploaded on the court websites and the actual dates mentioned in the case files, especially during the time of pandemic.
- Another letter will be written addressing District Judge of Lucknow and Principal Judge of Family Court Lucknow regarding the issue of longer dates especially in cases of maintenance and domestic violence which lingers on the court proceedings and has severe setbacks of which our survivors are at the receiving end, therefore requesting for shorter dates in the cases.
- We have been conducting District as well as State-level Lawyers Workshop in order to build a strong network of lawyers, who can look into women centric cases through a skilled, feminist and with a rights-based approach. The aim is to create a safe space/platform for survivors to access the legal system with a sensitive manner both at state and national level.
- Advocacy with SLSA and DLSA and DWCD to adopt best practices for releasing of compensation under VCS and RLB Mahila Samman Kosh.

